

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COUNCIL MINUTES

Committee: Council

Date: 23 April 2013

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

Time: 7.30 - 10.00 pm

Members Present: Councillors B Rolfe (Chairman), K Angold-Stephens, K Avey, R Bassett, A Boyce, Mrs H Brady, W Breare-Hall, K Chana, T Church, Mrs T Cochrane, R Cohen, C Finn, Mrs R Gadsby, L Girling, Mrs A Grigg, J Hart, Ms J Hart, D Jacobs, Mrs S Jones, Ms H Kane, P Keska, J Knapman, Ms Y Knight, Mrs J Lea, L Leonard, A Lion, J Markham, A Mitchell MBE, G Mohindra, R Morgan, S Murray, J Philip, Mrs C Pond, B Sandler, Ms G Shiell, Mrs P Smith, P Spencer, D Stallan, Ms S Stavrou, Mrs T Thomas, H Ulkun, Mrs L Wagland, G Waller, A Watts, Mrs E Webster, C Whitbread, Mrs J H Whitehouse, J M Whitehouse, D Wixley, N Wright and J Wyatt

Apologies: Councillors Mrs M Sartin (Vice-Chairman), G Chambers, P Gode, Mrs M McEwen, H Mann and Ms S Watson

Officers Present: G Chipp (Chief Executive), D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive), C O'Boyle (Director of Corporate Support Services), R Palmer (Director of Finance and ICT), I Willett (Assistant to the Chief Executive), G Lunnun (Assistant Director (Democratic Services)), A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer), P Seager (Chairman's Secretary), J Preston (Director of Planning and Economic Development), A Mitchell (Assistant Director (Legal)) and T Carne (Public Relations and Marketing Officer)

113. VICE CHAIRMAN

The Chairman announced that the Vice-Chairman was absent and he invited Councillor B Sandler to join him on the dais as to fulfil the role of Vice-Chairman for this meeting.

114. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Assistant to the Chief Executive on behalf of the Chairman of Council, 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.

115. FORMER DISTRICT COUNCILLORS IAN BEATTIE AND JOAN ORMSTON

It was with much sadness that the Chairman informed the Council of the deaths of former District Councillors Ian Beattie and Joan Ormston.

The Chairman reported on his attendance at the funeral of Ian Beattie together with the Assistant to the Chief Executive. The Chairman advised that he would be attending the funeral of Joan Ormston later this week.

Members were informed that Ian Beattie had been a District Councillor for 21 years representing the Buckhurst Hill ward from 1974 until 1979 and the Buckhurst Hill West ward from 1979 until 1985. He had been Chairman of the Council in 1980/81.

He had also been a member of the former Chigwell Urban District Council for many years and Chairman of that authority in 1969/70.

Members were informed that Joan Ormston had been a District Councillor for four years representing the Debden Green Ward from 1990 until 1994. She had also been a Loughton Town Councillor.

Councillor Watts and Mr I Willett, Assistant to the Chief Executive paid tribute to the memory of Ian Beattie and Joan Ormston. Councillor Jenny Hart paid tribute to the memory of Joan Ormston.

The Council stood for a minute's silence in tribute to the memory of former District Councillors Ian Beattie and Joan Ormston.

116. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2013 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

117. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made pursuant to the Council's Code of Conduct for Members.

118. ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Chairman's Announcements

(i) Events

The Chairman reported on some of the events he had attended since the last meeting of the Council.

The Chairman thanked members for supporting and officers for arranging the Civic Awards event held at Gilwell Park.

The Council noted that the Chairman had attended a number of musical events including Motivat at Epping Forest College, Local Music Awards held at Loughton Methodist Church and Youth Makes Music held at the Royal Festival Hall. The Chairman referred to the success achieved by local youth groups at the High Sheriff's Awards, the Millennium Fund and the Essex Chairman's Awards.

The Chairman advised that he had attended the Declaration Ceremony for the new High Sheriff of Essex, Mrs Julia Abel-Smith.

Members noted that the Chairman had opened the Epping Forest Re-use Project in Bower Hill Epping.

The Chairman referred to his attendance at the St George's Day Parade and National Scout Service held at Windsor Castle at which her Royal Highness, the Duchess of Cambridge had been present.

(ii) Floral Display

The Chairman announced that he intended to send the flowers from tonight's meeting to Ann Crabb a resident of Lambourne End.

(b) Announcements by the Leader of the Council

The Leader advised that he had no announcements to make under this heading.

(c) Announcements by Portfolio Holders**(i) Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder**

Councillor Waller referred to the problems being experienced by visitors and shoppers seeking a car parking space in the Epping Town Centre car parks owned by the Council. He advised that there was little doubt that the current problems were linked to the substantial tariff increases, implemented on 5 January this year, in the station car parks operated by NCP on behalf of London Underground Limited. He advised that many commuters who had previously parked at the station were now opting instead to use the combined stay car parks at Bakers Lane and Cottis Lane and this was a matter of concern for local retailers who feared their customers might look elsewhere if they were unable to park at convenient locations in the town.

