

EPPING FOREST LOCAL COUNCILS' LIAISON COMMITTEE

NOTICE OF MEETING

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Date:** Wednesday, 28th November, 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

<p style="text-align: center;">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</p>

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 20)

To confirm the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 13 June 2007 (attached) and matters arising.

3. ISSUES RAISED BY LOCAL COUNCILS

To discuss the following matters raised by Local Council's:

i) Quality Councils

At the Local Council's Liaison Committee meeting on 7 March 2007, Councillor Ed Borton (Nazeing Parish Council) asked that the issue of Quality Councils be raised at this meeting. They would like to know how Quality Councils would affect local councils and how the delegated functions would affect them.

As this was very much a political issue, they asked that the Leader and the Cabinet be invited to participate in the debate.

(ii) Community Involvement in Section 106 Planning Gain Decisions on Applications

(iii) Update on Proposed Return Visit of Councillor Norman Hume Highways Portfolio Holder for Essex County Council

(iv) Police Liaison Issues

4. CHOICE BASED LETTINGS

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.

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. The Assistant Head of Housing Services (Operations) will be attending the meeting to explain how the scheme works in more detail.

8. At the time of writing the report it is expected that the scheme will go live on 19 November 2007. It was hoped to explain the scheme at the last meeting, but unfortunately due to other pressing agenda items the matter was deferred.

5. PARISH AND TOWN COUNCIL REMUNERATION SCHEMES - REVIEW

The District Council wrote to Parish and Town Council clerks on 30 October 2007 about the need to review their remuneration schemes where these have been in operation.

The recruitment of an independent person to a vacancy on the independent panel is currently in progress and it would be helpful if local Councils could give replies by the end of the year.

6. YOUTH COUNCIL

To receive report from D MacNab (Deputy Chief Executive).

7. UPDATE ON LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (LDS) AND GYPSY AND TRAVELLER DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT (DPD)

The Council has been Directed by The Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government (Hazel Blears) to amend the Local Development Scheme (LDS) submitted to GO East in October 2006. This Direction requires the Council to produce a separate Development Plan Document (DPD) on "Gypsy & Traveller Site Provision", and for this DPD to be submitted for examination by 30 September 2009.

This matter was considered by Cabinet on 12 November 2007, and the amended LDS was agreed. This has now been re-submitted to GO East for their approval.

It is currently anticipated that the Issues & Options consultation for this DPD will take place in Spring / early Summer 2008.

8. UPDATE ON FIFTY FAVOURITE TREES PROJECT (Pages 21 - 22)

The receive a progress report on County Care's Fifty Favourite Trees project

The purpose of the project is to determine the fifty favourite trees within the District via nominations from people and organisations within the District. The Project is being run A website for the project had been set up at www.favouritetrees.org.uk.

Officers will be in attendance to provide an update on the exhibition at Waltham Abbey District Museum.

9. VETERAN TREE HUNT PROJECT

10. EPPING CONSERVATION AREA - DRAFT CHARACTER APPRAISAL - PUBLIC CONSULTATION (Pages 23 - 24)

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

12. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Meetings of the Committee are scheduled for the following date next year:

23 March 2008

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT LOCAL COUNCILS' LIAISON COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 13 June 2007 **Time:** 7.30 - 9.20 pm

Place: Council Chamber, Civic
Offices, High Street, Epping

**Members
Present:**

Representing Epping Forest District Council:

Councillor(s): Mrs C Pond (Chairman), R Morgan and Mrs M Sartin

Other Councillors:

Councillor(s): R Frankel, A Green and Mrs J H Whitehouse

Representing Essex County Council:

County Councillor(s): J Spencer and M Tomkins

Representing Local Councils:

Councillor J Salter (Abbess, Beauchamp and Berners Roding Parish Council), Mrs A Deluca (Chigwell Parish Council), Councillor B Murphy (Epping Town Council), Mrs P Smith (Epping Upland Parish Council), Councillor P Boshier (High Ongar Parish Council), Councillor R Witham (Lambourne Parish Council), Councillor A Barr (Lambourne Parish Council), Councillor R Pearce (Loughton Town Council), Councillor Mrs J Woods (Loughton Town Council), Councillor Ms J Bowerman (Matching Parish Council), J Collins (Moreton Bobbingworth and the Lavers), Councillor Ms G Castle (Nazeing Parish Council), Councillor Mrs D Borton (Nazeing Parish Council), Mrs E Aitken (North Weald Bassett Council), Councillor C Hawkins (North Weald Bassett Parish Council), Councillor B Surtees (Ongar Town Council), Mrs J Ballard (Roydon Parish Council), Councillor Ms N Wilkinson (Roydon Parish Council), Councillor R Northwood (Sheering Parish Council), Mrs D Harris (Sheering Parish Council), Councillor A Purkiss (Theydon Bois Parish Council), Councillor Ms K Canning (Waltham Abbey Town Council) and C Thompson (Moreton, Bobbingworth and Lavers PC)

