

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee:	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Date:	Wednesday 26 February 2025
Place:	Council Chamber - Civic Offices	Time:	7.00 - 9.40 pm
Members Present:	Councillors R Baldwin (Chairman), C McCann (Vice-Chairman), E Barnard, M George, W Kauffman, J Lea, A Lion, J Lucas, J Parsons, S Rackham, G Wiskin, D Stocker, L Burrows and M Dadd		
Other Councillors:	Councillors P Keska, C Whitbread, H Whitbread, N Bedford, S Heather, M Morris, J H Whitehouse and J M Whitehouse		
Other Councillors (Virtual):	Councillors S Murray, K Williamson and S Patel		
Apologies:	R Bassett and M Markham		
Officers Present:	L Kirman (Democratic Services Officer), G Courtney (Service Manager (Planning Development)), M Faux (Senior Crime and ASB Officer), R Moreton (Corporate Communications Officer), B Stalabrass (Environmental Health Team Manager Commercial & Air Quality), M Thompson (Service Director - Regulatory Services), J Warwick (Service Director (Contracts, Partnerships and Procurement)), S McNamara (Procurement and Contract Development Manager) and N Richardson (Service Director (Planning Development))		
Officers Present (Virtually):	J Gould (Acting Deputy Chief Executive), C Jaggard (Air Quality Officer), V Messenger (Democratic Services Officer), C Walsh (Service Manager (Housing Needs & Management)) and J Taphouse (Interim Service Manager (Assets Management))		

[A RECORDING OF THIS MEETING IS AVAILABLE FOR REPEATED VIEWING](#)

64. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman reminded everyone present that the meeting would be broadcast live to the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

65. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Committee noted the following substitutions reported at the meeting:

- Councillor Dadd had been appointed as substitute for Councillor Bassett, and
- Councillor Burrows had been appointed as substitute for Councillor Markham

66. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

67. MINUTES**Resolved:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2025 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

68. MATTERS ARISING AND OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

The Chairman advised members that call-in of the decision on the acquisition of Cottis Lane multi-storey car park (minute 56) had been withdrawn.

There were no other outstanding actions or matters arising.

69. PUBLIC QUESTIONS & REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee noted that no public questions or requests to address the meeting had been received.

70. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS - CALL-IN

The Committee noted that no executive decisions had been called-in for consideration since the previous meeting.

71. DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT - UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PAS REPORT

Graham Courtney (Service Manager Planning) and Nigel Richardson (Director of Planning Service), provide the Committee with an update on the progress of the PAS recommendations for Development Management and highlighted that the new committee structure had been established, a training programme had been developed, and dates would be circulated when finalised. A review of the revised Committee structure would be carried out in July 2025.

The Committee suggested that:

- the length of agenda, frequency of site visits and training on the relevance of highway matters could be considered before the review, and the
- the use of a minibus for site visits should be reconsidered.

The Committee raised a variety of questions and were advised that Chairmen and Vice Chairmen's meeting of Development Management, would provide an opportunity to consider some items before the July review, and received confirmation that training was open to all members.

Resolved:

The Committee noted the report.

72. ORGANISATION PERFORMANCE – QUARTER 3 OUTTURN AND PRIORITY PROJECTS UPDATE

The Chairman reminded the Committee that the Leisure KPI and the Epping Leisure Centre priority project were as detailed in item 10 of the supplementary agenda, this would be considered as part of this item.

The Committee raised specific points and were advised as follows:

- Average re-let times, no comments were shown, and this was classified as a red indicator. John Taphouse and Chris Walsh– advised that three independent living bed sits were skewing the figures, these properties were difficult to let, and alternative approaches were being considered. A new relet standard had been approved, which should assist in the turnaround of properties, a new partner agreement would provide performance management system on voids and pre void inspections were being carried out.
- Fly Tipping, concerns on the levels across the district. Mandy Thomson advised on the ‘scrap the waste’ campaign with ECC, CoL and the Police, which would run for 6 weeks, cross border work was being carried out to share information and intelligence, and funding has been received to monitor hotspots, including those in areas with poor or no lighting. Reports of fly tipping should be made through the website, staff needed specific authorisation to investigate fly tipping before it was removed, the potential to authorise TVS staff may be considered. The suggestion to liaise with ECC to identify the impact and repercussions of changes to civic amenity site policy would be taken back to the working group.
- Sundry Debt – continued to be red, and an explanation of the quarterly figures, baseline and target, and how much debt goes to default. James Warwick advised that there was a plan of action across the Council and that a written response would be provided,
- Ombudsmen complaints. Jen Gould advised that recommendations were received from the Ombudsman, these were considered and monitored by the leadership team. The monitoring could be shared in the members bulletin,
- Fit for the future – priority programme. The Leader, Cllr C Whitbread, advised the Committee that the budget had mentioned the realignment of this programme, and that Local Government Reform would also shape this programme moving forward.
- The Broadway Refurbishment. John Taphouse detailed the programme was on track and the risks, resident dissatisfaction and commercial tenants dissatisfaction should be reclassified as green.

