

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND PLANNING SERVICES STANDING
SCRUTINY PANEL
HELD ON THURSDAY, 26 APRIL 2007
IN MEMBERS ROOM, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.30 - 10.30 PM**

Members Present: Councillor Mrs P Smith (Epping Upland Parish Council) (Chairman), D Kelly (Vice-Chairman), D Bateman, Mrs D Borton, Mrs A Cooper, A Lee, Mrs P Richardson, Mrs L Wagland, Mrs J H Whitehouse and J Wyatt

Other members present: K Angold-Stephens, R Frankel and Mrs M Sartin

Apologies for Absence: D Jacobs, G Mohindra and Mrs A Grigg

Officers Present J Gilbert (Head of Environmental Services), J Preston (Head of Planning and Economic Development) and Z Folley (Democratic Services Assistant)

Also in attendance:

1. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

It was reported that Councillor Mrs J H Whitehouse was substituting Councillor D Jacobs.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None reported.

3. NOTES OF LAST MEETING - 16 JANUARY 2007

Noted subject to the inclusion of Councillor Batemans comments on the need for rail transport links from the South of the District to Stansted Airport in minute 34 (East of England Plan). It was clarified that the 'strategic network' meant motorways.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE / WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel consider their work plan.

Item 2 (New Local Development Scheme). The scheme was awaiting the final version of the East of England Plan. The Framework was to replace the Local Plan and would be submitted to plenty of Member meetings.

Item 4 (East of England Plan). Agreed that this should read 'Final Version'. The time table for this was outlined. It was anticipated that the government would issue the final version in June 2007.

Item (7) Ongoing Traveller Issues. Members had authorised some top level clearance work for the Paynes Lane, Nazeing Traveller site but there were risks attached to this. Thus, further consideration now needed to be given to this area. The

Panel needed to receive further information on these issues at a future meeting. Reference was also made to recent discussions between the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Economic Development and the County on traveller issues.

5. ISSUES IN RURAL AREAS - FOCUS DAY - 10 MARCH 2007

The Head of Planning and Economic Development reported details of the Focus Day held on 10 March 2007 to scope and identify ways of addressing pressures in rural areas. He reminded the meeting that an independent facilitator had been appointed to facilitate the day. However, his report of events had not yet been circulated, due to sickness absence, but it should be made available shortly.

The meeting was held on a Saturday and was well attended by both local members from EFDC and the County, including three EFDC Portfolio Holders, representatives from residents groups, Dobbs Weir, the Police and the West Essex Area Highways Manager, Davina Millership. The timetable involved a round table discussion.

Those present thought that the style of the event was good and should be used again. This method of consultation should be used again.

It was noted that the facilitators report would provide an independent assessment of the issues explored at the day. When available, it would be circulated to the participants, Members and be considered by this Panel who would then produce an action plan identifying how the key actions were to be pursued. The Panel stressed the need for this action.

It was questioned whether a special meeting of the Panel should be arranged, if practical prior to the next scheduled meeting of the Panel on 26 June 2007 for the consideration of the report. It was also agreed that the facilitator should circulate the document as it was their work.

ACTION:

- (1) Head of Planning Services to ensure facilitators report is circulated to Members when available.**
- (2) Democratic Services/Lead Officers/Chairman to identify suitable date for special meeting of Panel.**

6. PARKING ON GRASS VERGES/ PARKING IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Members were reminded that the Panel had been tasked by the OSC with monitoring the recommendations of the 2005 Task and Finish Panel on residential parking and identifying measures, where necessary, for ensuring they were actioned. This had stemmed from two requests for the 2007/08 OS work plan submitted by Councillors Frankel and Angold - Stephens seeking further consideration of the many problems around residential parking in the District. The bids together with the final report and recommendations of the 2005 Panel were before Members.

