

EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MINUTES

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Committee **Date:** Thursday, 16 March 2006

Place: Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.30 - 9.27 pm

Members Present: Councillors Mrs D Collins (Chairman) Mrs J H Whitehouse (Vice-Chairman) M Colling, K Faulkner, P Gode, Mrs A Grigg, F Maclaine, Mrs M Sartin, D Stallan, M Woollard and R Morgan

Other Councillors: Councillors Mrs J Davis, S Murray, Mrs P K Rush, K Wright and J M Whitehouse

Apologies: Councillors Mrs D Borton

Officers Present: J Scott (Joint Chief Executive), S G Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer)

By Invitation: S Williams and L Chalkley

93. MINUTES

The minutes for the meeting held on 2 March 2006 were not available for consideration.

94. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The meeting noted that Councillor R Morgan was substituting for Councillor Mrs D Borton.

95. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

96. LIAISON WITH LONDON UNDERGROUND LTD

The Chairman welcomed Simon Williams of London Underground Limited (LUL) who gave a presentation updating the Committee on the current situation of the modernisation of the local train stations and lines, hours of service and parking facilities at stations. The Chairman also welcomed Laura Chalkley, the Essex County Public Transport Manager who was also attending the meeting.

Mr Williams informed the committee that:

- On the Hainault to Woodford line there would be some extension to the operation hours that would come into effect in October of this year (the service to finish shortly after midnight);
- LUL were currently working on a design for Epping Car Park, but this was progressing slowly, a study had indicated they could fit in a maximum of 156 further spaces and that it would involve building a deck above the lower level of the car park;

- it was the responsibility of Metronet to clean the Epping approach road and that they clean it every day;
- 25% of the network would be accessible by 2012;
- 33% of stations would be step free by 2012 and LUL were working towards 50% by 2020;
- All staff were receiving disability awareness training;
- As for accessibility at Buckhurst Hill, this was not in the programme for updating by 2012, it was found to be cheaper to provide two lifts from the existing hall than install new halls;
- Help Points and induction loops were being installed in all stations.

In answer to Councillor Wrights submitted question of “under what circumstances would it be possible to reopen the Ongar-Epping Line incorporating a direct link into London?” Mr Williams replied that there was a substantial cost associated with the reopening of the Epping to Ongar line. The costs were to update the line itself, bring the stations into use as well as the ongoing operational costs. Also the line was not in LUL ownership. It was estimated that the anticipated demand would be below capital investment requirements and even with the anticipated new housing in the area.

In answer to Councillors Mrs Rush submitted question of “as our ticket office at Theydon Bois has now been closed for five weeks, what extra measures are being put into place to a) ensure that the ticket machine has sufficient change at all times and b) the Oyster Card top-up machine is working?” Mr Williams explained the ticket office at Theydon Bois is now closed due to the increase use of the Oyster card, but there would still be a member of staff on duty all day and a local newsagent was now licensed to sell tickets. He also reminded the Committee that from April, children under 11, accompanied by an adult would travel free. Mr Williams indicated that staff at Theydon Bois would issue more complicated travel tickets on request.

There followed a question and answer session between the Councillors and Mr Williams.

Q. A member queried the wisdom of putting up ticket prices especially for single journeys as an inducement to buy an Oyster card. Also why had the Buckhurst Hill reconstruction stopped.

A. Mr Williams replied that the ticket prices were the policy of the Mayor of London – you need only buy the Oyster Card once and then top it up when needed. It is Metronets’ responsibility to maintain Buckhurst Hill, he would try and get a copy of their feasibility study.

Q. Who was responsible for keeping the drains clean in Epping station? Also a shelter was put up last year but had now been taken away, why? The East of England Plan examination, not much has been said about the feasibility study?

A. Metronet was responsible for the drains in Epping. As for the shelter on Platform 1, I imagine it has been taken away temporarily to facilitate the current building work. As for the East of England plan consultation not sure how we are going about this. However, it was noted that the Epping-Ongar line was not an issue for them.

Q. Would Grange Hill/Chigwell include a lift? The stations also attracted a lot of commuter parking on the narrow roads. Could the BT storage area be used as a parking facility?

A. No, lifts are not included at Grange Hill/Chigwell. I do not know the status of the BT Land, but will look into it.

Q. The lights on the approach to Theydon Bois station were on during the daytime; there are no plastic bags for rubbish at the stations and how do I report faults?

A. I will look into the lights being left on, bins were withdrawn after the London bombings on the advice of the Police and you can report any faults to the station staff who will report it or call the customer services centre.

Q. Can you tell us the approximate capital costs for the Epping/Ongar line?

A. I have not got the figures with me, but leave me your contact details and I will get back to you.

Q. You said the contractor had three hours to clean up any reported areas, from when does the three hours start?

A. It starts from when it's reported to the call centre.

Q. It would be more beneficial if concessionary bus passes were extended to cover the Central Line.

A. This is funded by Local Councils, we are happy to do it if they want to take it forward.

Q. Plans for work on Buckhurst Hill Station were drawn up 4 years ago, why has nothing happened so far. Also CCTV cameras were to be set up in the underpass, but this is not now happening. There should be liaison between LUL and Epping DC over the Epping /Ongar line, this could solve a lot of the commuter traffic problems.

A. I will look at the Buckhurst Hill situation. The CCTV will happen with the programmed modernisation project. And I will also look at the Epping /Ongar line suggestion.

The Chairman thanked Simon Williams for his presentation and for answering the Committee's questions. It was noted that Laura Chalkley wished to attend any other session held with LUL along with County Councillor C Pond.

97. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 2005/06 ANNUAL REPORT.

The Committee considered the draft annual report for Overview and Scrutiny. A number of minor amendments were made to the personnel of the panels and the following amendments were asked for:

- The full title of the Task and Finish panel on Local Development be used (Register of Development Proposals (incorporating Roads/Pavements and Parking in Residential Areas));
- Page 6 of the report – delete 'recommending that certain elements of it be supported' from first paragraph on that page;
- Change the word 'identified' to 'considered' in the last paragraph on page 8;
- To consider the wording of the last paragraph on page 8;
- To add in something about Housing Appeals Panel that was considered by the Constitutional Affairs Standing Panel;
- To add a sentence in the Environmental and Planning Standing Panel section about them looking at the Waste Strategy document;
- To add to the conclusion at the end of the report that feedback from the public would also be welcome.

Simon Hill told the meeting that there was scope for improving the final Task and Finish reports and publicising the work of the O&S. The annual report would be produced in a colour format, which the council could share with all the partners that O&S had worked with during the year.

The Chair asked Councillor Stallan if he would like to reconvene his review panel for one more meeting to see if the new O&S system had met its' objectives. Councillor

Stallan replied that he would gladly do so if the members of that panel were agreeable.

The committee wanted to express their thanks to the officers who produced the draft annual report for their hard work.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the draft annual report be amended as indicated and brought to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for final agreement; and
- (2) That the Scrutiny Review Panel for Overview and Scrutiny arrangements be reconvened for one meeting to review the outcome of the new Overview and Scrutiny System.

98. WORK PROGRAMME MONITORING

The Committee considered the work programme for next year and new requests made by members and officers. The Committee gave initial consideration to how these requests would be met. They agreed that some of the standing panels should be renamed and that five new Task and Finish (T&F) panels be set up. The Travellers T&F panel convened in 2005-06 was to continue until it had completed its brief.

Democratic Services Officers were requested to work up arrangements and timescales for the new T&F panels.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the following Task and Finish panels be disbanded as they had completed their original reviews:
 - (i) Externally Funded Leisure Services and Youth Provision;
 - (ii) Register of Local Development Proposals (incorporating roads/pavements and parking in residential areas);
 - (iii) Member Training;
 - (iv) Local Area Agreement for Essex.
- (2) That the draft work programme be agreed and the following changes be made to the standing Panels:
 - (i) The Housing Standing Panel to remain unchanged.
 - (ii) To rename the Constitutional Affairs Standing Panel to the Constitutional and Members Services Standing Panel.
 - (iii) As work for E-Government is now concluded, that the panel should be renamed the Customer Services and ICT Standing Panel, to take in and monitor work on the new Customer Contact Centre.

- (iv) The Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel to remain the same but will also look at and monitor the Local Area Agreements.
 - (v) The Environmental and Planning Services Standing Panel will consider monitoring enforcement figures/outcomes from Planning every 3 to 4 months (to be decided). Also to be added will be 'ongoing travellers issues' to consider a new county paper on traveller sites to be situated in the district.
- (3) That the following new Task and Finish Panels be set up:
- (i) A Leisure Task and Finish Panel set up to review, in this order:
 - a) Future Management of Waltham Abbey Sports Centre;
 - b) Review of the Future Management of the Roding Valley Meadows Local Nature Reserve;
 - c) Review of Arts Development in the District; and
 - d) District Council's Role and involvement in Outdoor and Community Events.
 - (ii) A Town Centre and Car Parks Task and Finish Panel set up to review the future development of town centres in the district and the role of car parks and parking in general plays in the success or otherwise of town centres.
 - (iii) A Crime and Disorder Task and Finish Panel to review new legislation (Crime and Disorder Act) coming into force in the next year.
 - (iv) A Local Strategic Partnership Task and Finish Panel to consider the recent Government consultative paper 'Local Strategic Partnerships – shaping their future.'
 - (v) An Elderly and Disabled Task and Finish Panel to consider the services provided by this council and associated voluntary agencies to the elderly and disabled of the district.

99. HOUSING APPEALS PANEL - TITLE, TERMS OF REFERENCE AND PROCEDURE

The committee considered the recommended alterations to operations to the Housing Appeals Panel, which had been considered by the Constitutional Affairs Standing Panel. The Committee also considered additional recommendations directly from the Housing Appeals Panel.

RESOLVED:

That a report be submitted to the Council recommending:

- (a) that the Panel be renamed "Housing Appeals and Review Panel";
- (b) that references in the Panel's terms of reference to 'appeal' and 'appellant' in homelessness cases be replaced with the words 'application', 'review' and 'applicant', as appropriate;

- (c) that the written representations procedure be discontinued;
- (d) that persons be strongly advised to appear before the Panel in order to ensure that all the relevant facts are made known;
- (e) that the appropriate officers be required to attend all meetings to present their case, whether or not the person applying to the Panel is in attendance, so that the Panel is able to examine matters in detail by asking questions and seeking clarification of the issues;
- (f) that consequential changes be made to the Panel's Terms of Reference in the Constitution.
- (g) that the requirements regarding substitutes be amended to read:
"each political group represented on the Panel shall be required to nominate the equivalent number of substitutes to cover for any member of the Panel who is unavailable;
- (h) that the reference to meetings not being held in the absence of both the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Panel be removed; and
- (i) that the insertion of a requirement that in the absence of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, a Chairman be appointed from the members (not substitutes) present at the meeting.

CHAIRMAN