

EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COUNCIL MINUTES

Committee: Council **Date:** 22 April 2008

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.30 - 8.50 pm

Members Present: Councillors Mrs C Pond (Chairman), J Knapman (Vice-Chairman), K Angold-Stephens, R Bassett, D Bateman, Mrs P Brooks, K Chana, R Church, M Cohen, M Colling, Mrs D Collins, Mrs A Cooper, R Frankel, T Frankland, Mrs R Gadsby, P Gode, A Green, Mrs A Grigg, Mrs A Haigh, Mrs H Harding, J Hart, Ms J Hedges, D Jacobs, D Kelly, R Law, Mrs J Lea, J Markham, Mrs M McEwen, G Mohindra, R Morgan, S Murray, G Pritchard, Mrs P Richardson, B Rolfe, Mrs P K Rush, B Sandler, Mrs M Sartin, P Spencer, Mrs P Smith, D Stallan, Ms S Stavrou, H Ulkun, Mrs L Wagland, Mrs E Webster, C Whitbread, Mrs J H Whitehouse, J M Whitehouse and J Wyatt

Apologies: Councillors Mrs S Clapp, P McMillan, T Richardson, P Turpin and M Woollard

Officers Present: D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive), R Palmer (Director of Finance and ICT), I Willett (Assistant to the Chief Executive), G Lunnun (Assistant Director Democratic Services), S G Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer), A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer) and J Boreham (Assistant Public Relations and Information Officer)

110. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman made a short address to remind all present that the meeting would be broadcast on the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

111. FORMER COUNCILLOR KEN EASLEA

It was with much sadness that the Chairman informed the Council of the death of former Councillor Ken Easlea on 7 March 2008. The Chairman announced that Ken Easlea had represented the Lambourne Ward on the District Council between 1995 and 2002. He had been Vice-Chairman of the Staff Appeals Panel in 2000/01, Vice-Chairman of Plans Sub-Committee 'C' in 2000/01 and Vice-Chairman of Area Plans Sub-Committee 'C' in 2001/02.

All present stood for a minute's silence in tribute to the memory of Ken Easlea.

Following the Chairman's announcement, Councillors D Jacobs and S Murray paid tribute to Ken Easlea.

112. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2008 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

113. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

114. ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Chairman's Announcements

(i) Engagements

The Chairman reported on her attendance at (a) the official opening of Clifford Close, Matching Tye (a rural housing scheme to assist local people to enter home ownership); (b) a function for runners up for the Citizen of the Year Award 2008; (c) visit to the Ninefields Senior Citizens Club where she had presented the Good Neighbour Award 2008 to Eileen Wilson; (d) the launch of the Ongar Tree Strategy and (e) a reception for the Royal Anglian Regiment hosted by the Chairman of Essex County Council.

Members noted that the Chairman of Essex County Council had invited councillors of all authorities in Essex to contribute personally to a memorial fund for the Royal Anglian Regiment.

(ii) Civic Awards Event

The Chairman thanked members who had supported her at the recent Civic Awards Event.

(iii) Chairman's Charity

The Chairman reported that she had presented a cheque to the Friends of St Margaret's Hospital on 12 March 2008 and that two voice boxes had been acquired for the Speech Therapy Department.

(iv) Charity Walk

The Chairman encouraged members to join her on a walk through Loughton on 27 April 2008 commencing at 2.00 p.m. from the Loughton Methodist Church.

(v) Flowers

The Chairman announced that the floral display from tonight's meeting would be sent to St Margaret's Hospital.

(b) Leader's Report

Councillor Mrs D Collins reported on her attendance at a Harlow Renaissance seminar on Education. She advised that head teachers of secondary schools in the Epping Forest District had invited her and the Deputy Leader to visit their schools in order to discuss matters of concern.

Councillor Mrs Collins reported on her attendance at a meeting at the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority regarding the Olympic White Water Canoeing venue. She advised that this was a very interesting project which would provide a good facility close to the District boundary after the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Council was advised that Councillor Mrs Collins had attended and spoken at a recent planning inquiry concerning proposed development in Nazeing.