The Portfolio Holder advised that extensive studies had been conducted of the usage of the Council's car parks in an attempt to determine the extent of the recent changes. He said that he was satisfied that there were now times during the week when availability of the short term spaces was unacceptably low, requiring users to spend time driving around seeking a space and this situation had worsened noticeably as a result of the tariff changes at the station car park.

Members noted that in seeking a solution, the Portfolio Holder had been mindful of the need to avoid, if possible, an undue impact on local residents including those working for employers in the town. Councillor Waller advised that although further research was required he believed the most effective action would be to reintroduce dedicated short-stay car parking spaces and to limit their use clearly as short-stay only. Accordingly, he was proposing to create at least 100 dedicated short-stay spaces in one of the car parks, which would be restricted to stays of no longer than three hours. The Council noted that it would be necessary to review the way in which any revised tariff structure operated for the 100 spaces as it was necessary to monitor the Council's finances carefully.

Councillor Waller advised that he would discuss his proposals with Epping ward councillors, the Town Council and other interested parties at an early date. He agreed to keep all members informed of the proposals as the situation developed.

(ii) Housing Portfolio Holder

Councillor Stallan advised that on 12 April 2013 thieves had gained access to six separate electrical intake cupboards serving the maisonette blocks in Limes Avenue and Copperfield Chigwell and had stolen a quantity of relays, time-clocks, fuses and lighting controls that served the communal lighting and emergency lighting to the blocks.

The Council was informed that on 16 April 2013 an electrician had attended a job to switch on the communal lights as requested by officers at the Limes Farm Office who

had noticed that the lights were not working in the stairwells. The electrician had discovered the theft and had worked late into the night with Council officers to trace the cable routes and rewire the emergency lights on a temporary basis so as to make the staircases and balconies safe. Members noted that for the time being the communal emergency lights would remain on until a permanent repair could be arranged.

Councillor Stallan reported that the Police and the Council's Insurers had been notified and images from the Council's CCTV system had been provided to the Police who were investigating the incident. Members noted that letters had been sent to residents, ward members and the Community Association explaining the situation.

(d) Councillor D Johnson

The Council noted the resignation of D Johnson as a District Councillor with effect from 18 March 2013. Members were advised that notice had been received signed by two electors requesting an election to fill the casual vacancy and an election would be held at the same time as the scheduled County Council elections on 2 May 2013.

119. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Council noted that there were no public questions for this meeting.

120. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS UNDER NOTICE

(a) Town Centre Partnerships

Question from Councillor Angold-Stephens to Councillor Grigg, Asset Management and Economic Development Portfolio Holder

"I understand work is going on into improving the effectiveness of our Town Centre Partnerships in the District. Can the Portfolio Holder tell us if she has a long-term objective and an action plan to address any identified short-comings and will she be seeking the views of the traders in our respective towns on ways to improve the effectiveness and engagement of the Town Centre Partnerships in the local community?"

Reply of Councillor Grigg, Asset Management and Economic Development Portfolio Holder

"It is correct that work is going on as a result of a Council decision to provide pilot funding for this financial year. As Chairman of the meeting held with the Partnerships, I have led a review of what we are all doing to assist our Town Centres.

The intended approach is to create a team for each main town to look at new initiatives in town centres and across the District as a whole.

The long term objective is to assist the vitality and viability of our local economies, which are facing continuing challenges from large developments elsewhere, or from the growth of purchasing via the internet. As the funding is at present for this financial year only, we are concentrating on practical projects on the ground.

We recently provided support sessions to the Partnerships to assist the submission of bids for funds. The Business teams have been encouraged to establish links with the local Chamber of Commerce, and are being helped by the LSP Manager. It is

anticipated that the Chairmen (or deputies) of the Town Centre Partnerships will share the information regarding new initiatives with traders and then feed back as the traders' views to us at subsequent meetings.

I anticipate that some of the bids may well be about new ways of working or supporting existing projects such as the One Shops Local scheme and tourism initiatives.

I look forward to reporting back on progress, and what future plans might include in support of these efforts”.

(b) The New Welfare Reform

Question from Councillor Girling to Councillor Stavrou, Finance and Technology Portfolio Holder

“Channel 4 News on Thursday 28 February raised an issue about the new Bedroom Tax. A disabled sister under new rules has to share a room with her 14 year old sister, even though the disabled sister needed a modified room. Does the Portfolio Holder agree this is unacceptable and is there any flexibility under this new law that will enable this Council to mitigate against such anomalies?”.

