



EPPING FOREST LOCAL COUNCILS' LIAISON COMMITTEE

NOTICE OF MEETING

Place: Council Chamber - Civic Offices **Date:** Tuesday, 29th November, 2022

Room: Council Chamber **Time:** 7.00 pm

Democratic Services Officer: R. Perrin
Tel: (01992) 564243 Email:
democraticservices@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Members:

District Council Representatives:

Councillors M Sartin, H Kane, J Lea, R Morgan, B Rolfe, D Sunger and J H Whitehouse

Local Council Representatives:

Clerks and Chairmen/Members of Parish and Town Councils

County Council Representatives:

Members for the following divisions:

North Weald and Nazeing:	Councillor C Whitbread
Loughton Central:	Councillor C C Pond
Ongar and Rural:	Councillor J McIvor
Epping and Theydon Bois:	Councillor H Whitbread
Buckhurst Hill and Loughton South:	Councillor M Vance
Chigwell and Loughton Broadway:	Councillor L Scott
Waltham Abbey:	Councillor S Kane

PLEASE NOTE THE START TIME OF THE MEETING

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN & VICE-CHAIRMAN

- (1) To confirm the appointment of District Councillor Sartin as the Chairman of the Committee for the municipal year; and
- (2) To confirm the appointment of Councillor B Scrutton, (the Essex Association of Local Councils Epping Forest Branch Chairman) as the Vice-Chairman of the Committee for the municipal year.

2. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

1. This virtual meeting is to be webcast. Members are reminded of the need to unmute

before speaking.

2. The Chairman will read the following announcement:

“I would like to remind everyone present that this meeting will be broadcast live to the internet (or filmed) and will be capable of repeated viewing (or another use by such third parties).

Therefore, by participating in this virtual meeting, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes. If members of the public do not wish to have their image captured, they should ensure that their video setting throughout the virtual meeting is turned off and set to audio only.

In the event that technical difficulties interrupt the virtual meeting that cannot be overcome, the Chairman may need to adjourn the meeting”.

3. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

EFDC Councillors - Please use the Members Portal webpage to report non-attendance at meetings https://eppingforestdc-self.achieveservice.com/service/Member_Contact to ensure your query is properly logged.

Alternatively, you can access the Members portal from the front page of the Council’s website, at the bottom under ‘Contact Us’ <https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/your-council/members-portal/>

Members, county councillors, and town/parish council representatives are reminded to sign the attendance register, in order to ensure that the minutes of the meeting accurately reflect attendance.

4. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Pages 7 - 12)**

To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 14 March 2022.

5. **ISSUES RAISED BY LOCAL COUNCILS (Pages 13 - 14)**

To discuss the following matters raised by the local councils:

QUESTIONS

- A. Communication** – Over recent years there has been a tangible decline in the communication methods chosen by EFDC, moving towards a more remote contact centre approach. This has led to a widening chasm in relationships, unfortunately resulting in a poor experience not only for our residents but also with Town and Parish Councils. As the first tier of local government, these Councils are the bodies closest to their residents with a greater understanding of local issues and concerns than any other tier of local Government. The current communication stream open to Town and Parish Councils is the same as that offered to members of the public – via the EFDC contact centre. This is long winded, frustrating, laborious, bureaucratic, and created entirely for the benefit of EFDC and not its residents. If there are issues of local concern identified by Town and Parish

Councils requiring a swift response, this communication method is simply unacceptable. Owing to the massive change in staffing, gone are many of the more experienced officers with whom Parish and Town Councils held relationships and forged bonds, working together for the benefit of its residents. This corporate style of operating is contributing to a breakdown in relationships.

We ask the following:

- How does the new communication system installed by EFDC benefit its residents?
- How does the new communication system installed by EFDC help to forge and maintain good relationships with Town and Parish Councils?
- Why must Town and Parish Councils first point of call be to the contact centre and not to relevant EFDC Officers?
- The EFDC Constitution states that the Monitoring Officer will make arrangements to ensure good communication with the Town and Parish Councils in the District – What are these arrangements?
- Does EFDC accept that its relationship with the first tier of local Government needs improvement, and if so how and by when does it intend on doing this?

The Customer Services, Service Manager, Susan Lewis and Team Manager - Complaints and Customer Satisfaction, Tracy Scott would be attending the meeting. (Attached is the Town and Parish queries flow chart)

B. New Planning System – Mid 2022 EFDC rolled out its new online Planning System. Parish and Town Councils have noted a number of flaws / difficulties with this system, making it cumbersome and difficult to use by both Town and Parish Councils and residents alike. A number of Councils have already sent feedback to EFDC about the new system and areas where changes should be considered. Town and Parish Councils were never trained on this new system, so went into it completely blind which has been extremely unhelpful. EF Branch has collated a list of issues being experienced by Town and Parish Councils in the District.

