

EPPING FOREST LOCAL COUNCILS' LIAISON COMMITTEE

NOTICE OF MEETING

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices,
High Street, Epping **Date:** Wednesday, 13th June, 2007

Room: Council Chamber **Time:** 7.30 pm

Democratic Services Officer: Adrian Hendry (tel: 01992 564246)
Email: ahendry@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Members:

District Council Representatives:

Councillors Mrs C Pond (Chairman), J Knapman, R Morgan, B Sandler and Mrs M Sartin

Local Council Representatives:

Clerks and Chairmen/Members of Parish and Town Councils

County Council Representatives:

Members for the following divisions:

North Weald and Nazeing:	Councillor A Jackson
Loughton Central:	Councillor C Pond
Ongar and Rural:	Councillor G McEwen
Epping and Theydon Bois:	Councillor T Spencer
Buckhurst Hill and Loughton South:	Councillor C Finn
Chigwell and Loughton Broadway:	Councillor M Tomkins
Waltham Abbey:	Councillor Mrs E Webster

**PLEASE NOTE THE START DATE OF THE MEETING
COFFEE/TEA WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE FROM 7.00
P.M IN THE MEMBERS ROOM**

- 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
- 2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE - CHAIRMAN**

Decision Required:

- (1) To confirm the appointment of District Councillor Mrs C Pond as the Chairman of the Committee for the Civic year
- (2) To appoint a Vice – Chairman of the Committee for the Civic Year

3. MINUTES

To confirm the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 7 March 2007 (previously circulated).

4. HIGHWAY ISSUES (Pages 5 - 8)

(Essex County Council). Tony Ciaburro, the Service Director for Highways and Transportation and Councillor Norman Hume, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation, will be attending this meeting to discuss local highway related issues.

Local Representatives have raised a number of questions for consideration. These are attached.

5. COMMUNITY FUNDS INITIATIVE

Recommendation:

To consider and endorse the recommendations of the Community Funds Initiative Working Group to be reported orally.

Local Councils to report.

6. CHOICE BASED LETTINGS SCHEME

Recommendation:

To receive a presentation from the District Council's Assistant Head of Housing (Operations) on the operation of the local Choice Based Lettings Scheme.

The implementation of a Choice Based Lettings Scheme is necessary in order to meet the requirements of Government that such a scheme be in place by 2010 at the latest.

Under a Choice Based Lettings scheme, all vacant social rented properties would be advertised to applicants on the Housing Register in a two-weekly publication, website, and other media giving details of location, type, rent, service charge, council tax band and landlord of the available accommodation. Applicants would apply for a property by "expressing an interest" either in person, by post, telephone, text, email or Internet. Limits to the number of "expressions" per applicant would be in place, which would include restricting "expressions" for properties to those households, which only have an assessed need for a particular property type.

At the end of the two weekly cycle, the Council would analyse the "expressions of interests" received and allocate each property following a prioritisation and selection process in accordance with its own Allocations Scheme. In general terms, the property would be offered to the applicant in the highest band, who has been registered the longest, who had "expressed an interest" for the specific vacancy. The results of the "expressions of interest" on each property advertised is then published in the next periodic publication, setting out the number received on each property, as well as the Band and registration date of the successful applicant. This helps applicants to see how long the successful applicant has been waiting and gives greater transparency in the allocation of accommodation, as each applicant would be

able to clearly understand how the scheme works.

The Government encourages authorities to work in partnership and has made grants available to assist with set up costs based on a bidding process. The Council took the lead in setting up the Herts and Essex Housing Options Consortium (HEHOC), which is a partnership of the following authorities:

- Brentwood Borough Council
- Chelmsford Borough Council
- Broxbourne District Council
- Uttlesford District Council
- East Herts District Council
- Epping Forest District Council

Following the submission of a successful bid to the Government, HEHOC received a grant of £96,000. Around £60,000 of the grant is funding a Consultant to Project Manage the implementation of the scheme, which will be managed by an external Choice Based Lettings Agency. The balance of the grant will go towards the set up costs.