Actions:

- (1): Ombudsman monitoring to be included in the members bulletin (Jen Gould), and
(2): Sundry Debtors – further details on data and improvement plan to be circulated to members (James Warwick)

Resolved

The committee commented and noted the report.

73. ESSEX PROCUREMENT PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE PAPERS – APPROVAL AND ADOPTION

Shane Mcnamarra provided an overview Essex Procurement Partnership Governance Papers and advised the Committee that there had been a long running partnership with Braintree and Castle Point and this would extend the partnership. The new partnership would provide a range of benefits including increased resilience, access to procurement expertise and reduced duplication. Minor amendments to procurement thresholds would be required to ensure alignment with the partners and a social value policy will be developed.

The Committee were advised after questioning that

- All public bodies must advertise contracts on a central digital platform, there would be further advertising and communication.
- The liabilities of the Council were currently being reviewed.

- The outcome measure for Social Value were based on nationally agreed measures, procurement would select relevant measures to the project however, this did not exclude working with potential contractors to introduce new and good practise.
- The model of the procurement hub had framework, when these were used there was a rebate which was used to offset the subscription and fixed costs shown in the report.

Resolved:

The Committee commended the report to Cabinet for the approval of the recommendations as set out in the draft Cabinet report.

74. EFDC ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR POLICY

Cllr Keska, Technical Service Portfolio Holder, introduced the report and advised the Committee that the proposed ASB policy was district wide and encompassed all housing tenures, privately owned, private rent and social housing. The policy defined the approach to the management and investigation of anti-social behaviour (ASB) complaints received by the Council and provided clear guidance on responsibilities and expectations for victims of ASB within the district. There was a requirement under section 218a of the Housing Act 1996 to publish the ASB policy.

The Committee welcomed the introduction of the policy, and received the following advice from Melissa Faux, Team Mager ASB, in response to the queries raised:

- There was a responsibility to work with partners under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, and to fulfil this a local action group met every six weeks. the Police, social care, open road, phoenix futures, and statutory partners attended. ASB cases and hotspots areas were considered. Issues of concern could be raised to the ASB team, who could refer to the local action group when appropriate.
- Low level reports of ASB are made to the Council, and there was a weekly briefing with the police when information was shared.
- PFCC are carrying out an Essex wide programme to integrate police and local authority data with Nottingham Trent University, this was complex work but would provide useful data and maps of hotspot areas.
- The ASB case management system used in Epping was limited, this was moving to new more sophisticated system which would provide access to some maps.
- The team received large numbers of residential ASB reports, which limited proactive communication with members. If members had any issues or concerns, they could email the ASB team to receive advice on specific cases.
- Victims would be responded to in 3 working days of a complaint being made, there was a process for assessing the impact and collecting evidence before action could be taken.
- There was no impact from the loss of the in-house police team on the introduction of the policy.
- There was a dedicated ASB team, with some capacity for overtime for some out of hours work.
- Successful prosecutions were publicised to increase awareness of the powers the Council and the national ASB week was an opportunity to communicate how to report ASB and ASB case reviews.

Resolved:

The Committee commended the ASB policy to Cabinet for approval.

75. SMOKE CONTROL AREA REVIEW

Cllr Keska, Technical Service Portfolio Holder, advised the Committee that the report set out four options for the Council to consider. The Government's Air Quality Strategy prioritised included the reduction of pollution from domestic burning through Smoke Control Areas (SCAs) and use of cleaner fuels. There was an expectation that local authorities reduced emissions from sources within their control, to reduced PM2.5. The Smoke Control Areas in Epping Forest District had been in place since the 1960s, and did not offer consistent protection to the health of our residents, or enforcement through FPN. This would not prevent the use of burners or fireplaces but ensure the adoption of cleaner burning methods which should reduce the creation of PM2.5 pollution and therefore minimize harm to human health. Reviewing the Smoke Control Areas and supporting the adoption of report would also show commitment to the Climate Change Agenda.