Reply of Councillor Stavrou, Finance and Technology Portfolio Holder

“I would like to thank Councillor Girling for the question as it allows me to correct some of the mis-information that has been circulating on this issue and also to bring Councillor Girling up to speed as he seems not to have kept up with how this policy has developed.

Firstly, this is not a new law as it has been applicable to private tenants for many years. The recent publicity has arisen because the same size criteria is now being extended into the social sector.

However, the size criteria for Housing Benefit purposes with regard to disabled children, was the subject of a Court of Appeal judgement last year. The Department for Work and Pensions initially appealed the Court of Appeal judgement to the Supreme Court but, on 12 March 2013, the Secretary of State announced that the appeal would not be pursued further. Following that decision by the Secretary of State, the size criteria for all private tenants, both in the private and social rented sectors allows an additional bedroom for children who would be expected to share but who are unable to share because of their severe disabilities.

It is for us to satisfy ourselves that children are unable to share a bedroom and we will consider not only the nature and severity of the disability, but also the nature and frequency of care required during the night, and the extent and regularity of the disturbance to the sleep of the child who would normally be required to share the bedroom. If someone has medical evidence to support the requirement for a child to have their own room, they will be allowed an additional room in the calculation of their Housing Benefit entitlement”.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Girling to Councillor Stavrou

Councillor Girling asked if any training was proposed for members in relation to the new Welfare Reform.

Reply of Councillor Grigg

Councillor Grigg stated that she would consult with the Leader of Council and officers and respond to this supplementary question in writing with a copy of the reply being placed in the Council Bulletin.

Reply of the Leader of the Council

Councillor Whitbread pointed out that councillor workshops had already been held on this issue.

(c) Broadband Access Improvements**Question from Councillor Girling to Councillor Stavrou, Finance and Technology Portfolio Holder**

“The three Members’ Local Plan Workshops and a recent Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in which BT attended as guests, all raised the issue of growth of commercial development on Langston Road, Loughton. BT was made aware by fellow member Councillor Lion that Langston Road, which is earmarked for high volumes of commercial growth in the next 20 years, but has one of the lowest broadband coverage in the District. Can the Portfolio Holder advise members what action is being taken by the District Council to ensure businesses in Langston Road will be receiving improved Broadband access in the very near future?”

Reply of Councillor Stavrou, Finance and Technology Portfolio Holder

“The Council is limited in how it can assist as this is a commercial issue for the internet service providers, as was highlighted in the BT presentation to which Councillor Girling refers.

Funding from the Government to improve connectivity is being managed by Essex County Council. Their consultation period for the Essex Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) State Aid Public Consultation ends on 19 April and the preferred supplier will be announced after this date. The preferred supplier will then advise where the funding from the BDUK will be spent. It must be remembered that the supplier is only likely to upgrade connectivity where it is commercially advantageous for them to do so. However, there is a website link that is available to allow people to register their interest in improving their local connectivity. This is currently being publicised prominently on the front page of the Council’s website.

The Council has already assisted in improving internet connectivity within the Council area by facilitating wireless broadband, to both businesses and the public, as a side benefit of the work on business continuity. The successful supplier, Fibre WiFi, can supply high speed broadband connectivity to areas that the major suppliers will not. Aggregated speeds of between 25Mb and 200Mb are available to most areas within the District if they choose to take up this service.

(d) Council's Nursery Service**Question from Councillor Angold Stephens to Councillor Breare-Hall, Environment Portfolio Holder.**

"At the last Council meeting I asked about the business plan for the Nursery but did not get a satisfactory reply. If, because of the reduced nursery area for growing at the new site, plants have to be externally sourced at considerable cost, or grown on from small purchased plants at a lesser cost, will the Portfolio Holder publish a business plan for the new nursery operation and provide a ground plan showing how the nursery and grounds maintenance will fit onto the site showing glasshouse space, outside standing areas for outdoor plants, and storage of pots, compost, and grounds maintenance machinery?"

Reply of Councillor Breare-Hall, Environment Portfolio Holder

"This issue has been raised before and has been satisfactorily answered either by myself or the Asset Management and Economic Development Portfolio Holder. In answering the question again this evening I have nothing new to add to those previous responses. The relocation of the Nursery Service, which forms part of the Council's Grounds Maintenance Operations, follows both a review of the manner in which the Nursery service is provided, and the Council's decision, as part of a strategic land holding review, to market the land in Pyrles Lane, Loughton, where the Nursery is currently located. A new depot is proposed on Council owned land at Oakwood Hill and the Nursery service will relocate to that new depot, should the appropriate consents be secured.

