

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT LOCAL COUNCILS' LIAISON COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 26 March 2008 **Time:** 7.30 - 8.55 pm

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

Members Present: **Representing Epping Forest District Council:**

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

Other Councillors:

Councillor(s):

Representing Essex County Council:

County Councillor(s):

Representing Local Councils:

Mrs P Smith, J Stone (Chigwell Parish Council), J Collins (Moreton Bobbingworth and the Lavers), C Thompson (Moreton, Bobbingworth and Lavers PC), Ms H Nicholas (Roydon Parish Council), Ms S Stavrou and Councillor J Salter (Abbess, Beauchamp and Berners Roding Parish Council)

Apologies: **Epping Forest District Council –**

Councillor(s):

Essex County Council –

Councillor(s): C Finn, G McEwen and C Pond

Parish/Town Councils: -

Councillor R Pearce (Loughton Town Council),
Councillor J Harrington (Sheering Parish Council) and S Jackman
(Ongar Town Council)

Officers Present: D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive), A Mitchell (Assistant Head of Legal, Administration and Estates (Legal)), Ian White (Senior Planning Officer), C Munday (Senior Enforcement Officer) and G J Woodhall (Democratic Services Officer)

By Invitation:

26. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2008 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the following amendment:

- (a) Minute 15a – the Council's record on recycling up to 42%, not up by 42%.

27. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

Due to the absence of the Vice-Chairman at the beginning of the meeting, the Chairman requested nominations for a Town or Parish Council representative to act as Vice-Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor B Surtees be elected Vice-Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

28. ISSUES RAISED BY LOCAL COUNCILS

(a) Licensed Premises

In respect of applications received by the District Council under the Licensing Act 2003, Town and Parish Councils had no statutory right of consultation. It was felt that there should be a liaison function whereby Local Councils were informed of all imminent applications for local residents to comment.

The Assistant Director of Legal Services responded that the Licensing Act 2003 regulated the methodology for consultation of any applications received. If the Council implemented any further measures then its decisions could be open to legal challenge for not following due process. Despite the legal difficulties involved in advertising applications further than the current measures, the Council was examining the viability of publicising applications received on the Council's website.

The Committee were informed by Moreton, Bobbingworth and the Lavers that the Government was currently reviewing the Licensing Act 2003, in order to incorporate more participation by Town and Parish Councils. Epping Upland reminded the Committee that the involvement of Local Councils was currently undefined and that local Councillors required a mandate from local residents to attend a Sub-Committee meeting and represent their views.

The Town and Parish Councils felt that publicising applications received by the District Council under the Licensing Act 2003 on the District Council's website would be beneficial, and the Deputy Chief Executive undertook to add this idea to the work programme for the District Council's Website Development Board.

(b) Goods Vehicles Operators Applications

Advice had been requested on how Town and Parish Councils could have an input into the decision making process for applications to the Traffic Commissioner for goods and public service vehicle operators licences.

The Senior Enforcement Officer advised the Committee that the Traffic Commissioner made the decision in such cases and that the District Council had a minimal power of intervention. Applications received by the Traffic Commissioner were monitored by the District Council and representations made accordingly. However it had been made clear to the District Council that objections could only be based upon environmental issues

and not planning grounds. Local Councils could be informed of forthcoming applications but any representations should be made to the Traffic Commissioner. The Deputy Chief Executive stated that the District Council would investigate whether details of all relevant applications could be disseminated to Town and Parish Councils for their consideration.

The Senior Enforcement Officer added that details of the routes taken by the vehicles were not part of the licence application, as this was the responsibility of the local Highway Authority. The District Council agreed to advise the Town and Parish Councils of how to report incidents relating to goods and public service vehicle licences, such as the routes used by such vehicles and consequent damage. In terms of enforcement action, the District Council would monitor any planning conditions for the site concerned whilst any conditions to the Licence itself would be monitored by the Traffic Commissioner. It was not known whether the Police was routinely informed of applications in order to make comment, and the District Council agreed to clarify the Police's involvement in the process. The Committee was informed that tractors and other associated agricultural vehicles did not require licenses from the Traffic Commissioner.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the possibility of publicising applications received under the Licensing Act 2003 on the District Council's website be investigated by the District Council's Website Development Board;
- (2) That methods of disseminating information in respect of goods and public service vehicle operators licences received by the Traffic Commissioner for the East of England to Town and Parish Councils be investigated by the Director of Planning & Economic Development;
- (3) That Town and Parish Councils be advised of how to report incidents in relation to goods and public service vehicle operators; and
- (4) That the involvement of the Police in determining applications for goods and public service vehicle operator licences be clarified and reported back to local councils.