The Committee raised a range of queries and comments were advised that:

- The current process for enforcement in Smoke Control areas, was that an offence needed to be witnessed by an officer, advice would be offered to improve situation, if there was no improvement an enforcement notice could be issued and if this was breached this would be referred to the Magistrates Court. With the new system advice would still be offered, then a warning letter and if no improvement a Fixed Penalty Notice could be issued.
- There were a limited number of enforcement cases which were complaint led.
- Residents who were experiencing financial hardship would be made aware of any issues and given advise before an FPN was issued.
- This was a consultation document, and there were a range of options available, including designating the whole district as a smoke control area.
- PM2.5 was not monitored in the district. There were background levels of particulates, a known source was chimney smoke and levels dropped as you moved away from the source, this was a key factor in suggesting control in urban areas where there was an increased density of chimneys and hence particulates.
- Bonfires were covered by nuisance legislation, this this covered building with roof and a chimney.

The Committee suggested several aspects for consideration including:

- How planned development could be incorporated into the smoke control areas, this could require regular redesignation.
- Concerns that this could impact rural areas with no gas supply where the main source of heating could be through coal/wood burners.
- How would this work with the new unitary authority an LGR? Could this be considered when the new shape of the district was known, to allow effective consultation with relevant districts.

The Committee commended and welcomed the review and requested that this be brought back to Scrutiny when the consultation had been completed.

Resolved:

The Committee endorsed the report for Cabinet.

76. CCTV STRATEGY

The Committee were advised that an appendix to the report was not included in the agenda, this had been emailed to members of the Committee and hard copies were available in the Chamber. This would be included in the minutes of the meeting.

Cllr Keska, Technical Service Portfolio Holder, advised the Committee that CCTV Strategy covered the period 2025-2032 this aligned with the expected lifespan of the assets. The strategy set out the Council's current CCTV provision, locations, numbers of cameras, maintenance costs, repairs, and replacements for the next seven years. It provided an overview of the benefits that would be realised for local communities and the various uses made of CCTV footage. The capital programme work programme for 2019-2025 had been met. The new strategy was required for the ongoing maintenance and replacement of the Councils CCTV infrastructure.

The welcomed the new strategy and highlighted the value of CCTV, they received the following advice in relation to queries raised:

- CCTV was recorded continuously over 24, would be automatically overwritten after 28 days, and this would be corrected in the Strategy before being presented to Cabinet.
- CCTV was a reactive service. There was some flexibility to respond to urgent out of hours requests, and to provide support to the police or partners proactively when needed.
- Clarity was given that the revenue budget was the working budget. The service did and would continue to identify income generating opportunities, and there could be future scope to work with the Town and Parish Councils.
- Data and evidence of usage were used to determine if cameras should be decommissioned. If a camera was decommissioned and the position changed cameras could be reinstated. Decommissioning was carried out in consultation with the ward Councillors
- CCTV footage downloads were requested from the police and insurance companies, there was a strict data sharing protocol that must be followed. There was a charge to outside agencies, and individual requests were considered on a case-by-case basis.
- The number of redeployable cameras provided enough to cover hotspots, new covert cameras had been funded by the PFCC to tackle fly tipping.
- The replacement programme for the next seven years, appendix one to the report, would be reviewed to address anomalies of zero being shown against entries. The revised appendix one would be circulated with the minutes.
- Legislation prevented Local Authorities from using CCTV for parking enforcement.
- There were minimum requirements for cameras to be brought into the Council's systems, this could impact on the requests from Town and Parish Councils.
- Cottis Lane car park cameras would be integrated into the Council's system and would be operated in line with all cameras across the district.

Resolved:

Pending the inclusion of the comments made by the Committee, the report was commended to Cabinet for approval.

77. CHAIRMEN TO REPORT ON THEIR SELECT COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Cllr. J Lucas, Chairman of Communities Scrutiny, updated the Committee on the work programme which was near completion. The final of meeting of Communities Scrutiny was on 4 March 2025. The Police would be present, and the Community Safety Partnership would be considered, all members were welcome to attend.

