

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MINUTES

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Committee **Date:** Tuesday, 1 June 2010

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.30 - 9.05 pm

Members Present: Councillors R Morgan (Chairman) K Angold-Stephens (Vice Chairman of Council) (Vice-Chairman) R Barrett, W Breare-Hall, Ms R Brookes, Mrs R Gadsby, Mrs A Grigg, D Jacobs, D C Johnson, J Philip and J M Whitehouse

Other Councillors: Councillors K Chana, Mrs D Collins, Ms J Hart, Mrs M McEwen, G Mohindra, Mrs M Sartin, Mrs P Smith, D Stallan, Mrs J Sutcliffe, Mrs L Wagland, C Whitbread, Mrs J H Whitehouse and D Wixley

Apologies: Councillors

Officers Present: D Macnab (Acting Chief Executive), K Durrani (Assistant Director Technical (Environment and Street Scene)), S G Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer), P Tredgett (Information Assistant), A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer) and M Jenkins (Democratic Services Assistant)

By Invitation: S Jones (London Underground Ltd.)

1. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman reminded everyone present that the meeting would be broadcast live to the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

2. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no substitute Members for the meeting.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 15 April 2010 be agreed.

5. LONDON UNDERGROUND LIMITED - PRESENTATION

The Committee welcomed Stephen Jones from London Underground Limited (LUL). He was there to update the Committee on the latest work being undertaken on the underground stations in the District. London Underground wanted to modernise the

stations and to make them safer places by adding CCTV, Public Address systems and Help Points. This project had been going on for the last four years and the works have just finished. LUL were in the planning stages for the 2012 Olympics and were in the early stages of planning and forecasting of demand. They were looking to complete the planning by 2011. LUL were also looking at the opening times of the ticket offices and were basing this on their survey of ticket sales. It was noted that only one in twenty tickets were bought at ticket offices, they rest were mostly Oyster card journeys. Given this they were looking to establish offices in the right place and to adjust ticket office opening hours. Their priority was to deliver a better service and provide assistance to passengers.

The meeting was then opened up to questions from members:

Councillor J Sutcliffe: Ticket office opening times, would the new times affect security for passengers in the evenings and help for passengers with problems with their tickets generally. During the Olympics their help would be needed to help foreign visitors staying in the area?

Mr Jones: LUL were presently looking at staffing and stations would not be undermanned, staff would be moved from the ticket office to other duties.

Councillor R Gadsby: Would not the upcoming Olympics need more people at stations?

Mr Jones: LUL would look at the manning of stations for that time; they would also need people with language skills.

Councillor Jon Whitehouse: Passengers would still need help with some tickets or when applying for travel/oyster cards etc. Also there was only step free access to platform 2 at Epping Station at present. And is there any plans for a Park and Ride scheme to be set up in our area.

Mr Jones: This would all form part of their forward planning.

Councillor R Brookes: She noted that the service from Loughton had got better but more crowded. As for Sunday closures of lines, there seemed to be no joined up planning over line closures for maintenance.

Mr Jones: There were a lot of closures but they do try and minimise disruption, but the scale of the works will mean that they will inevitably affect journeys.

Councillor R Brookes: Some indicator boards at Loughton have been out for a long time.

Mr Jones: The boards are not run manually; they are linked all the way down the line. I will find out what has been happening at Loughton and get back to you.

Councillor D Wixley: Who is responsible for cleaning up the litter in the car park at Loughton Station?

Mr Jones: He would look into it and get back to him.

Councillor A Grigg: She was concerned about the Epping and Ongar line and wondered if it could be reused. The new owners of the line had talked about turning it into a 'heritage line'. Are you aware of any approach that they may have made to LUL?

Mr Jones: He did not know, but he would find out and get back.

Councillor D Johnson: He was concerned that they were only just starting the planning for the Olympics – did they have enough time to do this.

Mr Jones: Planning had been going on for some time including modelling work; as they need to have plans in place for a 2011 test event.

Councillor D Johnson: How did you arrive at the figures for the ticket office closures?

Mr Jones: The opening hours were designed to reflect passenger numbers and their throughput in the station; a lot of work had gone into this. Looking at the purchasing patterns only one in twenty tickets was purchased at the ticket office, the other nineteen journeys were on Oyster Cards.

Councillor J Philip: He queried the opening hours at Theydon Bois as it may cause problems to the travelling public when closed. He was also concerned about the Station House at Theydon Bois; it had been allowed to deteriorate, could this be tackled.