The Leader advised that she had attended the meeting of the Essex Partnership Forum earlier in the day at which proposals for the Local Area Agreement 2 had been progressed. She agreed to update members on further developments regarding the Agreement.

The Council was advised that the Leader of Essex County Council had promised £100,000 from his Contingency Fund towards The Broadway, Loughton Town Centre Enhancement Scheme.

(c) Councillors not seeking re-election

The Council noted that the following Councillors were not seeking re-election on 1 May 2008:

Councillors R D'Souza, P McMillan, Mrs P K Rush and M Woollard.

The Chairman thanked those members for their service to the Council. Members noted that Councillors D'Souza, McMillan and Mrs Rush had each served the Council for a period of four years and that Councillor Woollard had been a member for nine years.

Councillor Mrs D Collins added her thanks for the work undertaken by Councillor D'Souza. Councillor Mrs A Haigh drew attention to the work which had been undertaken by Councillor Woollard. Councillors J M Whitehouse and D Stallan acknowledged the work undertaken by Councillor Mrs Rush. Councillor S Murray acknowledged the work undertaken by Councillors D'Souza, McMillan and Mrs Rush.

115. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

No public questions had been received for consideration at the meeting.

116. REPORTS FROM THE LEADER, CHAIRMAN OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

The Council received reports (circulated) from the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Community Wellbeing Portfolio Holder, the Environmental Protection Portfolio Holder, the Housing Portfolio Holder, the Leisure and Young

People Portfolio Holder and the Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder.

117. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS WITHOUT NOTICE

(a) Schools in the District

By Councillor S Murray to Councillor Mrs D Collins, Leader of the Council.

Earlier at this meeting you advised us of your proposed visits to schools in the District. Can you assure us that during those visits you will celebrate their successes and the things they do well in addition to discussing matters of concern.

Response by Councillor Mrs D Collins, Leader of the Council

Yes, I will. Our aim is to secure the highest possible standards for our schools and we hope that we can help to make a difference.

(b) West Hatch High School - Admissions

By Councillor Mrs A Haigh to Councillor Mrs D Collins, Leader of the Council

Can I request that when you meet representatives of West Hatch School you raise the issue again that over 59% of their intake is non-Essex pupils. This school has a high reputation and a sixth form and if we are looking for highly trained people within our District we must do everything we can to ensure that young people from the District can attend this school.

Response by Councillor Mrs D Collins, Leader of the Council

Yes, I agree with you and will raise this issue. Chigwell councillors are very concerned about the inability of Chigwell young people to get into the school. It is unfortunate that over the years the school has tended to take more children from Greater London. We will press the school to take more young people from this District. The presence of a sixth form gives even more reason to press for young people in this District to be able to attend the school.

(c) Stray Dogs – Collection at Weekends

By Councillor Mrs A Haigh to Councillor Mrs M Sartin, Environmental Protection Portfolio Holder

A resident of Loughton found a dog roaming on a Sunday and telephoned the PDSA. She was advised that organisation offered no service on a Sunday and I understand that the Council currently offers no service for the collection of stray dogs on a Sunday. Fortunately in that case the resident kept the dog overnight and the dog has now been returned to its owner. What plans does the Council have for collecting stray dogs on Sundays.

Response by Councillor Mrs M Sartin, Environmental Protection Portfolio Holder

The Government has changed responsibility for accepting stray dogs. From 6 April 2008 the Police no longer accept stray dogs taken to Police Stations and the responsibility for dealing with strays now rests solely with local authorities. At

present, as a result of a lack of funding from central Government, residents who find a stray dog out of office hours are being asked to keep hold of it until a member of the Animal Welfare Team is able to go out and collect it. This is a situation which we are monitoring and if members become aware of issues such as the one described by Councillor Mrs Haigh I would appreciate them advising me so that we can establish the extent of the problem.

(d) Street Signs – Oakwood Hill Estate, Loughton

By Councillor R Law to Councillor D Stallan, Housing Portfolio Holder

Street signs on the Oakwood Hill Estate are missing or vandalised. Can the Portfolio Holder advise when they will be replaced.