In June 2011, the then Environment Portfolio Holder placed a confidential report on the Cabinet agenda detailing how changes in staffing and operations at the Nursery could both facilitate a move away and generate savings. At the meeting, the Portfolio Holder took the decision to withdraw the report, and it is has yet to be resubmitted to Cabinet. However, I can inform the Member that the report set out changes to operations whereby, instead of plants being grown from seed, they would be purchased as seedlings and then grown on in glass houses at the new depot. This reduces the space required for glass houses but still enables the current level of service to be maintained. Overall, the relocation of the Nursery, and changes in operational approach, plus some associated staffing changes, were estimated to generate savings in the order of £45,000 per annum.

Moving on to the issue of a business plan, if the Member wishes to understand the Nursery service budget in more detail, the operational expenditure and income are clearly set out in the Council's budget. Beyond this, and the analysis of savings I have outlined above, I do not intend publishing a business plan at this time. This issue was also examined by Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting in July 2012, when it considered the Call-in of the Cabinet decision to approve the seeking of a planning consent for the Pyrles Lane site. Councillor Jennie Hart sought some assurances around the future of the Council's Nursery service and the Director of Environment and Street Scene set out in his answer to Councillor Mrs Hart the details I have provided above. He emphasised, as I have done,

the fact that this relocation and changes in service approach were all part of a much wider Council strategic land holding review. Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to support the original decision of Cabinet.

With regard to a ground plan for the new depot, the outline planning application has within it drawings which are indicative of the proposed layout. Those drawings identify the space allocated to the Nursery service and I will ensure that the Member receives a copy of them”.

(e) Expenditure on Consultants

Question from Councillor Jennie Hart to Councillor Stavrou, Finance and Technology Portfolio Holder.

“In view of the very high budget allowance of £100,000 for a consultant to advise on the next waste management contract, is the Portfolio Holder able to provide figures for expenditure on consultants engaged on all Council issues for the year 2011/12?”.

Reply of Councillor Stavrou, Finance and Technology Portfolio Holder

“The time from the receipt of the question to this meeting has not been sufficient for the Accountancy Section to compile a reply at a time when they are working on the closure of the accounts for 2012/13. As consultants are used across a wide range of activities, including capital schemes and the Local Plan, a substantial amount of analysis is necessary in order to provide a robust and comprehensive answer. I will arrange therefore for a written answer to be sent to Councillor Hart in due course and I will also publish the answer in the Council Bulletin”.

Supplementary Question from Councillor Jenny Hart to Councillor Stavrou

Councillor Hart asked if expenditure of £100,000 on a consultant in relation to the waste management contract represented value for money.

Reply of Councillor Stavrou

Councillor Stavrou advised that it would be inappropriate for her to comment on detailed costs as she did not have the figures in front of her. She confirmed that Councillor Hart would get a full and accurate answer to her question in the near future.

121. REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

The Council received written reports from the Asset Management and Economic Development Portfolio Holder, the Environment Portfolio Holder, the Finance and Technology Portfolio Holder, the Housing Portfolio Holder, the Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder, the Planning Portfolio Holder, the Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder, and the Support Services Portfolio Holder.

The Chairman invited the Leader to provide an oral report and other members of the Cabinet give an oral update of their written reports.

(a) The Leader of the Council

Councillor Whitbread thanked the many District Councillors who had attended and contributed to the three Local Plan Workshops which had been held. He also

extended thanks to the representatives of Town and Parish Councils for their valuable input.

The Leader drew attention to the Duty to Co-operate requirement of the Local Plan process. He stated that he had attended a joint meeting with the Leader and representatives of Harlow Council at which an update had been provided from a number of developers who had proposals for schemes in and around the boundaries of the Epping Forest District and Harlow.

The Council noted the proceedings of a recent meeting of the Locality Board. Councillor Whitbread advised that as well as discussing budget proposals the meeting had received feedback from a recent visit to the District of the new Police and Crime Commissioner, Nick Alston, an update on the North Weald Airfield consultancy, a progress report on the development of a West Essex Wellbeing Strategy and a presentation on the Essex County-Wide Traveller Unit. The Leader stated that concerns had been shared with members of the Locality Board about the adequacy of reporting arrangements for highway defects under the new Ringway Jacobs contract and the proposals for a County-Wide Telecare contract. Councillor Whitbread stated that the Locality Board was proving to be a positive initiative in terms of improving communication and mutual understanding between the various tiers of Government affecting the District.

The Leader reported that on 15 March 2013 he had chaired the Local Strategic Partnership Board which had received a report from the Director of Housing on the Council's Welfare Reform Mitigation Action Plan. He stated that the Council had been congratulated by other parties for taking such a pro-active stance in relation to this matter. He continued saying that as many of the reforms had been implemented the Partnership had agreed unanimously to share information amongst themselves, as many agencies were involved. To this end it had been agreed to hold a conference on the issue of Welfare Reform and the local impacts for the Epping Forest District.