Mr Jones: The changes in opening times were only proposals at present and they would consult about them. The public would not lose out on services. As for the Station House he would find out if there were any plans to refurbish it.

Councillor Janet Whitehouse: Who is responsible for parking at tube stations and are they aware of the shortage of parking at Epping Station. And, is there any progress being made towards substantially increasing the parking, such as a double-deck car park.

Mr Jones: There was an ongoing dialogue on the car parks, we know they are well used, but LUL are still at the early stages on this. He will find out more and report back in more detail.

Councillor D Collins: Are the stations to be fully manned in other ways despite the proposed restricted closing hours of the ticket offices.

Mr Jones: There will be staff available at the stations, but not necessarily at the ticket offices. There will be a staged consultation on this at some time.

Councillor P Smith: Previous presentations from LUL mentioned how hot the carriages got in the summer months, has it improved.

Mr Jones: The Central Line has a comparatively young fleet of trains (from 1992) but LUL are limited in what they can do to adapt them to take air conditioning units as there was insufficient tunnel height to take the units. By 2011 some work will have been carried on these trains including new windows and seats.

Councillor P Smith: Is there a scheme that includes using the Police for increased passenger safety.

Mr Jones: Passenger safety is always high on our list. This would include installing Help Points and CCTV. We can count on the Transport Police who will ensure they are in the right place at the right time.

Councillor J Sutcliffe: There are closed exits at Epping Station could they be opened; and could the closed eastbound exit at Buckhurst Hill station be opened as it is a long walk to/from the main entrance for people who live on the eastern side or who use the car park off Queens Road, and security should be less of a problem now that the CCTV is working in the underpass area.

Mr Jones: There are no plans at the moment to open the exits as we would have to deploy our staff to cover these. There would be a cost involved in staff and the installation of ticket reading machines. I understand what you are asking for but we need to make cost judgements on things like this.

Councillor W Breare-Hall: At Epping, why is the Oyster Card reader not in commission and why do trains come into platform 2 when there is no train on platform 1.

Mr Jones: Our aim is to get the majority of trains on to platform 1 so people do not have to walk. As for the Oyster Card reader it is has not been put into commission as it would have to be manned.

Councillor L Wagland: The signage has got worse over the years, they are not very clear. It is particularly bad at Mile End as the boards can't be read. There are also some safety concerns at Stratford where recent works have narrowed the platform edge, which now seems unsafe.

Mr Jones: There is a review taking place looking at the arrangement of signs at local stations. At Mile End there are works taking place at present, the same goes for Stratford Station. The Platform width does comply with safety standards, but I will check these out and get back to you.

Councillor D Jacobs: The older trains were quieter, will the new stock be as quiet.

Mr Jones: We will look at any lessons learnt when we replace them. But it will be a number of years before we replace the current stock on the Central Line.

Councillor D Jacobs: Are there any plans that LUL would sanction a connection with the Epping/Ongar line coming into platform 2 at Epping station.

Mr Jones: He was not aware of any plans about this, but will check if any dialogue has been opened up.

Councillor M McEwen: Rural commuters beyond Ongar tend to drive to Theydon Bois or Debden and take the underground into London. They have no where to park at these stations so tend to park in the surrounding roads, which have yellow lines. Are you aware of this problem?

Mr Jones: I will be happy to report back on this.

Councillor R Barrett: Discussions on parking have been going on for about three years. It may be that with increased parking, the underground could not cope with the extra capacity. The Oyster card also encourages more people to use the system. Tube lines in rural locations are important and we can work with LUL on parking. Can you tell us what are the traffic volume trends for each line? Can we get more trains on each line? What is the volume at peak periods on each line and can the lines cope. And how can the Council work with you on parking issues?

Mr Jones: I will have to check with colleagues on parking issues. As for capacity, the Central line is a modern fleet at maximum capacity; we cannot lengthen the platforms but we do have a new signalling system and are looking at how we can get the most from that line. As for the capacity on the lines, I will have to check the figures for the central line. It has recently taken a dip (because of the recession) but we are looking at a long term increase in passenger numbers.

Councillor Janet Whitehouse: What about the ticket office consultation?

Mr Jones: There will be consultations with the staff and the trade unions following the changes in the ticket purchasing habits of the public.

Councillor Jennie Hart: There were problems with parking at Debden station and in the surrounding streets. We need more parking spaces at the stations as there was restricted parking on the streets.

Mr Jones: I will find out for you if there are any plans.

