

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday 19 September 2023, 7.00 pm - 8.15 pm

Council Chamber - Civic Offices

Members Present:	Councillors H Kane (Chairman), J Parsons (Vice-Chairman), I Allgood, R Bassett, L Paine, R Pugsley and B Vaz
Other Councillors:	Councillors R Balcombe, N Bedford, S Kane, J Philip, C Whitbread, H Whitbread and J H Whitehouse
Apologies:	Councillor(s) A Lion
Officers In Attendance:	Melissa Faux (Senior Crime and ASB Officer), Mandy Thompson (Interim Acting Service Director (Technical)), James Warwick (Interim Acting Service Director (Contracts)), Phil Hawkins (Contract Compliance Specialist GM) and Christopher Smith (Environmental Enforcement Officer)
Officers In Attendance (Virtually):	Vivienne Messenger (Democratic Services Officer) and Jennifer Gould (Strategic Director and Chief Operating Officer)
Guests	Ben Sharples and Maria Sharples (Qualis Property Solutions)

A RECORDING OF THIS MEETING IS AVAILABLE FOR REPEATED VIEWING

11 WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman reminded everyone present that this meeting would be recorded and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

12 SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Committee noted that Councillor L Burrows had been appointed as substitute for Councillor A Lion.

13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor R Bassett declared a non-pecuniary interest in the following item of the agenda by virtue of being a Non Executive Director of Qualis and would remain in the meeting for its consideration.

- Grounds Maintenance

14 NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

A statement in response to a query on the status of Union recognition by Qualis was provided verbally to the Committee and had been sent as requested to Cllr Murray. This can be viewed on the webcast of this meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Place Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on 4 July 2023 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

15 WORK PROGRAMME**RESOLVED:**

The Place Scrutiny Committee noted the amendments and agreed the work programme.

16 TRANSFER OF GROUNDS MAINTENANCE TO QUALIS PROPERTY SOLUTIONS - UPDATE

Mandy Thompson (Interim Acting Service Director (Technical)) provided an overview and update on the transfer of the Grounds Maintenance Survey to Qualis Property Solutions the

- The service transferred in May 2023.
- Service issues were acknowledged; this was due to weather conditions and staff vacancies.
- The Council had appointed a Contract Compliance Officer.
- Independent and joint visits were carried out, and monthly monitoring meetings had been implemented.
- Both parties were working towards developing relevant performance indicators, improving the service and resident satisfaction.
- Performance would be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly basis.

The Committee

- Agreed that questions and comments would be reserved until after the presentation by Qualis on the operational aspects of the service.

Resolved:

That the Committee noted and endorsed the report, for the next Cabinet meeting.

17 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICE UPDATE (QUALIS PROPERTY SOLUTIONS LTD)

Ben Sharples and Maria Sharples (Qualis Property Solutions) provided details on customer views and the areas of responsibility in the contract for Qualis. The four-stage improvement plan was detailed:

- Stage 1: May 2023 to December 2023 - embed a visual standard; schedule and complete a pilot GIS mapping project which would detail the ownership of land.
- Stage 2: January 2024 to May 2024 - assess the inherited ICT and potential roll out GIS mapping with a dependency on EFDC
- Stage 3: June 2024 - review standards, set performance and KPIs.
- Stage 4: May 2024 to August 2024 - job creation, including apprenticeships and local jobs.

The Committee:

- Welcomed the update and presentation provided by EFDC staff and Qualis,
- Acknowledged that there had been some improvement since the previous presentation.
- Recognised the value of walkabouts and on-site inspections.
- Received confirmation that the Essex County Council (ECC) were responsible for the enforcement of overgrown private hedges.

- Agreed that GIS mapping, the ownership and responsibility of land would be a valuable tool.
- Suggested the inclusion of areas of weed spraying into the GIS mapping exercise.

Qualis.

- Confirmed that any service requests that did not fall under their remit were referred back to the Council
- Acknowledged a difficult start to the contract with unseasonable weather and staff vacancies
- Advised that recruitment, and efficient and effective scheduling would improve the service.
- Provided information on recruitment, and advised there were currently 2 vacancies and 2 agency members of staff
- Detailed that specific requests including those for No Mow May would be assessed considered on an individual basis

Committee Recommendation:

A referral system for all ground maintenance issues, irrespective of ownership and responsibility, be developed between organisations, as an outcome of the GIS mapping project.

Resolved:

That the Committee noted the report.