Cllr J Parsons (Chairman of Place Scrutiny) advised the Committee that the Place Scrutiny work programme had been completed, and important topics had been effectively scrutinised through the year. The Vice-Chairman- Cllr Markham, Members and Officers were thanked for their roles in scrutiny through the year.

Cllr Murray raised concerns relating to the space for a third bin for recycling, he was advised that this was discussed at the Place Scrutiny Committee and would be considered as part of the review of the exception policy.

Cllr Whitehouse requested that an update on green policies be included in the Member's Bulletin.

78. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME

Cllr R Baldwin, Chairman of the Committee advised the Committee that as recommended by Council on 20 February 2025, the calendar of meetings would be brought to the next meeting for agreement of Scrutiny dates for the next municipal year.

79. CABINET BUSINESS

The Leader of the Council, Cllr C Whitbread, provided an update and overview of Local Government Reorganisation and advised that the Government had agreed to Essex being on the priority list for devolution. There had been several meetings of the Leaders across Essex, but no decision had been made on the number of unitary authorities, evidence and data would be used to develop a sustainable model. A letter on the interim plan must be submitted to Government by the 21 March 2025, this was an executive decision and would be discussed at Cabinet on 19 March 2025. The Chairman and members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee were invited to attend Cabinet for discussion on the item. The Leader would also set up a cross-party Portfolio Advisory Group.

The Leader advised members that the Government had launched a consultation process on LGR and regular developments would be communicated to members, staff and residents.

Cllr Murray was advised that written confirmation would provided for the items on the forward plan; to clarify if council houses or properties for private sale would be built on the Chequers B and the Pyrles Lane sites.

Resolved:

The Committee noted: The forward plan, and the invite to attend Cabinet for the Local Government Reform item.

CHAIRMAN

Appendix 1

Financial Forecast Table – Programme of Work

Scheme Location	Previous year of replacement	2025-26 Budget	2026-27 Budget	2027-28 Budget	2028-29 Budget	2029-30 Budget	2030-31 Budget	2031-32 Budget	Total of 7 years
		£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Limes Farm Yellow Block, Chigwell	2024							12	12
Limes Farm Yellow Block lifts, Chigwell	2020							3	3
Limes Farm Green Block, Chigwell	2024						12		12
Limes Farm Green Block lifts, Chigwell	2020						3		3
Limes Farm Red Block, Chigwell	2019	47							47
Limes Farm Red Block lifts, Chigwell	2019	3							3
Norway House, North Weald	2019		35						35
Shelley Close, Ongar	2015	3							3
Springfields, Waltham Abbey	2023					12			12
Birch View The Plain, Epping	2024						8		8
Hemnall House, Epping	2024						3		3
Burton Road, Debden	2019	7							7
Barrington Hall, Debden	2019	2							2
Debden Broadway HRA	2022				10				10
Oakwood Hill Estate	2025							55	55
Marlescroft Oakwood Hill Play park	2023					9			9
Ninefields Hillhouse Play park	2023					9			9
HRA Non-programmed works	N/a	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35
HRA PROPERTIES		67	40	5	15	35	31	75	268
Independent Living Scheme sites (10 sites)	2024						12		12
Pelly Court, Epping	2024						8		8
INDEPENDENT LIVING SCHEMES		0	0	0	0	0	20	0	20
TOTAL HRA SCHEMES		67	40	5	15	35	51	75	288

Borders Lane shopping parade, Loughton	2020		12						12
Limes Farm Shopping Parade, Chigwell	2014						5		5
Loughton Way Shopping Parade, Buckhurst Hill	2022				16				16
Parklands Shopping Parade, Coopersale	2023					5			5
Pyrlies Lane Shopping Parade, Loughton	2020		17						17
Upshire Shopping Parade, Waltham Abbey (Decommissioned pre 2020)	N/a								
Roundhills Shopping Parade, Waltham Abbey	2023					5			5
Hillhouse Shopping Parade, Waltham Abbey	2019	9						10	19
North Weald Shopping Arcade (NWPC) Not EFDC	2017								
SHOPPING PARADE SCHEMES		9	29	0	16	10	5	10	79
Bakers Lane Car Park, Epping (decommissioned for development)	2019								
Cottis Lane Car Park, Epping (decommissioned for multistorey)	2019								
Traps Hill Car Park, Loughton	Nov 2024								
Pleasance Car Park, Ongar (Library)	2023					10			10
Bansons Car Park, Ongar (Sainsburys)	2024						14		14
Cornmill Car Park, Waltham Abbey	2024						11		11
Lower Queens Road Car Park, Buckhurst Hill	2017				19				19
Darby Drive, Waltham Abbey (Within budget for 2024/25)	April 2025								
Quaker Lane Car Park, Waltham Abbey	2024						15		15
Oakwood Hill Car Park	2021			5					5
Oakwood Hill Ind Estate car park, Loughton	2021			5					5