The Councillors outline their reasons for their requests as follows:

- (a) not a lot of the recommendations of the 2005 review had been implemented. It was initially envisaged that a District forum would be set up for prioritising local schemes however this had not happened;

- (b) there was not much in the report on cross - overs on non housing owned land. Consideration could be given to a charging regime for off street parking provision in view of the need to increase provision;
- (c) an up-to-date database had now been set up for schemes on housing land but there was still no forum for non Council –owned land. A sum of 200,000 per annum had been allocated for traffic management matters consideration could be given to identifying and ordering priorities for this. The LSA was to be reviewed to assess its value. This should provide an opportunity to see whether the recommendations could be incorporated into the document;
- (d) reference was made to on street parking problems in front of two storey flats in Chigwell where the ownership arrangements had prevented action to deal with the problems. In Grange Crescent, on street parking in private roads obstructed the road and emergency vehicles. Requests had been made for parking permits for this area but little progress had been made with this. In areas outside the District, steps had been taken to tarmac over grass verges to create more space;
- (e) concern was expressed at dropped kerbs that covered the entire frontage of a property. It was asked who should be contacted about such incidences? Were conditions attached to planning consents for garage conversions to ensure there was space for parking on the property concerned and that this was used? The Head of Environmental Services agreed to report back housing policy/County County policy on the width and depth of vehicles cross - overs; Could new byelaws be created to deal with these matters?
- (f) it appeared that the aims of the 2004 LSA/new highways agreements to improve the standard of highways were not being met. Steps should be taken to monitor the process and check for and take up any breeches of it. The issues was whether the Council should run local highways services itself. Scepticism was expressed at the value of steps to improve liaison over services as per paragraph (a) above. Instead consideration should be given to ways of exercising some control over the delivery of local services to secure practical results. There were difficulties with getting a response from the County Highways Office, thus solution needed to be found to resolve the difficulties.

The Head of Environmental Services clarified that the LSA had not yet been signed. The agreement would be reviewed to assess its value. A report would be submitted to the June 2007 Cabinet on this review. This would provide Members with an opportunity to feed their views into the process. The recent appointment of the new County Portfolio Holder for Highways would also provide a chance to consider issues afresh. The LSA was a mechanism for discussion and liaison on the service, not a means of delivering them. EFDC had continually pressed for more resources for Highways. There was a meeting planned for next week with EFDC and County officers and Portfolio Holders to discuss the communication arrangements for Highway Services.

A list of the existing Parking Schemes could be made available.

In relation to progress with the recommendation, the Head of Environmental Services updated members on the current position for each one of the recommendations. In

relation to recommendation 2 on the need for OSC to routinely monitor the Highways LSA, he advised that this was being carried out by the Committee which had recently held a discussion on the service provided by Highways and local concerns with the West Essex Area Highways Manager, Davina Millership. In relation to recommendation 3 on the need to establish a local forum for discussion on highways, it was reported that the Highways Manager was prepared to set up an EFDC Member liaison forum to discuss matters. Members were invited to consider this option.

It was also noted that the residents parking schemes in Epping would be completed by May 2007, Buckhust Hill by July/August. Part of the the Loughton Scheme had been completed as part of the Loughton Town Centre Enhancement Scheme. Should a database be established for priorities on non housing land then resources would need to be created for this.

In relation to enforcement (recommendations 16-17) it was noted that the Council did enforce yellow lines but had no powers to deal with people parking on pavements and obstruction which were police matters. There was a verge parking policy but this was out of date and did not cover current issues. Agreed that this be made available to the Panel.

EFDC had no resources for any highways work, save those set aside for the existing parking review schemes, following the transferral of the highways function to the County as the Highways Authority. New money therefore would need to be made available if Members wished to expand the highways services delivered by the Council to address the problems regarding off – street parking. Services might need to be bought in from elsewhere. Aside from asking for this additional provision, the Panel could seek to influence the shape of exiting highway commitments to achieve their aims when the Capital programme was reviewed.

It was asked whether the Council's Legal Services could be approached to ascertain the legal position regarding the Council's powers in relation to the new Highways agreement.

The Head of Planning and Economic Development referred to a recent Local Strategic Partnership Away day. At the conference, it was noted that Local Authorities would be expected to provide a delivery plan for infrastructure for projects. This would have a bearing on how Highways would undertake work for such scheme.