Apologies: **Epping Forest District Council –**

Councillor(s): B Sandler

Essex County Council –

Councillor(s): C Finn and C Pond

Parish/Town Councils: -

Chigwell Parish Council and Matching Parish Council (Matching Parish Council)

Officers Present: J Scott (Joint Chief Executive), J Gilbert (Director of Environment and Street Scene), I Willett (Assistant to the Chief Executive), P Sutton (Asst Head of Planning Services (Forward Planning & Environment)) and Z Folley (Democratic Services Assistant)

By Invitation: Councillor N Hume (Essex County Council)

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE - CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED:

- (1) That District Councillor Mrs C Pond be appointed as the Chairman of the Committee for the Civic year;
- (2) That Parish Councillor J Salter be appointed as Vice – Chairman of the Committee for the Civic Year

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 7 March 2007 be taken as read as a correct record.

3. HIGHWAY ISSUES

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting the County Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transportation, Councillor Norman Hume. The Portfolio Holder was in attendance to address a number of written questions submitted by Local Councillors and answer any other questions on matters relating to his area of responsibility.

Councillor Hume acknowledged the many local concerns about Highways and that Local Members were not at all happy with the quality of service. He informed the meeting that a recent MORI poll, conducted at the end of 2006, indicated a 6% increase in public satisfaction with the service compared to 2005/06 but there was still a long way to go. The intention was to give Councils a greater degree of local governance over highways. Consultation had taken place with Local Authorities to determine priorities for the Highways Locally Determined budget. This was to be increased significantly in the region of a ten fold increase and subject to consultation for next years budget.

Mr Hume acknowledged the need to improve customer services - this was a real issue of concern for Epping Forest. There were difficulties in recruiting permanent staff. Agency staff had been appointed but there was a need for more permanent staff to facilitate relations with the local community.

In response to Members written questions, the responses attached to these minutes were reported.

In response to other questions it was reported that:

- (a) earlier on in the week Highway Officers and the Leader of the Council met to discuss the need for works to improve Highway Junctions in Loughton. Councillor Hume referred to the intention to consult local members on this. A Member expressed concern

about accident black spots and traffic congestion on Langston Road, Rectory Lane and in Debden. He was invited to forward these concerns to Councillor Hume for a reply;

(b) concern was expressed at the number of signs on local roads especially at roundabouts in Epping. This was detracting from the street scene and was unsightly. It was explained that engineers determined where they were located based on safety needs. There was an opportunity for Members to input into this process. The County shared the concerns about sign clutter. It was stated that the process was partly prescribed by legislation;

(c) a Member from Matching asked when the third phase of verge grass cutting was to commence for that area? The Portfolio Holder undertook to report back on this;

(d) reference was made to changes to the inspection process for repairing potholes. Concern was expressed at the time taken to rectify them once identified. Councillor Hume acknowledged this and felt that delays in the process were not acceptable;

(f) it was questioned whether highways had an interface for contact with May Gurney, the Councils contractor for repair works? The Portfolio Holder said that he was not aware of any problems in this area of communication;

(g) lack of staff was a real problem. It was acknowledged that the District was placed at a disadvantage with regards to this by its close proximity to London which offered higher wages. Mr Hume clarified that there were currently three vacancies in the West Area Office which comprised approximately 20 agency staff and 60 permanent staff. This balance was not acceptable. The need to recruit more permanent staff was a priority and would be addressed;

(h) the Capital Programme for maintenance was relatively large but didn't go far enough. More emphasis would be placed on the category 'C' roads and footpaths;

(i) the meeting welcomed the commitment to increase funding but questioned how this was to be determined. Was it to be based on road length or usage? The road length criteria disadvantaged the south of the District where the network provided access to London and, as a result, suffered from high volumes of out commuter traffic. The Portfolio Holder reported that the budget was allocated on a needs basis and should reflect such problems;