Councillor R Barrett: I can't see what can be done about parking; it is not a problem that can be solved quickly.

Mr Jones agreed that parking was a difficult problem to solve.

Councillor J Sutcliffe: Was there a possibility of keeping talks open on some form of extension of the Freedom Pass to all stations on the Central line, maybe a limited use permit such as one free journey per month, allowing it for the over 70's to start with.

Mr Jones: There are discussions between LUL, the London Boroughs and TfL; there may be an opportunity to open a dialogue on this there.

The Chairman thanked Mr Jones for his presentation and for answering the questions posed. He noted that any answers to any questions not answered that night would be put in the Members Bulletin on their receipt.

6. REVISION OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE SAFER CLEANER GREENER STANDING SCRUTINY PANEL

The Committee considered a report from the Safer Cleaner Greener Standing Panel to make a minor alteration to their terms of reference deleting the reference to the West Essex Joint Waste Management Committee and replacing it with references to the Waste Partnership Member Board and the Inter Authority Member Working Group.

RESOLVED:

That the amendment of clause 2 of the Terms of Reference of the SCG Standing Panel to reflect changes in the Member monitoring arrangements of the Essex Waste Strategy by deleting the reference to the West Essex Joint Waste Management Committee and replacing it with references to the Waste Partnership Member Board and the Inter Authority Member Working Group be agreed.

7. PETITIONS - NEW SCHEME

The Constitution and Member Services Standing Panel asked that it be allowed to report directly to the Council meeting on 29 June 2010, on the Government's consultation on petitions and the new 'e-petition' scheme. This would mean bypassing this Committee as they were under time constraints to reply. The Standing Panel will have to consider the legislation and make recommendations for the amendment of the Council's Constitution to deal with the new rules and regulations.

RESOLVED:

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee authorise the Constitution and Member Services Standing Panel to report directly to full Council on the proposed new petition scheme at the end of June due to time constraints.

8. DEFRA CONSULTATION ON LANDFILL

The Assistant Director (Engineering Services), K Durrani introduced the report from the Safer Cleaner Greener Standing Panel. They had considered the Defra consultation document on landfill at their last meeting (29 April 2010). The consultation paper was on the possibility of banning certain materials from landfill and the steps which might be required to achieve that.

The consultation document was seeking responses to the following policy options: do nothing; landfill bans with a requirement to pre-sort; or payment based on producer

responsibility. The Standing Panel considered and endorsed a generalised response to six detailed questions asked by the consultation paper.

On consideration, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorsed the Safer Cleaner Greener Panel's recommended response.

RESOLVED:

That the Safer Cleaner Greener Standing Scrutiny Panel's recommended response to the Defra consultation paper on landfill as set out in their report be agreed.

9. WORK PROGRAMME MONITORING

(a) Work Programmes

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Senior Democratic Services officer, Simon Hill took the committee through their proposed work programme for the coming year.

Constitution and Member Services:

Members asked that item 8 on their work programme, member training review, be considered earlier than the schedule date of March 2011. Officers agreed that this could be done.

Councillor Jon Whitehouse said that the recent problems with the parking reviews should be looked at by a panel to assimilate any lessons learnt. Mr Hill advised that he should complete a PICK form and have it discussed at the next Overview and Scrutiny meeting.

(b) New Year's Work Programme

The Committee considered the two items circulated as a supplementary agenda requesting two more items of work to be added to the work programme.

(i) The first item was a request from Councillor Mrs D Collins to review the way annual appointments were made by the annual council meeting at the start of each year. This would also include a review of the appointment of Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Council.

AGREED: that this item of work should be given to the Constitution and Member Services Standing Scrutiny Panel and added to their work programme.

(ii) The second item was a request from Councillor C Whitbread for a review of the opportunities for setting up of assistants to Portfolio Holders so as to assist with Portfolio Holder duties and aid succession planning.

AGREED: that this item also be given to the Constitution and Member Services Standing Scrutiny Panel and added to their work programme.

(c) Reserve Programme

There were no items to add to the reserve programme.

10. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERSHIP TO STANDING PANELS

The Committee were asked to make appointments to Standing Panels in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny rules. The Committee were reminded that the Council had agreed pro rata applied to Standing Panels and that membership should be kept to a minimum to allow each Group to have representation. It was noted that on this basis it had been agreed by group leaders that Panels would consist of 11 Members, plus any independent member that wished to be a member of a Panel.