Response by Councillor D Stallan, Housing Portfolio Holder

If Councillor Law can provide details of the locations of the signs I will pursue this matter with officers in the Housing Directorate.

(e) Bus Stopping Places – The Broadway, Loughton

By Councillor K Angold-Stephens to Councillor D Stallan, Housing Portfolio Holder

In view of the inconvenience to the public as a result of buses stopping in Vere Road, and the Housing Portfolio Holder decision taken on 21 December 2007 allowing buses to wait on the garage forecourt in Burton Road, when will instructions be given to the bus companies that waiting in Burton Road is acceptable.

Response by Councillor D Stallan, Housing Portfolio Holder

If Councillor Angold-Stephens can provide me with further details after the meeting I will pursue this matter.

(f) Epping Forest College

By Councillor K Angold-Stephens to Councillor Mrs D Collins, Leader of the Council

Is the Leader of the Council aware that the interim Head of Epping Forest College will be invited to attend a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and is she also aware that he is completely revising the curriculum for the College.

Response by Councillor Mrs D Collins, Leader of the Council

Yes, that is helpful and I will try to attend the appropriate meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. We await with interest the results of the work he is undertaking.

(g) Western Avenue/Centre Avenue, Epping

By Councillor B Rolfe to Councillor D Stallan, Housing Portfolio Holder

Whilst campaigning recently in Western Avenue and Centre Avenue, Epping I received a number of complaints from residents about the poor state of the green

areas, many of which have ruts and broken kerbs. Will the Portfolio Holder investigate this problem and take action to improve the appearance of the areas.

Response by Councillor D Stallan, Housing Portfolio Holder

I will take up the matter with officers in the Housing Directorate and I will advise Councillor Rolfe of the outcome. If any other member would like to be kept aware of the situation I am happy to copy them into my response to Councillor Rolfe. In the meantime I would ask Councillor Rolfe to advise the residents that the problem is being investigated.

(h) Food Waste Collection

By Councillor D Jacobs to Councillor Mrs M Sartin, Environmental Protection Portfolio Holder

In view of the need to alleviate landfill charges when will this Council introduce some form of food waste collection.

Response by Councillor M Sartin, Environmental Protection Portfolio Holder

The Waste Management Partnership Board established under the Waste Management Contract will be discussing this matter as one of its priorities.

(i) Nottingham Declaration

By Councillor J M Whitehouse to Councillor Mrs D Collins, Leader of the Council

It is now twelve months since the Council adopted the Nottingham Declaration. Can the Leader of the Council advise on what steps have been taken by the Council to reduce carbon emissions.

Response by Councillor Mrs D Collins, Leader of the Council

We are aware of the need to pursue this matter. It was taken into account during a recent inspection by the Audit Commission in the Environment and Street Scene Directorate. We have made a start by taking steps to save energy, use the right fuels and recycle more in the Civic Offices. The new Safer Greener Cleaner Scrutiny Panel will be looking at the best ways to proceed.

(j) West Hatch High School – Catchment Area

By Councillor D Bateman to Councillor Mrs D Collins, Leader of the Council

Is there any possibility of increasing the catchment area for West Hatch School. Grange Hill is close to the catchment area but young people have found it very difficult to get into the school in recent years.

Response by Councillor Mrs D Collins, Leader of the Council

This has been a difficulty for several years and it is a matter that we will raise with the representatives of the school at our forthcoming meeting. I am not sure why it has been a problem for so long and I know that the County Council has attempted to resolve the issue in the past. We will do all we can for the benefit of young people in

this District. However, we do not have the power to alter catchment areas. This is something which is the responsibility of the County Council.

(k) Stray Dogs – Budget

By Councillor S Murray to Councillor Mrs D Collins, Leader of the Council

I understand that the Council has been provided with only an additional £8,000 from central Government in order to provide a service for the collection of stray dogs. The Council cannot provide an adequate service with such a derisory sum and I wonder if the Leader of the Council intends to make appropriate representations to central Government.

Response by Councillor Mrs D Collins, Leader of the Council.