(j) Councillor Hume reiterated that additional funding would be made available in the ECC Capital programme for maintenance work. He announced the intention to ensure the funding allocation process was transparent and fair and open and recognised local concerns and areas of particularly heavy traffic;

(k) there was some confusion about the roles of the respective agencies for Highways and the point of contact for complaints? These questions were regularly raised at local Police/residents meetings. The view was that the agencies tended 'to pass the buck'. There was a need for a central point of contact for all complaints;

(l) a member from Theydon Bois stressed that speed cameras be used to monitor black spots. Chevrons and other signs had been stolen from the area and accident black spots. Mr Hume said that he would take up these issues. Funding was being delegated downwards for safety issues. This was a County wide problem and one of many problems the Highways team had to deal with;

(m) the intention was to appoint a permanent manager for the West Area Office. The cost of the backlog for work was significant and way in excess of the £5.7 billion budget. An additional 15 million had been added to the maintenance budget just to catch up;

(n) a member stressed the need for a north facing slip at the M11/Harlow interchange;

(o) the County's pot of funding for highways was larger than that for other areas. Was this simply because it covered a relatively large area? Did it mean they were actually better off? The County had put an additional £15 million into the highways maintenance budget but it was investing money merely to catch up;

(p) Members felt that highway engineers should be left to carry out their 'on the ground' operational duties and not be expected to undertake front line customer services. More customer service staff needed to be provided to enable this clear division of duties;

The Chairman thanked the Portfolio Holder for his comprehensive and informative answers. She welcomed back Highways to a future meeting in six months time.

RESOLVED:

(1) That the County Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transportation, Councillor Hume, be thanked for attending the meeting and answering questions;

(2) That the responses be made available to Members; and

(3) That County Highways be invited back to the Committee in six months time.

4. COMMUNITY FUNDS INITIATIVE 2007/08

Councillor B Surtess of Ongar Town Council reported the recommendations of the working group for the Community Funds Initiative. He stated that the official letter from the County on the outcome of the latest round of bids had now been received. A tabled report on this was circulated to the meeting (attached). The budget for this year was not significant. However there would be another opportunity next year to place new bids. Some projects proved not to be viable this year. This was a difficult process but was undertaken on an open and fair basis.

RESOLVED:

That the attached proposals for the 2007/08 Community Initiative Fund be endorsed.

5. CHOICE BASED LETTINGS SCHEME

It was agreed that the presentation due to be given to the meeting on the Choice Based Lettings Scheme be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee in November 2007.

6. GRAFFITI CLEARANCE IN EPPING FOREST DISTRICT

The Head of Research and Democratic Services presented a report concerning Graffiti Clearance in the District. He reported that in 2000, the District Council introduced a graffiti policy, with the aim of removal of all graffiti reported by residents. Unfortunately

this policy had created a limitless demand and significant supplementary estimates with an overspend in 2006/07 to ensure the continuation of the service. This shortfall had arisen from a well meaning attempt to remove all graffiti wherever it occurred.

As a result the Council was in the process of reviewing the policy to restrict removal work to property owned by EFDC; graffiti on any other building considered offensive and cases of hardship. A copy of this draft was before Members.

The Head of Research and Democratic Services reported that, at its meeting on 11 June 2007, the Cabinet supported the changes subject to any changes suggested at this meeting. The Portfolio Holder was unable to attend this meeting but had undertaken a considerable amount of work with the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership to facilitate the service. In terms of next steps, he advised of the proposal to give Local Authorities new powers to deal with the problem and alternatives ways of delivering the service to make it more cost effective. The new approach was not about saving costs but about targeting effort.

Local Representatives expressed disappointment at the decision to limit the policy but expressed sympathy with the reasons behind the decision. It was asked whether additional funding would be made available to Local Councils to ensure the continuation of their existing service and commitments over the rest of the financial year. There was a need for one central point of contact for reporting graffiti. Would the District extend its graffiti service to help Local Councils clear graffiti on their buildings and undertake action to clear graffiti on private properties? The Head of Research and Democratic Services said that information could be made available on the financial implications of the new policy

Reference was made to Graffiti Removal Notices. The Head of Environmental Services clarified that the new Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005 made available these powers. He also reported that Local Authorities must explore all other available solutions prior to taking such action and, in so doing, form partnerships with other public and private sector organisations. The District Council Environmental and Planning Scrutiny Panel would be looking at how the Council should implement the new enforcement measures in the Act. Reference was made to two initiatives, the proceeds of which would provide additional funding for the service in addition to the budget.

