

EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Stronger Place Select Committee **Date:** Thursday, 23 September 2021

Place: Council Chamber - Civic Offices **Time:** 7.00 - 8.05 pm

Members Present: Councillors A Lion (Chairman), R Morgan (Vice-Chairman), R Bassett, I Hadley, J Jennings, C McCredie, M Owen and H Kane.

Other Councillors: Councillors S Kane and J H Whitehouse

Apologies: S Heather and R Balcombe

Officers Present: L Kirman (Democratic Services Officer), N Dawe (Chief Operating Officer), R Pavey (Service Director (Customer Services)), S Mitchell (PR Website Editor) and R Moreton (Corporate Communications Officer)

8. Webcasting Introduction

The Chairman made a short address to remind everyone present that the meeting would be broadcast live to the internet, and would be capable of repeated viewing, which could infringe their human and data protection rights.

9. Substitute Members

The following substitutions were reported:

Cllr H Kane was substituting for Cllr S Heather.

10. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct.

11. Notes of the previous meeting

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2021 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

12. Terms of Reference & Work Programme

The Select Committee noted the terms of reference and work programme.

13. Proposed Revised Terms of Reference - Stronger Place Select Committee

Cllr Lion advised that the proposed revised Terms of Reference (ToR) had been drafted in response to Member comments made in writing and at the meeting of the Stronger Place Select Committee on 22 June 2021. These had been presented to Overview & Scrutiny Chairmen & Vice-Chairmen on 22 July 2021, who commented that the revision was too detailed and noted that Overview and Scrutiny would need to approve any changes to the Terms of Reference.

The Stronger Place Select Committee:

- commended the revisions and the clarity and context that proposed ToR provided.
- noted that there needed to be some flexibility within the ToR.
- noted that some of the infrastructure and sustainability requirements detailed in the ToR would be subject to the Local Plan.
- suggested that presentations from external parties were an essential element of the role of the Select Committee as this would provide information and awareness and allow the committee to comment and influence when appropriate.
- requested that the proposed ToR be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- suggested the following items for inclusion in the work programme; the consultation on climate change, leisure, litter across the district, planning processes, enforcement and waste management.
- discussed if Cabinet decisions should be scrutinised or if scrutiny should be earlier to influence decisions. A preference was noted for early scrutiny, when possible.

Members commented that the revised ToR provided clarity that could be beneficial for the other Select Committees and Cabinet, and requested that this be taken to the next Joint Chairs meeting for consideration by the other Select Committees.

Resolved:

The Select Committee agreed that, pending minor revisions, the proposed terms of reference should be commended to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their comment and approval, and be presented at the next meeting of this Select Committee.

The work programme would be developed and prioritised.

14. Branding of the Ground Floor of the Civic Offices

Rob Pavey, Customer Services Director, outlined the proposed designs and names for the re-branding of the ground floor of the Civic Offices to the Select Committee. This reflected the new community and collaborative purpose of the space and promoted the area as a new destination where EFDC services would work collaboratively with partners to provide wraparound solutions for residents and wider community activity. He emphasised that this was not a proposal to rename the Civic Offices and was for the ground floor of the building. The refurbishment of the Civic Offices had provided an opportunity to review how the building was used, the building had a reduced footprint for EFDC staff and the top floor was occupied on a commercial basis. He described the areas of the ground floor and the flow through these areas and suggested the proximity and integration of the ground floor activity lent itself to a common brand.

It was acknowledged that there was some subjectivity and personal preference in all branding exercises, members had been involved in the iterative design process carried out over the summer and two options were presented: 'The Civic Hub' and 'The Civic'. Partners had been consulted and feedback on a common brand had been positively received. Signage was needed to help all parties signpost services and improve the visitor experience. The signage would have the same coloured floor markings, as floor spots to act as path markers to assist the journey through the building.

Learning outcomes had been noted from the process which could have had a clearer design brief and better engagement. The costs detailed in the report were maximum costs and included the design, production and installation though the space and the floor markings. The final design was a representation of collaboration and people working together and the name options for consideration were 'The Hub' or 'The Civic Hub'

Members of the Select Committee

- Commented that: residents had raised concerns on the cost of the exercise, acknowledged that rebranding could be expensive and difficult and there had been some level of reassurance that the costs included production and installation costs.
- Acknowledged that there could be a personal preference around the rebranding and as this was subjective there would always be some differences of opinion.
- Discussed the potential names and suggested that 'Civic' related to a city, was not a noun and therefore 'The Civic' was an anomaly; suggested that 'Hub' was more suitable term for an airport; that Forest, or Epping Forest should be included in the name and that Community Hub or Centre would be more suitable, as civic represented 'The Council'. It was noted that a Community Hub, run by a third party, already existed in Loughton. R Pavey advised that the names had been put forward as part of the design brief after an iterative process with some members and senior management, to revisit would add time and money to the project, the term 'hub' was widely used across the county to describe shared spaces that provided a variety of services.
- Remarked that the colours, floor markings would assist people moving through the space and this would be of benefit to people with visual impairment.
- Sought confirmation that there would be a review of the outcomes and success of the collaborative space and were reminded that a six month review formed part of the original proposal, this had been delayed due to the lockdown restrictions imposed by covid, but there would be a report that could be provided to this Select Committee in due course.
- Raised concerns about the staffing levels associated with the welcome space and the impact on other forms of customer service and telephone contact which was already under strain. R Pacey acknowledged the strain on Customer Services detailed that recruitment would assist and in the future other front line services would also be present in the welcome area, the staff would be floor walking when required but would be able to use the reception area to carry out back office duties at quieter periods, and self-service kiosks and visitor registration would also be used.

Cllr Whitehouse requested that logo was not placed on the outside glass case at the Civic Offices as this was used to showcase the Chairman's and Civic events and asked if there would be any non-digital publicity. R Pavey advised that the communication plan included non-digital formats, including conventional media channels, partners and other outlets such as libraries and offices. Cllr Kane confirmed that he and other members had been involved in an iterative process that went backwards and forwards with names and suggested that the space should be promoted with Parish and Town Councils.

The Committee agreed that from the two proposed options before them, 'The Civic Hub' was the preferred option.

Resolved:

The Select Committee considered the re-branding and proposed designs of the Ground Floor of the Civic Offices and agreed that the name 'The Civic Hub' should be recommended to Cabinet for consideration.

15. Dates of Future Meetings

The date of the next meeting was noted as the 13 January 2022.

CHAIRMAN