Councillor Whitbread reported on his attendance at a meeting of the Essex Leaders and Chief Executives. Discussions had included the Community Budget Pilot Programme. The Leader stated that it was still not clear what efficiencies could be delivered under this initiative but that progress was being made within the Essex Pilot in relation to the Integrated Commissioning of Health and Adult Social Care Services which hopefully would be of benefit particularly to the elderly.

Councillor Whitbread also referred to his continued involvement in the West Essex Economic Alliance, the London Stansted Corridor Consortium and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership.

Councillor Whitbread referred to the announcement made earlier in the meeting by the Chairman of the Council regarding the Civic Awards event. He stated that this had been an event of which the Council could be proud and he said he had been pleased to be invited by the Chairman to formally toast the guests, on behalf of the Council.

In closing, the Leader invited all members to join him in offering congratulations to former Councillor Di Collins on being selected as Epping Forest Citizen of the Year. He advised that the award had been in recognition of the length and breadth of her voluntary and community work for the residents of the Epping Forest District.

(b) Finance and Technology Portfolio Holder

Councillor Stavrou referred to the reference in her written report to the Telephone Switch Replacement Project. She advised that the existing Telephone Switch was obsolete and would be unsupported from 2017. As a result a tender exercise for the replacement of the switch had been undertaken with the assistance of the Essex Procurement Hub using the Government Procurement Service Framework.

The Council noted that invitations to quote had been issued and five expressions of interest had been received. The first stage of the evaluation had accounted for 75% of the scoring and had been evaluated against both the price and the ability to meet the specification and technical requirements. Councillor Stavrou advised that the top three scoring suppliers from this stage had then been required to present demonstrations. The demonstrations had accounted for the remaining 25% of the scoring and had been attended by herself, ICT officers and an ICT consultant. She advised that the totals had been combined and as a result she had signed a Portfolio Holder Decision Notice accepting the tender submitted by Solar Communications in the sum of £213,643. She pointed out that the new contract would achieve annual revenue savings of between £30,000 and £35,000.

(c) Asset Management and Economic Development Portfolio Holder

Councillor Grigg pointed out that Sainsbury's had agreed to submit an application to vary the Section 106 Agreement in relation to The Broadway store only to allow servicing via the forest from their depot in Waltham Abbey. She advised that the application would be considered at a future meeting of the District Development Control Committee.

Councillor Grigg drew attention to the success of the Tourism website – www.visiteppingforest.org and the One Shops Local website – www.oneshopslocal.com

(d) Planning Portfolio Holder

Councillor Bassett advised that the Planning Advisory Service had agreed to offer a training session for councillors on the new Government guidance on planning for traveller sites and reported that the session would take place on Monday 13 May 2013 commencing at 5.30 p.m. at the Epping Town Council Offices. He stated that further details would be included in the Council Bulletin. The Portfolio Holder encouraged all members of the Council to attend this session as it was important that the issue was robustly addressed in the Local Plan.

Councillor Bassett advised that he had attended a meeting concerning the proposal of the London Borough of Enfield for a Northern Gateway Access Road and that he would provide a summary of the proceedings in the Council Bulletin.

The Portfolio Holder advised that it now appeared the Government had softened its approach to deregulation of permitted development rights within residential curtilages. He stated that he would provide details in the Council Bulletin.

(e) Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder

Councillor Webster highlighted the grants obtained by the Council's Community Services as outlined in her written report.

122. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS WITHOUT NOTICE**(a) Car Parking in Epping**

Councillor J M Whitehouse referred to the statement made earlier in the meeting by the Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder and asked when and how a decision would be taken in relation to a new tariff structure. He also asked what consultation would be undertaken in relation to this matter.

Councillor Waller, Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder advised that he was not yet in a position to provide more details about the tariffs and it had not yet been decided in which car park the 100 spaces would be provided. He confirmed that it was his intention to consult with Epping ward councillors and the Town Council in relation to this matter.

(b) Council Housing Estates – Signage

Councillor Watts stated that he had noticed that there was a lack of adequate signage on some of the Council's housing estates. He asked the Housing Portfolio Holder if steps could be taken to rectify the position.

Councillor Stallan, Housing Portfolio Holder stated that he would discuss this matter with Housing Officers and would establish whether finance available within the Enhancement Fund could be used to improve signage.

(c) Epping Parking Review

Councillor J H Whitehouse asked the Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder when outstanding issues in relation to the Epping Parking Review would be completed.

Councillor Waller, Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder stated that he was reluctant to provide timescales as this was a matter which was outside of his control as the works were being implemented by Essex County Council as a contractor on behalf of the District Council. He continued however, that it was a priority for him to get matters completed as quickly as possible.

(d) Careline

Councillor Lea asked the Housing Portfolio Holder if he was in a position to provide more information about the future of the Epping Forest Careline in the light of Essex County Council's proposals for a county-wide Telecare contract.

