

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Environmental and Planning Services Standing Scrutiny Panel **Date:** Monday, 29 October 2007

Place: Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.30 - 9.45 pm

Members Present: Mrs P Smith (Chairman), K Chana, Mrs A Cooper, R Bassett, P House, D Jacobs, G Pritchard, Mrs P Richardson, Mrs L Wagland and Mrs J H Whitehouse

Other Councillors: K Angold-Stephens, Mrs A Grigg, Mrs M Sartin and J M Whitehouse

Apologies: D Bateman, R Frankel and M Woollard

Officers Present: J Gilbert (Director of Environment and Street Scene), J Preston (Director of Planning and Economic Development), Ian White (Senior Planning Officer) and Z Folley (Democratic Services Assistant)

Also in attendance: D Forkin, Councillor A Anderson and Councillor Mrs D Borton

32. Substitute Members (Council Minute 39 - 23.7.02)

It was reported that Councillor K Chana was substituting for Councillor D Bateman Councillor Mrs J H Whitehouse was substituting for Councillor R Frankel and Councillor D Jacobs was substituting for M Woollard.

33. Declaration Of Interests

Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor R Bassett declared a personal interest in agenda item (Nazeing Action Plan – Progress Report) by virtue of being the Chairman of the Nazeing Action Group). He declared that his interest was not prejudicial and he would remain in the meeting.

34. Notes of the last meeting

Noted.

35. Terms of Reference / Work Programme

(a) Planning Performance – Monitoring of Statistics Enforcement Figures

The Panel considered the need for continued monitoring of the new arrangements for reporting the above in the Council Bulletin. Initially it was agreed that the arrangements should be subject to a six monthly review to ascertain Members views on the trial. Officers reported on the outcome of this exercise.

It was noted that the feedback revealed that Members were supportive of the arrangements. In view of this success the Panel supported the intention to continue to report the statistics in the Bulletin and concluded that there was no need to keep the merits of the approach under review.

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J Preston undertook to follow up a request made by a Member in June 2007 to the enforcement team about a matter of concern

(b) Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 – Implementation of provisions Item 6

Sub – Group held its first meeting on 18 October 2007.

ACTION:

Work Plan to be updated to reflect the above.

36. Parking Review - Highway Services Presentation

The Chairman introduced to the meeting Mr D Forkin, the Area Highways Manager for West Essex. Mr Forkin was in attendance to report on District Parking Issues and answers questions from Members. The agenda referred to a number of 'topical' issues of concern. Mr Forkin addressed these as follows:

(a) Congestion

Epping was currently experiencing high levels of 'traffic gridlock'. This was due to the work to repair the signals (the 'loops' in the carriageways) for the Traffic Lights in the area. The intention was to replace these as soon as possible.

The Director for Environment and Street Scene reported that part of the area had been declared an 'Air Quality Management Area' as it had breached air quality standards. This could be attributed to the increase in congestion. Equipment for this action had been set up in that area.

Mr Forkin agreed to arrange for an engineer to look at the traffic lights near St Margaret's Hospital, Epping to ensure both sides allow sufficient time for passing traffic.

A Member asked whether the County liaised with the London Borough of Redbridge to ensure a coordinated approach to highways services across the District. Concern had been expressed about the Boroughs efforts to ease congestion in the south of the District leading to London which was causing further congestion. Mr Forkin reported that the County was in the process of developing schemes to relieve congestion with neighbouring authorities.

A Member stressed the need for the details of schemes to be placed in the local newspapers of the areas affected and for closer cross border liaison between the Highway Authorities to facilitate this.

A Member referred to the Loughton Town Centre Enhancement Scheme and the 'five way light system' in the centre of the Town. He questioned whether the County should contribute to this matter to ease the situation. Mr Forkin shared these concerns and considered possible sources of funding for this work. One option was to fund this through the Locally Determined Budget.

It was noted that the County only used sign diversions for road closures and only closed classified roads where it was possible to divert the traffic affected onto a road of equal status (another classified road).

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(b) Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs)

Mr Forkin explained that this process was governed by legislation and was lengthy. The legislation required proposed TROs to be advertised in the local paper in two editions. A Member questioned this approach as local newspapers only reached a limited number of people. He suggested a leaflet detailing proposed TROs be distributed to every household to ensure everyone was made aware of the proposals. Proposed orders could also be advertised in the Forester Magazine. Mr Forkin advised that such changes would require a change in legislation.

It was noted that in June 2007, the service was transferred from the County's Transportation Service to its legal team. Initial feedback indicated that this move had substantially quickened the process. It was noted that the Legal Team were in the process of dealing with objections received to the outstanding cases. These were more time-consuming. The intention was to separate the workload to enable schemes with no objections to be sealed quickly. Clearing the backlog was a priority area. The Panel noted past concerns about the length of time taken to process TROs. The Panel stressed the need to focus on current problems and for the process to include informal consultation to see whether the issues were still relevant before any detailed work was undertaken. The costs of the process for making orders was considered.

Councillor Mrs L Wagland asked to receive details of the above matters for further consideration.