Agreed that a position report be produced for the next meeting detailing:

- Current position for issues/recommendations made by 2005 review including commuter parking
- Details of current EFDC highways schemes – budget provision
- Legal issues regarding new highways agreement
- Existing Policy on Parking on Grass Verges.
- Summary of what local plan says in relation to issues

Also **agreed** that

The Head of Environmental Services agreed to report back housing policy/County County policy on width and depth of vehicles cross overs – Members Bulletin

ACTION:

Head of Environmental Services to make available information requested for next meeting.

7. CLEAN NEIGHBOURHOODS AND ENVIRONMENT ACT 2005 - IMPLEMENTATION OF PROVISIONS

The Head of Environmental Services referred to the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005.

It was that the Cabinet had authorised the Head of Environmental Services to carry out the powers in the Act which were relevant to the District but had not yet determined how they should be used. Since that time the Rodgers Review on national enforcement priorities had been circulated. The Executive Summary for which was before Members. The full report was in the Members Room. This put forward suggested priorities for the various enforcement activities of Local Authorities. The Council was obliged to have regard to this when considering its own priorities. The Panel was asked to consider whether they wished to look in depth at the review, before considering what powers in the act the Council should enforce. Alternatively, the Panel could just focus on the issues raised in the Act.

A Member suggested that the main problem for residents was litter. The Panel should have regard to the Rodgers Review to satisfy best value but should concentrate mostly on ways of making the District cleaner. It should be very much about identifying EFDC's own set of priorities. A small Sub – Group of the Panel should be arranged to give the issues in-depth consideration. An item should be put in the Members Bulletin to report this step and ask invite Members to join the Sub – Group.

8. MINUTES OF WEST ESSEX WASTE JOINT MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The meeting considered the minutes of the meetings held of the Joint Committee held on 26 January and 26 April 2007.

The Head of Environmental Services outlined the process for the County Waste Strategy, in which he explained the Outline Business Case (OBC), KAT Kerbside Analysis Toolmodelling (KAT) and the Baswood Point (which was a grouping made up of Basildon, Brentwood and Castle Point) for the purposes of the exercise.

The system design for the waste management strategy would probably be based on KAT modelling outcomes. There were issues around whether to invest in collection systems or disposal treatments. There had been a reconsideration of the OBC and there remained £90 million of PFI allocated to the process but DEFRA and the Treasury needed to be assured and convinced that the Districts and the County were as one on the strategy. The Memorandum of Understanding had been updated and all authorities were requested to agree it and sign it by the end of July 2007.

Later on in the year the Council would need to sign a legally binding document called the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA). This would prescribe what recyclables EFDC collected and how, where it would take them, what performance it should achieve, funding levels from County, the infrastructure to be made available and who would pay for it.

There had been some discussion at Management Board about the waste strategy process and the IAA where it was agreed that a single issue Council meeting be held on the issues in July 2006. This would give Member a better understanding of what it involved, the reasons for entering into the agreement. It was intended that this meeting would be open to the public and would be an information session for questions and answers on the process. No decision would be made at this stage. Decisions would be made later on in the year.

9. REPORTS TO BE MADE TO THE NEXT MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Chairman to brief OSC on tonight discussion covering decisions to:

Arrange and extra meeting of the Panel before next scheduled meeting on 26 June 2007 for consideration on report on focus day.

Request for position report on issues raised by requests on residential Parking and options for pursuing local highways concerns.

Arrange Informal Sub group of the Panel to consider in detail the measures available for cleaning up the District - Clean Neighbourhoods Act.

10. FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that the next meeting of the Panel would be held on 26 June 2007 at 7.30 in CR1 and then on

5 September
29 October
20 December 2007
28 February
23 April 2008

11. LAST MEETING OF THE YEAR

The Chairman noted that this was the last meeting of the Panel for this Council year. She thanked the Panel for their regular attendance at meetings and thanked the officers for all their support at meetings. She also noted that over the course of the year, the Panel had been very well attending by Members.