Any Choice Based Lettings Scheme must be developed in a way that takes into account the needs of vulnerable groups. This would involve close liaison with Social Care and a wide-range of partner agencies, ensuring that vulnerable people are able to participate fully in any scheme.

The Assistant Head of Housing (Operations) will explain how the scheme works in more detail.

7. GRAFFITI CLEARANCE IN EPPING FOREST DISTRICT (Pages 9 - 12)

Recommendation:

To consider and comment on the attached document on the need for a new approach to Graffiti Clearance in the District.

(District Council) Epping Forest District Council introduced a graffiti policy in 2000 with the aim of removing of all graffiti reported by residents, staff and members. Unfortunately this has created a limitless demand, which as a consequence has proved very difficult to match with available funding.

Consequently, the Town and Parish Councils are being consulted on a change of approach. The Council is in the middle of reviewing its policy to restrict removal work to property owned by the Council. A draft copy of the document is attached. The meeting is asked to give their views on this document.

8. EPPING FOREST DISTRICT CITIZEN OF THE YEAR - LOCAL AWARDS SCHEME

Recommendation:

To consider ideas for the creation of a local Citizen of the Year Scheme

(Local Councils) At the last meeting, consideration was given to the proposal to award

people who make a significant contribution to their local community. It was noted that whilst the Citizen of the Year Award scheme acknowledges work at the District level, there was no provision for honouring contributions at a more parish level. Members are asked to consider ideas for taking this forward.

9. PLANNING FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE - LAUNCH OF THE PLANNING WHITE PAPER (Pages 13 - 14)

To consider the attached letter concerning the launch of the planning white paper.

10. ISSUES RAISED BY LOCAL COUNCILS

No further issues have been raised for this meeting.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

12. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Meetings of the Committee are scheduled for the following dates this year:

28 November 2007
26 March 2008

Agenda Item 4

Please see attached questions from Local Council for the above discussion on highways issues. An agenda for the meeting will follow in due course.

We would welcome Cllr Hume and Mr Ciaburro dealing with the following list of questions.

- 1 We are conscious that there have been complaints in the past and we would welcome Cllr Hume explaining how he feels matters will be improved for the future.
- 2 Is there a defined specification for repairs to road surfaces?
 - (a) Can we have a copy?
 - (b) Who wrote it?
 - (c) How was it determined?
 - (d) How does ECC check that it has been adhered to?
 - (e) Is work checked before payment is authorized?
- 3 We understand that where utility companies dig up roads and do not repair them satisfactorily they are made to come back and do it at their cost. What is the position with regards to ECC repairs, which appear quite often to need repairing within 4-6 weeks of the initial repair, particularly in the winter months. Can ECC please confirm that where contractor's re-attend it is at their cost and not ours.
- 4 Is there a standard of performance when issuing specifications to Highways sub- contractors and can we see a copy?
- 5 What key performance indicators do ECC impose on those Contractors. Are there financial penalties placed upon them.
6. Are there any published statistics of overall performance of the Highways Dept.
7. How are repairs prioritized?
- 8 What arrangements are in place for cross-border issues to be dealt with, such as with Hertfordshire County Council and the London Boroughs of Redbridge and Waltham Forest.
- 9 We have been told in the past that there are always staffing problems.
 - (a) What is the financing and staffing of the ECC Highways Dept and is it adequate. If not, what action is being taken to fill vacant posts.
 - (b) Do you use Agency staff, how expensive are they, and are they cost effective?
- 10` How is the funding split between the various Districts. This used to be on a per kilometer basis and this would seem grossly unfair, in particular for Epping where

usage is far higher per kilometer of road, having regard to its close proximity to Central London.

11 Having regard to the number of pot-holes and other areas where repairs seem to recur year after year, what analysis has been carried out with regards to Quality Control and Best Value.

12 Are there any penalties placed upon Contractors for not dealing with instructions in a proper or timely manner.

13 From our perception the system does not appear to be working as well as when Epping Forest District Council were acting as Agents. Have similar complaints been made by other Districts where the Highways Department have taken back overall control.