Councillor Stallan, Housing Portfolio Holder advised that the comments made by District Councillors at the last Council meeting had been reported to and taken into account by County Councillors. He reported that County Council officers were gathering information to assist County Members in making a decision and account would be taken of the possible impact on current local provision. Councillor Stallan stated that he would work with officers to ensure that local residents received a good service whichever option was pursued by the County Council.

(e) Former Laundry Site, Bower Hill, Epping

Councillor Avey asked the Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder if any steps were being taken to acquire land in Bower Hill in order to provide additional car parking.

Councillor Waller, Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder stated that the Council's legal officers had made enquiries about the ownership of this land but it would not solve the problem of short-term parking in the town due to its distance from the High Street. He also pointed out whilst the site was close to the underground station there was still space available within the station car park which suggested that additional land was not required for that purpose.

(f) Recycling of Litter in Litter Bins

Councillor Wixley referred to the Council's good record in relation to recycling and suggested this could be improved if steps were taken to recycle litter placed in litter bins. He asked the Environment Portfolio Holder if consideration would be given to introducing bins similar to those in some London Boroughs which comprised of four separate compartments for different types of litter.

Councillor Breare-Hall, Environment Portfolio Holder advised that the suggestion was timely in view of the current discussions taking place for a new contract. He agreed to take this suggestion forward to the Portfolio Holder Advisory Group on the Procurement of a new Waste Management Contract. He also agreed to publish the outcome of those discussions in the Council Bulletin.

(g) District Museum – Heritage Lottery Fund Grant

Councillor Smith drew attention to the item in the Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder's written report regarding the grant of £1.65 million to extend and completely redevelop the Museum in Sun Street, Waltham Abbey. She asked the Portfolio Holder if any further details of the project could be provided at this time.

Councillor Webster, Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder, stated that her written report provided only a snapshot of what was proposed. She said that this was a very exciting project and that she would keep members informed of developments via the Council Bulletin.

(h) Benefits

Councillor Jennie Hart asked the Housing Portfolio Holder if it was correct that a family or individual of working age in council housing and on Housing Benefit, and who may be in full time work, but could be having their income topped up by benefits would be penalised if they have an extra room by having their benefit reduced, whereas a similar family or individual of working age in council housing, who pay their own rent in full would not be charged for their extra room.

Councillor Stallan, Housing Portfolio Holder advised that he would need to seek advice from officers and that in liaison with the Finance and Technology Portfolio Holder he would publish a response in the Council Bulletin.

123. MOTIONS

The Chairman reported that there were no motions to be considered at this meeting.

124. REPORT OF THE CABINET - STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Mover: Councillor Bassett, Planning Portfolio Holder

Councillor Bassett submitted a report proposing the adoption of a Statement of Community Involvement which would establish the Council's vision and strategy for effective community participation in relation to the preparation of Local Plans and the Development Control (Management) process.

Councillor Knapman expressed concern that ward councillors were not made aware of pre-application discussions between officers and developers and asked the Portfolio Holder if appropriate steps could be put in place.

Councillor Bassett agreed that local members should be made aware of formal pre-application discussions and agreed to speak to officers about the implementation of a process.

Report as first moved ADOPTED

RESOLVED:

That the Statement of Community Involvement attached to the report of the Cabinet, including the revised Local Plan Communications Strategy, be approved on the understanding it represents the minimum level of actions the Council will take to encourage community involvement in the Local Plan process.

125. REPORT OF THE CABINET - CORPORATE PLAN 2011 - 2015 -KEY OBJECTIVES

Mover: Councillor Whitbread, Leader of the Council

Councillor Whitbread submitted a report proposing Key Objectives for 2013/14 which were intended to address national and local priorities and specific service challenges.

Report as first moved ADOPTED

RESOLVED:

That the Key Objectives attached to the report of the Cabinet be adopted.

126. REPORT OF THE CABINET - PAY POLICY STATEMENT

Mover: Councillor Ulkun, Support Services Portfolio Holder

Councillor Ulkun submitted a report proposing adoption of a Pay Policy Statement for 2013/14.

Report as first moved ADOPTED

RESOLVED:

That the Pay Policy Statement attached to the report of the Cabinet be adopted and published on the Council's website.

127. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

(a) Report of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Council received a written report from Councillor Morgan, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

(b) Reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Chairman announced that there were no reports to be considered under this item.

(c) Reports of Overview and Scrutiny Panels

(i) Report of Constitution and Members Services Scrutiny Standing Panel – Protocol on Partnerships and External Organisations and Review of Outside Bodies

Mover: Councillor Watts, Vice-Chairman of the Panel

Councillor Watts presented a report following a review of the Protocol on Partnerships and External Organisations and the list of Outside Organisations on which the Council was represented. He sought leave of the Council to add the words “be adopted” to the end of recommendation (1) of the Panel.