29. ITEMS RAISED BY THE DISTRICT COUNCIL

(a) Local Biodiversity Action Plan

The Forward Planning Manager addressed the Committee regarding the Local Biodiversity Action Plan. This had been produced for the District in consultation with a number of other bodies, and circulated at the meeting was a list of the fourteen aims of the Action Plan, along with potential local council involvement for each aim such as including an article regarding the Veteran Tree Hunt in parish magazines. The Forward Planning Manager added that the trees within the District currently protected by County Council Tree Protection Orders (TPO's) would be resurveyed prior to the lapsing of their orders. However, this was a planning issue that was currently being addressed by the Conservation Team. The Local Biodiversity Action Plan had been adopted at the recent meeting of the Cabinet, but it would be redrafted in an easier to read format prior to general circulation early in 2008/09. It was highlighted that several areas had tree strategies, of which the District Council had been very supportive during their implementation.

(b) Community Engagement – Local Development Framework and Sustainable Community Strategy

The Forward Planning Manager gave an overview of the new planning system to be implemented, the Local Development Framework, to the Committee. The key document under the new system would be the Core Strategy, which would be closely integrated with the plans and strategies of other local public bodies, focused on delivery and coordinated with other components such as the Local Area Agreement and Sustainable Community Strategy. It was intended for the Core Strategy to be very different from the Local Plan, which was essentially a development control document. The key to the new system was the provision of a 'vision' for the District over the next fifteen years, in accordance with national and regional policy such as the East of England Plan. The District Council was under an obligation to consult widely with the local community, or there was the risk of the Planning Inspectorate declaring the Council's Framework 'unsound'.

The Committee was informed that a 'visioning' exercise had been undertaken recently by Chigwell Parish Council, which had examined open spaces, facilities, the street scene, education and housing provision within the parish. It had been a very useful process for the Parish Council, which had required the balancing of competing priorities, and it was intended to invite the public to comment in due course. Local Councils were requested to consider pursuing a similar approach to Chigwell Parish Council, either singly or jointly, as it would be an excellent method of engaging the local community in the establishment of the Local Development Framework. Stage one of the engagement process would involve events and exhibitions throughout the District advertising the Core Strategy; stage two would encompass the more formal consultation upon the issues and options contained within the Strategy and was scheduled to start in the autumn of 2008. The Forward Planning Manager advised the Committee that the emphasis of the Local Development Framework was upon delivery, and would be an entirely different concept from the Local Plan.

30. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman stated that Essex County Council had issued a rebuttal of the recent article in The Times newspaper regarding the £61,950 cost of a trip by politicians and senior officers to the 400th anniversary celebrations of English settlement in Jamestown, Virginia.

In respect of three-week cycles for the Area Planning Sub-Committees, the Deputy Chief Executive stated that the Local Councils had been consulted and their concerns were considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This Committee had then recommended a switch to three-week cycles for the Area Planning Sub-Committees, which was subsequently approved by both the Cabinet and Council. It was accepted that the change might be an issue for some local councils, however there would still be a 21-day consultation period for each planning application.

It was reported to the Committee that at the next meeting there would be reports concerning Quality Councils, Community Involvement in Section 106 Planning Gain Decisions on Applications, and an invitation would be issued for Councillor Hume, the Highways Portfolio Holder for Essex County Council, to attend.

The Deputy Chief Executive reported upon the recent establishment of the District Youth Council and progress thereafter. The Youth Council was aware of the need to represent all young people within the District, including those in care or with special needs.

31. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Councillor Mrs Pond was thanked for her chairmanship of the Committee throughout the year. The Committee were advised of the scheduled meeting dates for 2008/09.

RESOLVED:

That the following meeting dates scheduled for the new municipal year be noted:

- (i) 11 June 2008;
- (ii) 5 November 2008; and
- (iii) 4 March 2009.

CHAIRMAN