Yes, we have been expected to take over this service with very little funding. We will endeavour to put some additional money into the service, if necessary. I agree it is a good idea to make representations to central Government and I will write expressing our disappointment about the amount of funding made available.

(l) Animal Welfare Section

By Councillor J Knapman to Councillor Mrs M Sartin, Environmental Protection Portfolio Holder.

Would you pass on my thanks to officers in the Animal Welfare Section for the efficient manner in which they attended to a badly injured fox recently.

Response by Councillor Mrs M Sartin, Environmental Protection Portfolio Holder.

Yes, I will be happy to pass on your thanks.

118. MOTIONS

(a) Multi-Faith Forum

Moved by Councillor Mrs A Haigh and seconded by Councillor B Sandler

“That this Council -

- (a) notes the establishment of a Multi-Faith Forum representing a wide range of religious organisations and individuals in the District;
- (b) notes that Councillors Mrs A Haigh and B Sandler have been formally appointed by the Forum as Chairman and Vice-Chairman;
- (c) acknowledges that this Forum enhances the scope of the Local Strategic Partnership in its role of bringing together the widest range of community agencies and partners to assist in the provision of services in the District;
- (d) notes that it is the wish of the Forum to work with the Local Strategic Partnership to promote community events which are designed to foster cross-faith understanding and community cohesion through dialogue, education and community events; and
- (e) resolves to provide moral support and encouragement to this important initiative and to engage with the Forum as a consultee”.

Carried

Motion as first moved **ADOPTED**

RESOLVED:

That this Council -

- (a) notes the establishment of a Multi-Faith Forum representing a wide range of religious organisations and individuals in the District;
- (b) notes that Councillors Mrs A Haigh and B Sandler have been formally appointed by the Forum as Chairman and Vice-Chairman;
- (c) acknowledges that this Forum enhances the scope of the Local Strategic Partnership in its role of bringing together the widest range of community agencies and partners to assist in the provision of services in the District;
- (d) notes that it is the wish of the Forum to work with the Local Strategic Partnership to promote community events which are designed to foster cross-faith understanding and community cohesion through dialogue, education and community events; and
- (e) resolves to provide moral support and encouragement to this important initiative and to engage with the Forum as a consultee.

(b) Electoral Rolls – Release to Candidates

Moved by Councillor T Frankland and seconded by Councillor R Law.

“This Council –

- (a) notes that the current practice of the Registration Officer/Returning Officer is to supply a copy of the Electoral Roll for the ward in question once the nomination papers of candidates have been approved;

(b) agrees that it would assist the democratic process and candidates to complete their nomination papers if the Electoral Roll were released when nomination papers are issued to prospective candidates; and

(c) asks the Registration Officer/Returning Officer to check the legal requirements, and consult the Electoral Commission for advice, and consider releasing those registers at an earlier stage once candidates have publicly declared themselves as candidates but before the formal submission of nomination papers”.

Lost

RESOLVED:

That no further action be taken in relation to this matter.

119. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS UNDER NOTICE

There were no questions asked by members under this item.

120. REPORT OF THE CABINET

(a) External Funding – Portfolio Holder Responsibility

Councillor Mrs D Collins, Leader of the Council and Chairman of the Cabinet invited the Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Support Services Portfolio Holder to present this report of the Cabinet.

(Mover: Councillor C Whitbread – Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Services Portfolio Holder)

The Portfolio Holder submitted a report proposing Portfolio Holder responsibility for external funding.

Report as first moved **ADOPTED**

RESOLVED:

That external funding form part of the Finance, Performance Management and Corporate Support Services Portfolio.

121. REPORTS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(a) Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 – Local Authority Executives

(Mover: Councillor K Angold-Stephens, Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee).

Councillor Angold-Stephens submitted a report following consideration by the Constitution and Members' Services Standing Scrutiny Panel and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the choice of Executive for the Council.