14 Consultations with Town and Parish Councils appear to be breaking down. At least one Parish has been told that in future they will not be advised of temporary road closures on the basis that an advert would appear in the Public Sector Notices column of the local paper. Whilst this might satisfy the legal requirement, from a practical point of view very few people look at the Public Sector Notices and the knock-on effect in rural communities can be quite severe, particularly at the time when parents are taking children to school.

15 The Northern part of EFDC has recently had disruptions caused by the works on the A414. The standard of diversion signs appears to be nothing more than confusing. Fortunately hold-ups are only 5-10 minutes, even in rush hour, and a diversion via the M11, M25 and A12 would appear to be somewhat long-winded.

16 Is there a defined policy to concentrate on main roads and ignore side streets and roads running through housing estates? Whilst this might be a better utilization of funds allowing through traffic to flow at a faster rate, it does not help rate payers who live on the estates and have to suffer the consequences of roads not being repaired and re-surfaced.

17 Signage is certainly a problem, we have experienced a number of instances where signs have been stolen and have not been replaced. Whilst we appreciate there is a cost implication we do feel that the time taken to replace the missing signs is more than would be acceptable in any performance standard indicator.

18 The concept of not dealing with matters in a timely fashion is somewhat frustrating. We are sure that all Parishes have their pet problems, but to receive a letter from the Highways & Transport Department a month after they were written to, and to say that the concerns are being investigated, and to then suggest that ECC will endeavour to effect repairs within 28 days of completion of the investigations, without giving any indication as to how long the investigations themselves will take, is not acceptable.

19 We would very much like to improve communication between Parish and Town Councils and the Highways Department and ECC. There is rarely any feed-back, and as mentioned above, frustration ensues.

A system was run quite successfully with EFDC whereby Parish and Town Councils would send a monthly list of requests for repairs - could this system not be re-instated on a county basis with a limited time period for repairs to be completed.

20 There is general concern over the state of pavements, and how damaged pavements are repaired. If cars and lorries park illegally they might get fined or clamped, or even removed. Can the staff dealing with such matters check that the vehicles have not damaged the pavement, and take appropriate action to make the perpetrators pay for the damage caused.

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Date:

Our ref:

Your ref:

Clerks of Parish & Town Councils in the Epping Forest District

Dear

Graffiti Clearance in Epping Forest District

As you well know, graffiti is an illegal anti-social activity that creates a negative impression of an area and contributes to people's fear of crime. It can be any writing or picture scribbled or drawn on a wall etc without the owner's consent.

Graffiti is an issue not only in Epping Forest, but also nationally and internationally. There is no legal requirement for a Local Authority to remove graffiti however, the District Council endeavours to remove graffiti on its own land, buildings and highway signage.

Epping Forest District Council introduced a graffiti policy in 2000 with the aim of removal of all graffiti reported by residents, staff and members. Unfortunately this policy has created demand within the District, which is limitless, as a consequence it has proved very difficult to match demand with available funding. Although transfer of funds has enabled these various funding crisis's to be dealt with, the Council no longer feels that this ad hoc approach can continue.

Thus, I am consulting Parish and Town Councils on a change of approach. The Council is in the process of reviewing the policy to restrict removal work to property owned by the council. A draft copy of the document is attached. Could you please let the council have your views on this.

I am arranging to place an item on Local Councils Liaison Committee meeting on 13th June 2007 but would appreciate hearing from you before that meeting with your comments. If you require any further information regarding the draft policy please contact Caroline Wiggins Crime Reduction Co-ordinator on 01992 564122 cwiggins@eppingforestdc.gov.uk.

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EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL - STATEMENT OF POLICY REGARDING GRAFFITI REMOVAL

(1) Introduction - What is Graffiti?

Graffiti is an illegal, anti-social activity which creates a negative impression for an area and contributes to fear of crime within the community. The legal definition within the Anti Social Behaviour Act is "Graffiti includes painting, writing, soiling, marking or other defacing by whatever means".