(c) Parking Reviews

Mr Forkin reported that ECC undertook minor parking reviews on an annual basis through their Locally Determined Budget. ECC did not match EFDC commitments in the area. EFDC commissioned all major reviews.

It was noted that all members had been invited to comment on the Epping Parking Review and received details of the work which was now being put into effect. The Cabinet sought comments from the local Members and Epping Town Council and amended the scheme to reflect these concerns.

It was intended that the scheme would be reviewed six months after the date of implementation (1 August 2007). Terms of Reference would be set for this work based on the feedback, to indicate, who would carry it out, make the decisions, and the resourcing implications.

It anticipated that the six – monthly review of the Buckhurst Hill Scheme would be a lengthy exercise and larger and more complex than initially anticipated in view of the scale and complexity of some of the concerns. ECC were in the process of collating feedback for these reviews. The concerns would then be assessed and prioritised.

(e) Parking on Estates and Grass Verges

It was explained that the new Traffic Management Act might decriminalise parking on grass verges and thus give Local Authorities new powers in relation to the areas.

Until then it was necessary to contact the Police to report incidences of footway parking as they had responsibility for such matters and could use the powers necessary for dealing with it.

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A Member expressed concern about incidents of pavement parking in Churchill Road, Ongar. Mr Forkin undertook to take this up and get back to the Member.

(f) Speed Management Policy

Mr Forkin drew attention to a recent Government Circular entitled 'Setting Local Speed Limits' which placed an onus on Local Authorities to review their speed management policy. The statement was available on the Website. The Panel noted the County's intention to review their current policy to ensure its new policy reflected the circular. It was suggested that this review be considered at a future meeting in the new year.

(g) Essex Freight Strategy

It was noted that the Traffic Management Team had yet to announce their timetable for the strategy. However, the County intended to consult extensively on it when available and to bring it to Members for consideration. Further details of this were included in the updated Nazeing Focus Day Action Plan

(h) Maintenance of the more minor roads

It was reported that the County was in the process of pulling together a forward programme (a 'Localism Agenda') for the above and invited Members to submit suggestion for inclusion in the scheme to ECC. The process was designed to enable local people to have influence over local schemes, however the details were not yet know. Mr Forkin also reported on their 'Footways Maintenance ' Programme which included plans for carriage ways and whole stretches of road.

Details of these Local schemes were circulated through the Members Bulletin on a regular basis.

(i) Communication with Harlow Based Offices – Points of Contact

Members could contact Highways in a number of ways and could also log issues through the Countys website. Trevor Baker managed the Epping Area and was supported by two engineers. Ken Barrett was the Enforcement Officer for Epping, thus any concerns about enforcement could be directed to him. Ian Hollingvale was the Senior Engineer. The establishment comprised officers with knowledge of the local area.

The Panel welcomed the additional funding that had been invested into Epping Forest over the last few months.

RESOLVED:

That Mr Forkin, the West Area Highways Manager be thanked for attending this meeting.

37. West Essex Area Joint Waste Committee - Notes of the last meeting held on 26 September 2007

The Panel considered the minutes.

Officers referred to the timetable for the Inter – Authority Agreements and explained the KAT modelling process, the outcome of which was to brought to Members in due course.

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The Joint Committee had also agreed that the Partner Authorities of the Joint Committee would share with each other their respective results from the KAT modelling exercises.

38. Nazeing Action Plan

The Panel considered the progress report and an updated version of the Nazeing Focus Day Action Plan. This covered the monitoring Framework, the Essex County Freight Strategy, Bridge Issues, Enforcement, Cross Border Issues, Goods Vehicle issues, Planning, Implementation and Outstanding Action.

The Forward Planning Manager reported on a recent telephone conversation with Inspector Stephen Pearce of Essex Police. Inspector Pearce was considering an invitation to give a presentation to the next meeting (20th December) of the Panel and had asked the Forward Planning Manager for contact details of the local councillors so that he could discuss the issues with them. The Forward Planning Manager undertook to contact Inspector Pearce again to chase up these matters."

"In relation to 3(a) of the Action Plan (Inspection of Fish and Eels Bridge), the Forward Planning Manager had been advised by County officers that structural assessment was carried out every two years. Routine repairs were then carried out on an as needs basis. More major works go into the Works Programme. A load-carrying assessment had been carried out once in recent years, and the records are being checked to establish when this was. The ECC contact is Clive Woodruff (01245 437185).

It was noted that ECC Trading Standards officers had carried out a successful pilot in the Braintree Area on the enforcement of HGVs breaching weight restrictions. As a result the project was to be rolled out on a county wide basis. Mr Forkin reported that he had arranged a meeting with Trading Standards and would report the details of this to a future meeting. The Panel welcomed this initiative

The Panel were asked to agree to the establishment of a working group to oversee the implementation of the plan, but felt that such action was not necessary and agreed that the Panel should simply receive further progress reports on the issues. It was noted that if necessary the Panel could review this decision at their next meeting on 20 December 2007.

39. Reports to be made to the Next Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Chairman to report to next OSC on 8 November 2007 on tonight's discussions.

40. Future Meetings

20 December 2007, 28 February, 23 April 2008.

CHAIRMAN