Carried

Members noted that this report had been brought direct to the Council without prior consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Chairman of that Committee had approved this under Overview and Scrutiny Committee Rule 4(j) on grounds of urgency bearing in mind the need to agree the arrangements for appointing representatives before the Annual Council meeting.

Report as amended ADOPTED

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the changes to the Protocol on Partnerships and External Organisations set out Appendix 1 to the report of the Panel be adopted;
- (2) That the revised list of external organisations to which the Council makes appointments be approved as set out in Appendix 2 to the report of the Panel; and
- (3) That a recommended revised list of external organisations to which the Cabinet makes appointments as set out in Appendix 3 to the report of the Panel be referred to the Leader of Council for decision.

(ii) Report of the Constitution and Members Services Scrutiny Panel – Housing Appeals and Review Panel – Terms of Reference

Mover: Councillor Watts, Vice-Chairman of the Panel

Councillor Watts submitted a report proposing changes to the terms of reference of the Housing Appeals and Review Panel following the adoption of a new Council Housing Allocations Policy and further consideration of the order of presentation of cases at meetings of the Appeals and Review Panel.

Report as first moved ADOPTED**RESOLVED:**

(1) That the terms of reference of the Housing Appeals and Review Panel be amended as follows:

(a) subject to the Cabinet adopting the recommended new Housing Allocations Scheme, paragraph (1)(c) – exclusion of housing applicants from the Housing Register – be removed;

(b) paragraphs (6) and (7) be revised as follows:

“(6) In relation to appeals or reviews at which the applicant's case is presented in person or by a representative, the hearing shall be conducted in the following order:

(a) Chairman's introductory remarks;

(b) Presentation of the Officer's case;

(c) Questioning by the applicant (or representative);

(d) Questioning by members of the Panel;

(e) Presentation of the applicant's case;

(f) Questioning by the Officer;

(g) Questioning by members of the Panel;

(h) Summing up by the applicant;

(i) Summing up by the Officer;

(j) Panel considers its findings in the absence of the applicant and the Officer;

(k) The decision of the Panel will be conveyed to the applicant and Officer in writing.

(l) The Panel shall have discretion to reverse the order in which the cases of the applicant and the Council are presented, provided that both parties agree.

(7) If requested by the appellant/applicant or their representative, the Chairman may agree to (6)(b)-(d) above taking place after (e)-(g) and to (h) and (i) being reversed”; and

(2) That consequential amendments be made to the Constitution.

(iii) Report of Constitution and Members Services Scrutiny Standing Panel – Review of Contract Standing Orders

Mover: Councillor Watts, Vice-Chairman of the Panel

Councillor Watts presented a report of the Panel following a review of Contract Standing Orders.

Report as first moved ADOPTED

RESOLVED:

- (1) That, as agreed at the last annual review of Contract Standing Orders, the maximum period for renewing contracts under CSO C4 (1)(g) namely two years, be reaffirmed on a permanent basis;
- (2) That the delegation to Chief Officers (as defined in Contract Standing Orders) relating to the approval of ad hoc tendering lists after public notice under CSO C7(6)(a) be reaffirmed on a permanent basis; and
- (3) That Contract Standing Order CSO(1) be amended by the addition of reference to the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2013.

(iv) Report of Constitution and Members Services Scrutiny Standing Panel – Review of Officer Delegation

Mover: Councillor Watts, Vice-Chairman of the Panel

Councillor Watts presented a report of the Panel following a review of officer delegation.

Amendment moved by Councillor Watts and seconded by Councillor Philip

“That in addition to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Panel in this report, the following additional proposal be agreed:

“That this Council requests the Assistant to the Chief Executive provide a report to the next meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee proposing a process by which members will review Officer Delegation”.

Carried

Report as amended ADOPTED

RESOLVED:

- (1) That a report be submitted to the Leader of the Council recommending that the proposed changes to officer delegation in respect of Executive functions as set out in Appendix 1 to the report of the Panel be approved;
- (2) That the suggested alterations to officer delegation in respect of Council functions as set out in Appendix 2 the Panel be approved; and
- (3) That this Council requests the Assistant to the Chief Executive provide a report to the next meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee proposing a process by which members will review officer delegation.

(iv) Report of the Constitution and Members Services Scrutiny Standing Panel – Review of Financial Relations

Mover: Councillor Watts, Vice-Chairman of the Panel

Councillor Watts submitted a report of the Panel following a review of Financial Regulations.

Report as first moved ADOPTED

RESOLVED:

That Appendix B (Section 4) of Financial Regulations be amended as shown in Appendix 1 to the report of the Panel in order to change each authorisation level for virements as follows, subject to the other terms and conditions set out in the Financial Regulations:

Decision Maker	Limit of Delegated Authority
Chief Officers	£ 20,000
Portfolio Holders	£ 50,000
Cabinet	£100,000
Council	£100,000 +

(vi) Report of Constitution and Members Services Scrutiny Panel – Localism Act 2011 – Executive Constitution

Mover: Councillor Watts, Vice-Chairman of the Panel

Councillor Watts submitted a report following a review of the Constitution in order to ensure that it reflected the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.