- Why did EFDC change to this new planning system?
- Who did EFDC consult about the introduction of this new system, considering Town and Parish Councils are statutory consultees.?
- Is the system now fully functional without issue, or are there current issues that EFDC is addressing, and if so, what are those issues?
- Was there any training offered on the system, and if so to whom?
- Does EFDC plan to run any training sessions, and if so for whom and when?
- Will EFDC look at each of the issues stated on the list compiled by the EF Branch members, and respond with action / intended action taken?

The Service Manager for Development Management, Andrew Marx gave the following responses and would attend the meeting.

- Why did EFDC change to this new planning system?
To prepare the Local Planning Authority for the digital planning age, to secure efficiencies and resilience in service provision, to enhance performance monitoring, to deliver real-time business intelligence to managers and to support the digital strategy of the Council.
- Who did EFDC consult about the introduction of this new system, considering Town and Parish Councils are statutory consultees.?

The Council did not publicly consult on the procurement of the system, as it is an operational matter for the Authority.

- Is the system now fully functional without issue, or are there current issues that EFDC is addressing, and if so, what are those issues?

The system is fully functional. As with any complicated and large-scale project of this nature (millions of data points to be transferred, integration with GIS, transfer of over 1.3 million electronic documents from the previous electronic document management system) there are small issues that are being addressed. The system will continue to be developed incrementally over time, as the technology on which it is built allows this development without disrupting core services.

- Was there any training offered on the system, and if so to whom?
Yes, training was provided to relevant Council staff.
- Does EFDC plan to run any training sessions, and if so for whom and when?
No, not specifically as it was not considered that training on the public facing part of the system would be required. We are happy to listen to any suggestions from local Councils, and obviously tips and tricks can be shared (or demonstration provided) on an individual basis if considered necessary.
- Will EFDC look at each of the issues stated on the list compiled by the EF Branch members, and respond with action / intended action taken?
Yes, we are working with IT colleagues and the supplier to agree a programme of product development over time, so any suggestions will be logged and considered, and where appropriate implemented if possible.

- C. Highways** – EF Branch would like to invite Cllr Lee Scott, ECC Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport, to provide an update on his plans for the future of Highways in the County, and to address any areas of general concern that Parish and Town Councils may have, including:

- The efficacy of the Local Highways Panel and the adequacy of budgets provided to them.
- The prime remit of Local Highway Panels
- What (if any) options are available for introducing traffic calming measures on rural country roads
- The contract with Ringway Jacobs, how long this is in place for, when it is due for renewal, and whether or not they offer value for taxpayers' money.

Essex County Councillor Scott Lee had been contacted and unfortunately has given his apologies for this meeting. He advised that he would attend the next meeting.

- D. EF Recycling Hubs** – Some Parish and Town Councils are reporting that these bins are always full and need to be emptied more regularly. They are attracting fly tipping, and generally viewed as a dumping ground.

- Is it EFDC's responsibility to empty / clear these bins / sites?
- If so, what is the emptying schedule, and can this be changed?
- Who is responsible for clearing the fly tipping at this location?

The Service Manager Contracts, James Warwick gave the following responses and Team Manager for Waste Management, David King would attend the meeting.

- Is it EFDC's responsibility to empty / clear these bins / sites? **If the sites are EFDC's they are cleared by Biffa. A list of sites is on the council's website: <https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/recycling-and-rubbish/find-recycling-and-bottle-banks/>**
- If so, what is the emptying schedule, and can this be changed? **Emptying schedules for the 1100 mixed recycling banks can change according to usage but generally are done once per week – the static sweepers who visit the sites once daily are required to phone Biffa if a bank is full. Textile banks are weekly as well.**

Residents can also report full banks online to us.

<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/recycling-and-rubbish/report-a-street-cleaning-issue/>

Parish and Town councils can contact their Area Waste Officer or wastemanagement@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

- Who is responsible for clearing the fly tipping at this location? **If it is an EFDC site, we will clear the fly tipping that occurs around the sites – usually on a daily basis. We are having significant issues at the Traps hill site, and we are clearing fly tipping twice per day at the moment but as fast as we remove it another dumping takes place.**

If any parish or town council has specific issues it would be helpful if they can contact us on wastemanagement@eppingforestdc.gov.uk or they can contact their Area Waste Officer.

We are in the process of updating the areas which the area waste officers cover, once this has been done, we will provide the updated contacts and areas to the Town and Parish Councils.

6. EPPING FOREST DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN - PROGRESS

(Epping Forest District Council) To report to the Committee on the current position of the new Local Plan for the Epping Forest District.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

1. To note that Parish Council Tax Bases for 2023/24, along with the annual pro forma Precept returns, are scheduled to be issued on Friday 2nd December 2022. Parish and Town Councils are reminded that completed Precept returns should be submitted in accordance with the 31st January 2023 deadline.
2. To discuss what format these meetings should take place i.e., face to face, virtual or hybrid and dependent on those considerations, whether the meetings should take place in the daytime or evening.
3. To discuss what the Committee want to get out of these meetings and any future items they would like to see on the next agenda.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Subject to item 7.2 - To note that the next meeting has been scheduled for 14 March 2023 at 1.00pm via Team/Zoom.