It was reported that nominations to Chairman and Vice Chairman to Standing Panels were excluded from the pro rata calculation rules required for such positions contained in the Council's constitution.

The Committee had before them a tabled paper detailing nominations to the Panels.

RESOLVED:

That the appointments to Standing Panels annexed to these minutes be adopted.

11. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERSHIP TO TASK AND FINISH PANELS

The Committee were asked to consider appointments to the new Task and Finish Panel.

It was noted that any Member could be appointed to Task and Finish Panels. However Cabinet Members would not be able to serve on panels which bore directly on their Portfolio. In addition no panel could comprise of members of a single political group and restrictions on numbers did not apply.

Members were also asked to appoint a Chairman and Vice Chairman to each Panel.

The meeting had before them a tabled schedule detailing nominations.

RESOLVED:

That the appointments to Task and Finish Panel annexed to these minutes be adopted.

12. CABINET REVIEW

1. Councillor Mrs Collins updated the Committee on the latest government proposed changes to planning policy; they will now concentrate on enabling more local decisions. A lot of Quangos have been or are about to be disbanded, including the Audit Commission and Gypsy and Traveller issues are to be dealt with locally. Details are to be issued in the Members Bulletin.

2. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that there were some problems with the Parking reviews and the cost of advertising them. A late updating report will go out to the Cabinet by the end of the week.

13. UPCOMING PRESENTATION FROM THE LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

It was noted that the LSP manager would attend the next meeting of this Committee. Members decided that they needed information from the LSP manger on what areas he would cover at his presentation. To this end the LSP annual report will be

circulated to members of the Committee to give them an idea of the subjects to be covered.

Councillor Jacobs said he would like an update on the Ongar Health Centre, Mr Macnab said he would put an answer in the Members Bulletin.

CHAIRMAN

Overview and Scrutiny Panels Nominations for 2010/11

Standing Panels

Constitution and Member Services Panel

Member Nominations –

Conservative Group (7): K Chana; Mrs McEwen; Ms J Hedges; J Philip; Mrs M Sartin; D Stallan ; Ms C Edwards.

Liberal Democrats Group (2): Mrs J Sutcliffe; Mrs J Whitehouse

LRA Group (2): J Markham, R Cohen

Other Nominations: none

Chairman – Mrs M McEwen

Vice-Chairman – K Chana

Finance and Performance Management

Member Nominations –

Conservative Group (7): B Judd; D Johnson; G Mohindra; J Philip; W Pryor; Mrs S Watson, W Breare-Hall

Liberal Democrats Group (2): D Jacobs; (+1 Vacancy)

LRA Group (2): Mrs R Brookes, R Cohen

Other Nominations: none

Chairman – G Mohindra

Vice-Chairman – R Cohen

Housing

Member Nominations -

Conservative Group (7): Mrs R Gadsby; Mrs J Lea; Mrs A Grigg; A Lion; R Barrett; Ms J Hedges; Ms S Jones

Liberal Democrats Group (2): Mrs J Whitehouse; D Dodeja

LRA Group (2): Ms J Hart, L Leonard

Other Nominations: S Murray

Chairman – S Murray

Vice-Chairman – Mrs R Gadsby

Safer, Cleaner, Greener

Member Nominations –

Conservative Group (7): W Breare-Hall; A Boyce; Mrs C Edwards; Mrs S Jones; B Judd; Mrs J Hedges; G Mohindra

Liberal Democrats Group (2): D Jacobs; P Spencer

LRA Group (2): Mrs C Pond, Ms T Cochrane

Other Nominations: none

Chairman - Ms C Edwards

Vice-Chairman – Mrs J Hedges

Planning Services

Member Nominations –

Conservative Group (7): Mrs A Grigg; Mrs S Jones; Mrs McEwen; W Prior; J Philip; A Watts; H Ulkun.

Liberal Democrats Group (2): Mrs P Brooks; J M Whitehouse

LRA Group (2): C Finn, J Markham

Other Nominations: none

Chairman – J Philip

Vice Chairman – H Ulkun

**Task and Finish Panels for 2010/11
Draft Nominations for Membership**

Children Services Task and Finish Panel

(No pro-rata on T&F Panels)

Members –

Conservative Group: Mrs R Gadsby; Mrs J Hedges; J Knapman, Mrs L Wagland

Liberal Democrats Group: Mrs P Brooks

LRA Group: Mrs R Brookes, Ms T Cochrane

Other Nominations: none

Chairman: Mrs L Wagland

Vice Chairman: to be appointed at first meeting

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