It was reported that Theydon Bois Parish Council had established its own scheme for clearance. The Portfolio Holder would welcome new ideas for improving the service. The Head of Research and Democratic Services also reported on a number of new ideas which might benefit Local Councils.

It was suggested that the details of a central purchase scheme for clearance materials could be made available to Local Members. In relation to preventative measures it was noted that the action to set up a District Youth Parliament should help to educate young people about graffiti problems;

A Member stated that a coherent policy was required to deal with anything that detracted from the street scene namely (illegal posters/adverts). A Member stressed that the penalties for carrying out graffiti be better publicised. Articles would be placed in the press on this.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the attached policy and procedural arrangements be approved;
- (2) That steps be taken to publicise the policy including the penalties for offenders; and
- (3) That the details of a central purchase scheme for Graffiti clearance materials be reviewed

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

It was reported that at the last meeting, the Committee considered the District Councils Citizen of the Year Award Scheme.

Members noted that the Council received a number of nominations for people heavily involved in the affairs of their home village or community. It was acknowledged that whilst, these people made a generous contribution in their home locality, the spread of their activity was too narrow for the (District) Citizen of the Year award. The meeting considered ideas for recognising such activity.

The Committee suggested that articles be put in the Forester Magazine highlighting the work of volunteers and voluntary agencies in the District. Any other ideas should be sent to Councillor Surtees of Ongar Town Council.

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

The Head of Forward Planning reported that, on 21 May 2007, the Government published a Planning White Paper – Planning for a Sustainable Future. The White Paper forwarded proposals for major infrastructure projects recommended by the Eddington and Barker Reviews. The core principles aimed to streamline the planning process, make it more accountable, improve public consultation, ensure planning supported climate change and sustainable development. The meeting had before them a copy of a consultation letter from GO-East dated 21 May 2007 on the launch of the paper and the attached information. It was noted that the White Paper and associated consultation documents were available on the Department of Communities and Local Government Website. The deadline for comments was 17 August 2007.

A Member asked whether the paper contained proposed changes to Tree Preservation Orders policy? There was some reference to this but nothing in relation to Household developments. Some Members stressed the need for this area to be looked at.

9. ISSUES RAISED BY LOCAL COUNCILS

No business was reported for this item

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Gypsy and Traveller Needs – Consultation

It was reported that the East of England Assembly (EERA) was conducting a review of Traveller needs for inclusion in Regional Strategies. Comments on this should be sent back to EERA by 31 July 2007, but Local Councils would be written to before this to seek their views. Further information could be provided by Ian White the Principal Planning Officer for Forward Planning.

11. JOINT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (COMMUNITY)

The Chairman reported that this would be the last meeting John Scott, the Joint Chief Executive (Community) would be attending as he would be retiring on 31 July 2007. She thanked John for all his hard work as the Lead officer of the Committee over his many years of service.

Several member paid tribute to John. The Vice – Chairman, Councillor J Salter, stated that John had been a stalwart of the Committee for many years and had always been there to offer the members impartial support and listen to their views.

Councillor B Surtress of Ongar Parish Council said that Local Representatives owed a tremendous amount to John. His support had made an invaluable contribution to the way local members worked together to achieve their aims which he was very much proud of. Councillor Pearce said that John had acted as the 'outward face' of the District Council who never gave in to problems and made things happen.

Following the tributes the Committee gave John a standing ovation and wished him all the best for the future.

12. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on 28 November 2007 and then on 26 March 2008.

CHAIRMAN

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Minute Item 3

Local Liaisons Questions - 13 June 2007 - Response by County Portfolio Holder for Highways and Transportation Councillor Hume

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?