Actions:

- (1) Qualis to provide details of the organisational structure of the grounds maintenance team
- (2) Qualis to ensure Ward Members were invited to the estate walkabouts.
- (3) Consideration be given to the development of a referral system to allow residents a single point of contact for all ground maintenance issues, irrespective of ownership and responsibility, as an outcome of the GIS mapping project.

18 PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER (DOG CONTROL)

Mandy Thompson (Interim Acting Service Director (Technical)) introduced the Public Space Protection Order (Dog Control) (PSPO) report.

- The Committee were advised that the Council tried to encourage responsible dog ownership and an operational PSPO would streamline and improve the enforcement process carried out by the Council's Environment & Neighbourhoods officers.
- Consultation on the proposed PSPO was required and the suggested approach set out criteria for the implementation of the PSPO, if consultation was favourable (60%), or reconsideration of the proposal in light of 40% objections.
- The PSPO would last for three years with an option to amend and extend for a further three years.

The Committee

Welcomed the report and suggested that the PSPO would be welcomed by the community and received confirmation that:

- The PSPO applied across the district and would be enforceable in Epping Forest as City of London Constables were authorised to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN).

- Dog waste could be put in any waste bin, and awareness on the disposal of dog would be included as part of the consultation exercise.
- FPNs carried the maximum level of fine, which was set by Government,
- Enforcement would be carried out within current resources.
- A targeted approach could be taken, when there was repeat offending of dog fouling,

Committee Recommendation

Consideration be given to raise awareness of the fines and use of litter bins for dog waste with the use of stickers on all litter bins throughout the district.

Resolved:

The Committee endorsed the recommendations of the report to Cabinet.

19 PUBLIC SPACE PROTECTION ORDER (DEBDEN BROADWAY)

Mandy Thompson (Interim Acting Service Director (Technical)) introduced the Public Space Protection Order (Debden Broadway) (Antisocial Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014) report. The Committee were advised that:

- Public Space Protection Orders (PSPO) were intended to deal with a particular nuisance or problem in a particular area that is detrimental to the local community's quality of life.
- The Broadway had been highlighted as an area of focus for the Home Office 'ASB hotspot patrols' within the Epping Forest District.
- Detailed conditions of the proposed PSPO were included in the report.
- Hotspot patrols had commenced and the introduction of the PSPO would complement this work and allow swift enforcement action to be taken.
- Consultation on the proposed PSPO was required and the suggested approach set out criteria for the implementation of the PSPO, if consultation was favourable (60%), or reconsideration of the proposal in light of 40% objections.

The Committee welcomed the report and received confirmation that:

- The PSPO would give the powers to identify where the perpetrators of the ASB were from.
- There was scope for other areas to have a PSPO, but this must be based on evidence.
- Low level ASB should be reported to the Council.
- Enforcement would be carried out within existing resources.
- Officers did have powers to request names and addresses, if a perpetrator refused the police could be contacted, CCTV and body cam footage could provide opportunities to gain this information retrospectively.

Resolved:

The Committee endorsed the recommendations of the report to Cabinet.

20 ESSEX DRAFT WASTE STRATEGY

J Warwick (Contracts Service Director) introduced the draft waste strategy for Essex and advised the Committee that this report was before the Scrutiny Committee to raise awareness

and ask members for feedback and support on the consultation. The following key points were highlighted.

The Strategy:

- Had been developed collaboratively with all the bodies in the Essex Waste Partnership,
- Provided the Vision, objectives and a framework for the management of waste for the next 30 years, had challenging targets and did not prescribe collection regimes or practices which would be developed locally,
- Consultation would run from 13 September 2023 to 22 November 2023, there were in-person sessions across the County, and it was available on-line and in hard copy,
- The final waste strategy would require approval from Essex County Council before being presented to Forest District Council, and other members of the Essex Waste Partnership Wand for adoption.

The Committee

- Received clarity that the figures contained in the cover report, in relation to aims and aspirations of the draft waste strategy had been transposed, and should be read as per the draft waste strategy for Essex 2024/2025
- Acknowledged their role in the consultation exercise.
- Were advised that costs needed to factored into waste collection.

Resolved:

That the Committee acknowledged the consultation exercise on the draft waste strategy

Actions:

- (1) Details of the draft waste strategy to be included in the Members Bulletin
- (2) The website to be circulated - <https://www.essex.gov.uk/wastestrategy>

21 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Resolved:

The committee noted the date of the next meeting was on 9 January 2024 at 7:00pm.

CHAIRMAN