Report as first moved ADOPTED

RESOLVED:

That Article 7 (The Executive) of the Constitution be amended to reflect the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 as set out in the Appendix to the report of the Panel.

(vii) Report of the Licensing Services Task and Finish Panel

Mover: Councillor Smith, Chairman of the Panel

Councillor Smith presented a report of the Panel following a review of the local arrangements in relation to premises licences and whether or not a more flexible approach could be undertaken to accommodate members and the public who experienced difficulties in attending daytime meetings and looking at ways of informing the occupiers of neighbouring properties of applications that were under consideration.

Councillor Angold-Stephens, Chairman of the Licensing Committee advised that Committee had not accepted the recommendations of the Task and Finish Panel on

the grounds that they were inappropriate and that the costs of implementation were prohibitive.

Amendment moved by Councillor Angold-Stephens and seconded by Councillor Morgan

“That the implementation of recommendations (3) and (4) of the Panel’s report (relating to evening meetings for all licences other than taxis) and (7) – (10) (relating to consultation) be deferred until 1 July 2013 or when appointments to new posts in Democratic Services and Licensing Section have been made, whichever is the sooner.”

Lost

The attention of the Council was also drawn to the views expressed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet.

Report as first moved ADOPTED

RESOLVED:

(1) That, having considered the comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Licensing Committee and the Cabinet, the recommendations set out in the report of the Licensing Services Task and Finish Panel be adopted subject to (2) below;

(2) That recommendation (5) in the report of the Panel be amended to reflect the view of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that a review of operation of the new scheme be commenced at nine months rather than one year; and

(3) That a District Development Fund supplementary estimate in the sum of £63,770.72 for 2013/14 be approved.

128. DISTRICT/PARISH REMUNERATION PANELS - ALLOWANCES AND EXPENSES

The Council considered a report of the Assistant to the Chief Executive following a review of the remuneration level for members of the District/Parish Remuneration Panels following representations from the members of those Panels that they considered their level of payment was no longer justified in the light of the current levels of activity of the Panels.

RESOLVED:

That, pursuant to Regulation 20(3) of the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, provision be made for the payment of an allowance of £250 per annum for each member of the Remuneration Panel plus expenses payable at a rate equivalent to the allowances and expenses applicable to councillors with effect from 1 May 2013.

129. LOCALISM ACT 2011 - NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING AREA DESIGNATIONS

Members were informed the Council had a statutory responsibility to conduct local referendums within the District in respect of any Neighbourhood Development Plan brought forward for consideration and adopted by the Planning Authority.

RESOLVED:

That, in accordance with:

- (a) section 61E of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as provided for by Section 116 and Schedule 10 of the Localism Act 2011;
- (b) regulation 9 of the Planning (Referendum) Regulations 2012; and
- (c) any other statutory provisions enacted and brought into force subsequently,

Mr I Willett (Returning Officer for the Epping Forest District), be appointed as Counting Officer for the purpose of local referendums in any area for the purposes of making Neighbourhood Development Plans within the District and as Proper Officer for exercise of all other powers under (a) and (b) above.

130. CALL-IN AND URGENCY - PARKING SCHEMES ACROSS THE DISTRICT TO BE IMPLEMENTED BY THE NORTH ESSEX PARKING PARTNERSHIP (NEPP)

The Council noted that the Chairman of the Council had agreed that the decision of the Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder to nominate the nine highest scoring parking schemes across the District for implementation to the Traffic Regulation Order Sub-Committee of NEPP, should be treated as a matter of urgency and should not be subject to call-in.

Councillor Waller, Safer, Greener and Highways Portfolio Holder reported that of the nine schemes nominated, resources had been made available to implement four in the next tranche, following those schemes which were currently passing through the implementation process. He also advised that the other schemes nominated would remain among the priorities for nomination when further resources allowed.

131. JOINT ARRANGEMENTS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**(a) Citizens' Advice Bureau**

The Council received from Councillor Cohen, one of its representatives on the Citizens' Advice Bureau statistics recorded by the Bureau for the year 2012/13 up to 1 March 2013.

Members raised queries about the statistics and asked for a more detailed report in relation to the activities of the Bureau having regard to the amount of funding provided by the Council. Reference was made to the discussion at the previous Council meeting when it had been agreed that the Bureau should be invited to attend a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to present a detailed report on their work undertaken in the District.

RESOLVED:

That as agreed at the last meeting the Citizens' Advice Bureau be invited to attend a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

CHAIRMAN