For the majority of repairs to Potholes and other common surface defects ECC use Clause 949, 950 & 951 from the Manual of Contract Documents for Highway Works, Volume 1 'Specification for Highway Works'. The County Council will also use propriety systems such as 'Rhinopatch' or 'Jetpatcher'. (Further information on these systems can be found on the web sites <http://www.asiplc.com/rhinopatch1.html> and <http://www.jetpatcher.co.uk/>

With reference to Statutory Undertakers reinstatements are covered by the "Specification for the Reinstatement of Opening in Highways" (Second Edition 2002). This has been drawn up as a code of practice by a New Roads and Street Works Act working party of the Highway Authorities and Utilities Committee (HAUC). This specification sets out the statutory requirements for materials. Performance and standards of workmanship for use in association with street works carried out by utilities and other undertakers with apparatus in the street. It is available from The Stationary Office, ISBN 0-11-552538-6, cost £10.

(a) Can we have a copy?

A copy of the 'Specification for Highway Works' is available from the Stationary Office (ISBN 0 11 552705 2) or via the internet via the Highway Agency web site <http://www.standardsforhighways.co.uk/mchw/index.htm>

(b) Who wrote it?

The document is a Highway Agency Specification which the county adopted in April 2006 as it was very similar to its own specification which it has been using since 1998.

(c) How was it determined?

The specification has been derived over a number of years though experience.

(d) How does ECC check that it has been adhered to?

Adherence can only be determined by visual inspection.

(e) Is work checked before payment is authorized?

With 6,693 jobs raised in Epping Forest District alone it is only practical to check up on about 10% of the repairs and those that exceed 10% of the order value

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.

Reinstatements carried out by Statutory Undertakers in the highway are covered by a guarantee period depending upon the depth of the excavation, with works up to 1.5m having a two year period whilst those over 1.5m a three year period. If during the guarantee period

any defects are found in the materials, workmanship and standard of reinstatements the utility or other undertaker must rectify the defect at their expense, this also re-starts the guarantee period for the reinstatement.

Each ECC repair has a 12 month guarantee period. Any defects will be notified to the contractor and corrected at his expense

Yes this was not an easy task. New regulations would be introduced for late Autumn 2007 which would place the County in a stronger position in relation to enforcement work.

4. Is there a standard of performance when issuing specifications to Highways sub-contractors and can we see a copy?

Standard of workmanship are contained within the specification. A performance base specification is not practical as there are too few parameters for measuring performance.

5. What key performance indicators do ECC impose on those Contractors. Are there financial penalties placed upon them.

The contract has a number of key performance indicators which include the measurement of the contractors' Program delivery, Quality of work, responsiveness etc, etc. These indicators are used as monitors and may be used to determine any contract extension.

6. Are there any published statistics of overall performance of the Highways Dept.

A recent MORI poll of residents in Essex has shown for the district of Epping Forest a +6% satisfaction with provision of highway services, this is a big improvement from a negative 20% satisfaction in 2004 when the agency arrangement were in place.

7. How are repairs prioritized?

Repairs are priorities according to risk, as recommended by the Code of Practice 'Delivering Best Value in Highway Maintenance'. Details of the assessment is contained in the 'Essex code of practice for highway inspections'

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.

There are regular liaison meeting of County Hall staff with other Eastern Regional authorities and the Highways Agency to discuss maintenance policy, winter service, NRSWA, traffic diversions or current issues. On a local basis there are few issues or occasions when cross boundary co-ordination is required with the exception of cross boundary traffic diversions.

ECC Officers discuss all road closures with neighboring local authority officers, where the diversion route will affect another authority's network or the diversion is through one of their roads.

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?

Agency staff rates are higher than permanent salaried staff however Agency staff do not get paid when they are off sick or on holiday. They are not entitled to training or time off for this, contributions are not made with regards to pensions and they do not have any entitlement with regards to redundancy or any substantial notice periods. All Agency staff are on one week's notice. The advantage of using Agency staff is that they can cover for fluctuations in workloads however at present the West Area Office are using Agency staff to cover for vacancies. The West Area Office are currently undergoing another recruitment drive.

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.

The funding was split according to capital needs. Three thirds of this was allocated to the Capital Budget. The remaining two fifths went towards the Revenue Budget. A recent study indicated that District was actually better off under the new system for allocating funding compared to the old method.

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.

With regards to Quality Control I refer back to the previous questions. Essex and particular parts of Epping is mainly founded on clay soils (London Clay) which are prone to movement caused by seasonal or climatic changes. There is anecdotal evidence that these roads require more attention compared to those founded on gravel or other soils. In dealing with roads that are subject to regular movement analysis has shown that in most cases a regime of regular patching and other minor maintenance works can be better value long term compared to a full reconstruction and its associated disruption to traffic etc.

