

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF HOUSING SCRUTINY STANDING PANEL
HELD ON THURSDAY, 27 JANUARY 2011
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 5.40 - 8.40 PM**

Members Present: S Murray (Chairman), Mrs R Gadsby (Vice-Chairman), R Barrett, D Dodeja, Mrs A Grigg (Chairman of Council), Ms J Hart, Mrs S Jones, Mrs J Lea, L Leonard and A Lion

Other members present: W Breare-Hall, Ms R Brookes, J Philip, D Stallan and J M Whitehouse

Apologies for Absence: Ms J Hedges and Mrs J H Whitehouse

Officers Present A Hall (Director of Housing), R Wilson (Assistant Director (Operations)) and M Jenkins (Democratic Services Assistant)

44. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

It was noted that Councillors J Philip and J Whitehouse were substituting for Councillors Mrs J Hedges and Mrs J Whitehouse respectively.

45. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

46. TERMS OF REFERENCE/WORK PROGRAMME

The Terms of Reference were noted. The Work Programme was currently running on course.

47. HOUSING SERVICE STRATEGIES ON TENANT PARTICIPATION AND RENT ARREARS

The Panel received a report from Mr A Hall, Director of Housing, regarding the Housing Service Strategies on Tenant Participation and Rent Arrears.

The Housing Service Strategies were originally produced around 12 years ago in accordance with an agreed standard framework, and had since been updated. The strategies gave more detail than the Council's main Housing Strategy on the various housing services provided. There were 17 Housing Service Strategies which covered subjects such as Equality and Diversity and Housing Allocations.

The strategies were produced to a common format that set out how individual housing services would be delivered. They had assisted Housing Services in achieving the Customer Service Excellence Award for the Housing Directorate excellence.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Housing Service Strategies on Tenant Participation and Rent Arrears be recommended to the Housing Portfolio Holder for incorporation.

48. COUNCIL RENT INCREASE 2011/12 BRIEFING

The Panel received a briefing from Mr A Hall, Director of Housing, regarding the proposed Council Rent Increase for 2011/12 – Briefing.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) had been prepared in accordance with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Under this legislation the Secretary of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) had the power to issue directives in respect of appropriate income and expenditure items and the calculation of central government subsidy entitlement.

The Government had announced their intention of replacing the existing HRA subsidy system where councils were required to pay their notional HRA surplus as determined by the subsidy settlement to the Government who redistribute it. The new system would enable councils to keep all rents in exchange for an allocation of national housing debt.

The proposed average rent increase for 2011/12 was 7.2% (£5.51), which gave an average rent for 2011/12 of £87.67.

At its meeting on 17 January 2011 the joint meeting of the Finance and Performance Cabinet Committee and Scrutiny Panel was due to make a recommendation to the Cabinet on the proposed Council Rent Increase for 2011/12.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed recommendation to the Cabinet on the Council rent Increase for 2011/12 be noted.

49. REVIEW OF PARKING ENFORCEMENT MEASURES ON HOUSING ESTATES

The Panel received a report from Mr R Wilson, Assistant Director of Housing (Operations), regarding the Review of Parking Enforcement Measures on Housing Estates.

At its meeting on 23 March 2009, the Panel considered a report on options to resolve the increasing problems with parking and increased congestion on housing estates. The Panel agreed that parking enforcement measures should be carried out on housing estates on an ad hoc basis. The members further agreed that the position should be reviewed in January 2011.

Separately the Cabinet had given a high priority to off street parking schemes in the Loughton and Abbess Roding areas. Although there were other proposed schemes, the available funding was not known until the tenders for earlier schemes were evaluated.

Following consultation exercises, enforcement measures had been undertaken in two areas across the District being Valley Hill Close, Loughton and Shelly Close, Ongar. There were concerns about areas around the Debden Underground Station because of commuters parking on grass verges to avoid parking charges. Consideration was being given to undertaking a consultation exercise on enforcement measures in

Torrington Drive, Loughton, to stop commuters parking on the grass verge opposite the flats.

It was noted that during this period, there had been 6 appeals against refusals of permission for vehicular crossovers, one of which had been upheld. It was suggested that the existing policy of carrying out parking enforcement measures on an ad hoc basis on housing owned land continued.

RESOLVED:

(1) That the Review of Parking Enforcement Measures on Housing Estates be noted; and

(2) That the existing policy of carrying out parking enforcement measures on an ad hoc basis in housing-owned land continue indefinitely.

50. REPORTS TO BE MADE TO THE NEXT MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no reports being put forward to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

51. FUTURE MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Panel was on 24 March 2011.