Offensive graffiti is illegal, unauthorised marking of premises or installations may contain some or all of the following elements:

- (a) Obscene language;
- (b) Language of a politically/racially/religiously insulting or inciting nature;
- (c) A statement denoting hatred intolerance or violence;
- (d) An image which is graphically explicit and obscene or otherwise offensive; and
- (e) An image which is visually offensive or textually offensive by reason of the message which it conveys.

(2) Applications of the Policy

Epping Forest District Council will only remove graffiti from their property

(3) How to Report Graffiti Incidents

The Crime Reduction Unit of Epping Forest District Council may be contacted on Tel No: 01992 564272 or via the on line reporting form on the Epping Forest District Council Website

(4) Legal Requirements

There is no legal requirement for the Council to remove graffiti but the Council is determined it will exercise its discretion for the well-being of the Community to commit resources to this service.

(5) Service Levels

The District Council will endeavour to remove all graffiti on its own land and buildings. It also undertakes to remove all graffiti from highway signage and other signs in public areas.

The Council will not remove from private property. In such circumstances the Council will undertake to provide information on Companies who will provide a professional removal service to those owners if required.

The Council after consultation with the Epping Forest Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership Hate Crime Operational Group will remove what it considers to be obscene, racial and sexual graffiti wherever it occurs and will exercise its discretion to remove this even if it occurs on private premises or land.

(6) Response Times

Graffiti is planned to be removed within two weeks of being reported to the Crime Reduction Unit of Epping Forest District Council.

March 2007



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE EAST OF ENGLAND

Regional Partners & Stakeholders

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21 May 2007

Dear Colleague

PLANNING FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE - LAUNCH OF THE PLANNING WHITE PAPER

The Government has published today a Planning White Paper, *Planning for a Sustainable Future*.

The White Paper will take forward the proposals for major infrastructure projects recommended by Rod Eddington and developed by Kate Barker in their respective reviews. The White Paper will also respond to the recommendations made by Kate Barker for further improvements to the Town and Country Planning system.

In setting out new planning reforms the Government aims to:

Streamline planning and make it more accountable

- By introducing a new system for major infrastructure, under which:
 - the Government will set a clear policy framework through national policy statements, for which Ministers will be clearly accountable to the public and Parliament;
 - decisions will then be taken more quickly by an independent, expert body on a transparent and objective basis, having regard to the national policy position;
- By reducing or removing planning requirements for minor household improvements like conservatories and solar panels;
- By speeding up the appeals system so disputed cases can be resolved more quickly;
- By ensuring more decisions are taken locally through the planning system.





Improve public consultation and make it easier for communities to engage in decisions which affect them

- By ensuring there is thorough and effective consultation before national policy is set on key infrastructure issues;
- By making it a legal requirement for developers to consult local communities on major projects;
- By making public inquiries into major projects more accessible;
- By doubling the resources given to bodies such as Planning Aid which help disadvantaged and hard-to-reach groups get involved in planning decisions.

Ensure planning supports climate change and sustainable development

- By ensuring policy on infrastructure integrates environmental, social and economic goals;
- By ensuring timely decisions on renewable energy projects vital to enable the shift to a low-carbon economy;
- By strengthening the way climate change and reducing emissions is taken into account in local planning decisions;
- By reaffirming the Government's commitment to protecting the greenbelt and putting towns centres first.

The White Paper will be subject to a 12 week period of consultation. It is accompanied by four separate consultation documents:

- Householder Permitted Development
- Planning Performance Agreements
- Planning Fees
- Planning Appeals

The White Paper and associated consultation documents are available on the CLG website at: www.communities.gov.uk/planningwhitepaper and I would encourage your participation in the consultation on these important documents. Should you wish to discuss any of this in more detail, I would be happy to do so, as would John Williamson (tel: 01223 372739, email: john.williamson@goeast.gsi.gov.uk) who is leading for us on the Planning White Paper.

Yours sincerely,

ALEX PLANT
Deputy Regional Director of Development & Infrastructure