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

See answer to Q.5

The contract has a number of key performance indicators which include the measurement of the contractors' Program delivery, Quality of work, responsiveness etc, etc. These indicators are used as monitors and may be used to determine any contract extension.

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.

See answer to Q.6

A recent MORI poll of residents in Essex has shown for the district of Epping Forest a +6% satisfaction with provision of highway services, this is a big improvement from a negative 20% satisfaction in 2004 when the agency arrangement were in place.

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.

ECC consult all Parish and Town Councils on temporary road closures.

Temporary road closures under a 5 day Notices – Parish or Town, District Council, Police, Fire, Ambulance, Buses are consulted.

Temporary road closures over 5 days. The Orders are undertaken by ECC Law and Admin and Parish and Town Councils are statutory consultees. Also these are advertised in the Paper

Notices are placed on site.

All stats companies with planned works including ECC maintenance works are requested to leaflet affected frontagers and provide advance warning signs.

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.

The A414 is a strategic route and is used by HGV. The only practical way to divert this traffic would be via other strategic routes. Drivers with local knowledge are more likely to determine their own diversion route which will suit their need. The fact that hold ups were kept to a minimum only demonstrates the works were successfully publicised

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.

The Highways Maintenance Initiative was a three year capital programme initially concentrating on the main roads (A and B). This year, the final year, there is more of an emphasis on the C roads.

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.

The theft of road signs and other ironworks is a national problem. There are no indicators for the replacement of signs but priority is given to Stop and Give way signs followed by regulatory sign and other in order of importance.

We are aware of the problems with stolen signs and are endeavoring to replace all reported missing signs. This is proving to be an extremely complicated job with plastic signs being stolen as soon as they are replaced.

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.

Response times are dependant on resources. We acknowledge all correspondence and prioritize works accordingly.

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.

The Area Office Staff believe that the situation has much improved. A concerted effort has been made to respond to requests from the many Parish, Town and District representatives and members of public. It is disappointing to hear that there are still complaints of a lack of feedback. Some information with regards to specific problems would greatly assist the Area Highways Manager to investigate the problems and address them. It is difficult to contain the many requests for repairs with a limited budget and decisions on priorities must be maintained.

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.

Parking on a footway (where it has not been allowed for by virtue of specifically marked out spaces) is an offence under the Highways Act. The offence is driver related, which is to say it is the driver who must be prosecuted. Responsibility for enforcement therefore rests with the Police. However, where there are waiting restrictions the restriction also applies to the footway (if it is part of the public highway), as well as the carriageway and a penalty charge notice can be issued by a Council parking attendant. In this case the driver does not have to be present and the notice, if not paid, is followed up with the registered keeper.

Re-charging owners of illegally park vehicles would not be practical as a) it will not be possible to providing evident that will stand up in court and b) any monies raised would not cover the cost of administration.

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Community Initiatives Fund 2007/08 £92,319 available in this round