Report as first moved **ADOPTED**

RESOLVED:

(1) That this Council continues to operate a Leader and Cabinet Executive and rejects the option contained in the 2007 Act for an elected Mayor and Cabinet Executive;

(2) That the existing Executive Constitution be varied in accordance with statutory requirements and reviewed at a later stage once Government regulations have been published so that a public statement regarding changes to the Executive Constitution can be prepared, a timetable set and transitional arrangements agreed; and

(3) That the existing provisions of the Executive Constitution regarding the removal of the Leader of the Council by resolution of the Council be continued as part of any variations in the Constitution subject to further consideration of Government regulations once published.

(b) Annual Report – 2007/08

(Mover: Councillor R Morgan, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee).

Councillor Morgan submitted the annual Overview and Scrutiny report.

Councillor Morgan thanked the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, Members of the Committee and Panels, and officers for their support during the past year. Councillor Mrs Harding thanked Councillor Morgan for the way in which he had chaired meetings of the Committee.

Report as first moved **ADOPTED**

RESOLVED:

That the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Scrutiny Standing Panels and the Task and Finish Panels during the past municipal year as detailed in the annual report be noted.

122. REPORT OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

(a) Annual Report – 2007/08

(Mover: Councillor J Knapman, Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee)

Councillor Knapman submitted the first annual report of the Audit and Governance Committee.

Councillor Knapman thanked the other District Councillors on the Committee, the co-opted members and the officers for the support they had given him during the past year.

Councillor Mrs Haigh thanked Councillor Knapman for the way in which he had chaired the meetings of the Committee and asked him to write to the co-opted members expressing thanks for their constructive comments and attention to detail.

Report as first moved **ADOPTED**

RESOLVED:

(1) That the first annual report of the Audit and Governance Committee 2007/08 be noted; and

(2) That the Chairman of the Committee write to the co-opted members expressing thanks for their contributions during the last year.

123. COUNCILLOR P HOUSE

The Council noted that on 14 March 2008, P House had given notice of resignation from the office of District Councillor for the Loughton Forest Ward of the District. Members noted that his normal term of office would have expired in May 2010. Notice had been received signed by two electors requesting an election to fill the casual vacancy and an election would be held at the same time as the scheduled elections on 1 May 2008.

The Chairman of the Council and Councillor Angold-Stephens thanked P House for the service he had given to the Council.

RESOLVED:

That the resignation of P House as a District Councillor with effect from 14 March 2008 be noted.

124. COUNCILLOR P MCMILLAN

The Council was advised that on 22 February 2008, Councillor P McMillan had given notice in accordance with Regulation 10(b) of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 of resignation from the Conservative Group of the Council with effect from that date. Members noted that Councillor McMillan had also advised that he did not intend to join another political group and wished to be referred to as an "Independent Councillor".

The Council was further informed that Councillor McMillan had given notice of resignation as Chairman of Area Plans Sub-Committee West and as a member of certain Committees, a Sub-Committee and Panels.

RESOLVED:

(1) That Councillor P McMillan's notice of resignation from the Conservative Group of the Council and his wish to be referred to as an "Independent Councillor" be noted;

(2) That Councillor McMillan's resignation as Chairman of Area Plans Sub-Committee West and as a member of the following Committees, Sub-Committees and Panels be noted:

(a) District Development Control Committee;

(b) Licensing Committee;

(c) Licensing Sub-Committee;

(d) Provision of Value for Money within Planning Services Task and Finish Panel; and

(e) Town Centre and Car Parks Task and Finish Panel.

125. COUNCILLOR MRS J HEDGES

The Council was advised that on 22 April 2008, Councillor Mrs J Hedges had given notice in accordance with the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 of resignation from the Liberal Democrats Group on the Council and a wish to join the Conservative Group. A further notice has been received dated 22 April 2008 signed by the Leader of the Conservative Group accepting Councillor Mrs Hedges as a member of that Group.

In accordance with Section 100(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, together with Paragraphs 6 and 25 of the Council's Procedure Rules, the Chairman had permitted on grounds of urgency, the inclusion of this item of business so that members were aware of the steps which had been taken.

RESOLVED:

That the decision of Councillor Mrs J Hedges to join the Conservative Group of the Council be noted.

126. JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

There were no reports from members under this item.

CHAIRMAN