CAR PARK SCHEMES		0	0	10	19	10	40	0	79
Civic Offices, High Street, Epping	2021			15					15
Civic Offices, Homefield House, Epping	2023			3					3
CIVIC OFFICE SCHEMES		0	0	18	0	0	0	0	18
North Weald Airfield	2023						35		35
North Weald Waste Vehicle Depot	N/a							35	35
NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD SCHEMES		0	0	0	0	0	35	35	70
Portable/Rapid Deploy units	2023				28				28
Ninefields Rapid Deploy units	2023				42				42
PORTABLE CCTV SCHEMES		0	0	0	70	0	0	0	70
Bobbingworth, (Land Drainage)	2024						10		10
Clifton Road, Loughton (Land Drainage) (Decommissioned November 2022)									
Debden Broadway	2022				60				60
Epping Forest District Museum, Waltham Abbey	2024						15		15
High Road, Loughton	2023					40			40
High Street, Epping	2021			80					80
Oakwood Hill Depot, Loughton	2024						16		16
Limes Farm Hall interior & exterior	2024						6		6
Queens Road, Buckhurst Hill	2022				25				25
Town Mead, Orchard Gardens, Waltham Abbey	2023					6			6
Limes ANPR, Limes Avenue, Chigwell (Decommissioned November 2022)	2018								
Sun Street Library, Waltham Abbey (Decommissioned)	2015								
Hemnal Street Council Office (Decommissioned)	2017								
Hillhouse Leisure Centre	2019	10						11	21
Epping Leisure Centre (new)	2026								

Gutteridge Lane	2025							10	10
Debden Broadway expansion of existing scheme	2025							7	7
Non-Programmed Works	N/a	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35
MISCELLANEOUS CCTV SCHEMES		15	5	85	90	51	52	33	331
TOTAL GENERAL FUND SCHEMES		24	34	113	195	71	132	78	647
TOTAL ALL SCHEMES		91	74	118	210	106	183	153	935

It is important to note that although the Financial Forecast Table is used to inform the Funding Plan, an assessment will be made of those systems coming towards the end of their expected life to ensure that actual replacements/renewals are prioritised in the order of greatest need, and that renewals are only undertaken when they are required.

Safer Streets

Ninefields- Waltham Abbey

In summer 2022 the Council was successful in a bid to the Government support by the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) aimed to address crime and anti-social behaviour in Paternoster ward, Waltham Abbey. The bid resulted in £338,000 from the Home Office boosted by a further £169,000 from the EFDC.

The aim of the project was to improve the health and wellbeing of residents utilising a multi-agency “whole systems approach” recognising that health and wellbeing is affected by a wide range of factors. Serious violence, driven by county lines and drug dealing together with exploitation of vulnerable adults/children was a major concern. Closure Orders had been sought and applied to several properties in the ward. Recruitment of local children into gangs was also a major concern along with child exploitation.

A key element of the project was the installation of CCTV across Ninefields, this was one of the larger spends of the project and included 10 mobile cameras which could be moved to target changing hot spots and static CCTV cameras for the new play area. CCTV was also used to tackle fly-tipping across the estate. We were also able to repurpose an element of the funding allocated towards CCTV to install 21 new solar lights across the area to improve feelings of safety.

As part of the grant agreement the Council agreed to undertake the project management of the CCTV, making use of existing frameworks, including the purchase, installation and maintenance of the cameras over a period of 10 years.

Oakwood Hill - Loughton

A further Safer Streets Bid was submitted to the PFCC in Spring 2024 in respect of the area of Oakwood Hill which is within the Alderton Ward Loughton. The successful bid of £167,000 included £50,000 towards the cost installation and maintenance of CCTV cameras for the area. Progress has been rapid with the first tranche of cameras due to be installed in early Autumn.