Ref No	Applicant	Contact Name	Tel	Project	Total Project Cost	Grant Sought	Outcome
	2324 (Chigwell) Squadron						
CIF3-EF-001	ATC	Mrs C Thomas	0208 257 0390	Replacement minibus NE	£12,000	£6,000	£0
CIF3-EF-002	Chestnut Cat Sanctuary	Miss A Sweeney	0208 500 3842	Re-surface car park NE	£23,713	£9,288	£0
CIF3-EF-003	Moreton Village Hall	Tony Boyce	01277 890298	Refurbish kitchen F	£17,158	£5,473	£5,473
CIF3-EF-004	Matching Parish Council	Mr E Fenwick	01279 730770	Installation of granite edging to village	£33,875	£33,875	£6,000
CIF3-EF-005	Loughton Town Council	Louise Fuller	0208 508 4200	Alleyway naming scheme F	£8,050	£1,500	£1,500
CIF3-EF-006	Loughton Town Council	Louise Fuller	0208 508 4200	New item of play equipment plus surfacing F	£19,500	£8,500	£8,500
CIF3-EF-007	High Ongar Parish Council	Dr Peter Boshier	01245 231003	Installation of new play area P	£23,900	£25,412	£12,000
CIF3-EF-008	Epping Forest Community Church	Nita Tribe	0208 502 0695	Refurbishment of Epping Forest Community Church building P	£35,000	£20,000	£10,000
CIF3-EF-009	Roydon Parish Council	Mrs Jan Ballard	01279 427939	Installation of CCTV refer to CDRP	£9,550	£9,000	£0
CIF3-EF-010	1st Theydon Garmon Scout Group	Trevor King	01992 574874	Rebuilding Scout HQ F	£500,000	£10,000	£10,000
CIF3-EF-011	Fyfield Village Hall & Sports Pavilion	Wendy Henshaw	01277 899367	Extension of Fyfield Village Hall P*	£239,588	£30,000	£7,469
CIF3-EF-012	Association of the Friends of Lambourne Church	Arnold Raven	01992 813582	Installation of biodegradable toilets within Lambourne Church NE	£19,351	£9,675	£0
CIF3-EF-013	High Ongar Village Hall Committee	Peter Trevelyan	01277 363158	Building a new village hall F	£628,000	£7,500	£7,500
CIF3-EF-014	Enfield Scout Sailing Association	Marion Caslake	01707 873875	Wetsuits NE	£2,100	£2,100	£0
CIF3-EF-015	Theatre Resource Dobbs Weir Residents Association	Edwina Simpson	01277 365626	Environmental works to Arts Centre F	£9,460	£7,877	£7,877
CIF3-EF-016	Dobbs Weir Residents Association	Rosemary Smith	01992 465545	Refurbish Dobbs Weir Village Hall P	£28,000	£26,000	£16,000
					£1,609,245	£212,200	£92,319

P = Concern at lack of obvious progress

NE = Not eligible

F = Full grant

P=part grant

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50 Favourite Trees – Stage 1

The culmination of 18 months hard work came to fruition on Saturday 3 November with the opening at the Waltham Abbey Museum of the 50 Favourite Trees Exhibition. The exhibition will run until Tuesday 8th January 2008. In May 2007, 50 “favourite” trees were chosen by a panel of judges with at least one tree chosen in each parished area. A poster has been created of each tree which is being given to the nominator, landowner and Parish or Town Council. See www.favouritetrees.com for full details.

Veteran Tree Hunt – Stage 2.

Over the summer a number of veteran tree hunt days have been undertaken aiming to show people how to recognise and record veteran trees and record veteran trees. This has worked well and the search is in full swing. Currently the database holds over 800 trees.

In October 2007, the Favourite Trees project has just received a massive boost with a new £40k grant awarded by the Greenarc. The funding will go towards the systematic and complete surveying of six parishes in the District between now and March 31st 2008. The parishes chosen are Roydon, Epping Upland, Theydon Bois, Lambourne, Chigwell and Stapleford Abbots

Each parish will be carefully surveyed with all its veteran trees photographed and recorded on this website. The data will also go nationally to our partners the Woodland Trust via the Ancient Tree Hunt. As well as funding survey work, the grant will also enable us to run an educational outreach project with local schools focusing on art, photography and ancient tree recording.

Lastly the grant will also allow us to produce a book of the favourite trees project and the veteran tree hunt.

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Epping Conservation Area Character Appraisal

The Planning Directorate have recently published the consultation draft of the Epping Conservation Area Character Appraisal. Local residents, businesses and visitors to the town are all invited to comment on the draft before the final version is published in February 2008. The purpose of the character appraisal is to define the character of the conservation area, review its boundaries and highlight any parts of it that may be in need of improvement. Local authorities have a statutory duty to formulate proposals for the enhancement of their conservation areas and in recent years, the Government has been encouraging local authorities to produce character appraisals for all their conservation areas. The draft character appraisal for the Epping Conservation Area covers topics such as public spaces, shopfronts, highway signs as well as sites with potential for improvement or development. A management plan at the end of the document sets out objectives for the conservation area for the next five years.

The appraisal is available to view on the Council's website at:

http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/Council_Services/planning/conservation/conservation_areas.asp

A limited number of hard copies will also be available. These can be obtained by telephoning (01992) 564068 or emailing conservation@eppingforestdc.gov.uk. Alternatively, the appraisal is available to view at the District Council's Planning Reception from Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping.

A public meeting is being held at **7.30pm on Tuesday, 27th November 2007 in Epping Hall, St John's Road, Epping** to discuss the character appraisal. Anyone interested in the future of the Epping Conservation Area is invited to attend.

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