

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday 4 April 2023, 7.00 pm - 8.45 pm

Council Chamber - Civic Offices

Members Present:	Councillors M Sartin (Chairman), D Sunger (Vice-Chairman), I Allgood, C Amos, R Balcombe, R Baldwin, R Bassett, N Bedford, P Bhanot, P Bolton, H Brady, R Brookes, L Burrows, S Heather, J Jogia, H Kane, S Kane, H Kauffman, P Keska, J Lea, J Leppert, A Lion, J Lucas, T Matthews, J McIvor, L Mead, R Morgan, S Murray, C Nweke, J Parsons, A Patel, S Patel, J Philip, Caroline Pond, C C Pond, K Rizvi, P Stalker, D Stocker, C Whitbread, H Whitbread, J H Whitehouse, J M Whitehouse, K Williamson, D Wixley and S Yerrell
Apologies:	Councillor(s) N Avey, D Barlow, E Gabbett, I Hadley, S Heap, R Jennings, J Jennings, C McCredie, M Owen, R Pugsley, S Rackham and B Vaz
Officers In Attendance:	Georgina Blakemore (Chief Executive), Andrew Small (Strategic Director, Corporate and Section 151 Officer), Gary Woodhall (Team Manager - Democratic & Electoral Services) and Natalie Cole (Corporate Communications Officer)
Officers In Attendance (Virtually):	Jennifer Gould (Strategic Director and Chief Operating Officer) and Vivienne Messenger (Democratic Services Officer)

[A RECORDING OF THIS MEETING IS AVAILABLE FOR REPEATED VIEWING](#)

79 WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager 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.

80 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

81 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

(1) That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 28 February 2023 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record; and

(2) That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 6 March 2023 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

82 ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (a) Harlow Rotary Club Abseil

The Chairman informed the Council that she would be undertaking the abseil down the water tower in Harlow, organised by the Harlow Rotary Club, in aid of her chosen charity and would welcome any sponsorship from Members.

(b) Essex High Sheriff

The Chairman announced that she had attended the declaration of the new High Sheriff for Essex in Chelmsford.

83 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

The questions received from members of the public, together with the answers, are attached as an Appendix to these minutes.

84 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS UNDER NOTICE

The Council noted that there were no questions by members under notice that had been submitted for consideration at this meeting.

85 REPORTS FROM THE LEADER & MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

The Council received written reports from Portfolio Holders. The Chairman invited the Leader of Council to provide an oral report and the opportunity for other members of the Cabinet to give updates on matters concerning their relevant portfolios.

(a) Leader of the Council

The Leader of Council reported that he had attended various meetings, including at City Hall to discuss London and the South-East planning issues, with other Leaders and Chief Executives from North Essex, as well as regular meetings with the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town and Qualis Boards.

The report of the Leader of Council was noted.

(b) Place Portfolio Holder

The report of the Place Portfolio Holder was noted.

(c) Finance Portfolio Holder

The Finance Portfolio Holder added that the contract for the North Weald Airfield Market had been extended to the end of 2024 with a rent increase applied. It was good for both the Airfield and North Weald that the Market would be continuing.

The report of the Finance Portfolio Holder was noted.

(d) Housing & Community Portfolio Holder

The Housing & Community Portfolio Holder reported that the Council would receive £1.6million for the de-carbonisation of its properties. This would cover 130 Council-owned properties, particularly in the rural areas of the District.

The Portfolio Holder also added her thanks to Mr N Allston for his work as the High Sheriff of Essex.

The report of the Housing and Community Portfolio Holder was noted.

(e) Wellbeing & Community Partnerships Portfolio Holder

The report of the Wellbeing & Community Portfolio Holder was noted.

(f) Customer Portfolio Holder

The Customer Portfolio Holder requested Members to report any issues that they might experience, following the improvements to the website, to the Customer Services Team.

The report of the Customer Portfolio Holder was noted.

(g) Contracts & Commissioning Portfolio Holder

The report of the Contracts & Commissioning Portfolio Holder was noted.

(h) Technical Services Portfolio Holder

The report of the Technical Services Portfolio Holder was noted.

(i) Internal Resources Portfolio Holder

The report of the Internal Resources Portfolio Holder was noted.

86 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS WITHOUT NOTICE

The questions by Members without notice, and the answers given, can be viewed in full as part of the recording of the meeting available on the Council's YouTube channel; a link to which is available on page 1 of these minutes.

<u>Question asked by:</u>	<u>Question asked to:</u>	<u>Subject of the Question:</u>
Cllr J H Whitehouse	Technical Services Portfolio Holder Cllr K Williamson	The Council's response to the Government consultation on planning fee increases.
Cllr S Murray	Leader of the Council Cllr C Whitbread	Progress with internal investigation within Qualis.
Cllr T Matthews	Leader of the Council Cllr C Whitbread	Addressing the issue of potholes in rural areas.
Cllr L Mead	Internal Resources Portfolio Holder Cllr S Kane	Not being able to pay by cash for parking within the District.
Cllr S Heather	Housing & Communities Portfolio Holder Cllr H Whitbread	Update on Safer Streets scheme on the Ninefields estate, Waltham Abbey.
Cllr C Pond	Finance Portfolio Holder Cllr J Philip	Cost of compulsory redundancies, within the Council and Qualis.
Cllr D Wixley	Internal Resources Portfolio Holder Cllr S Kane	Reasons for holding the Election Count at the Waltham Abbey Marriot and not the Civic Offices.
Cllr C Nweke	Housing & Communities	Future plans for the

	Portfolio Holder Cllr H Whitbread	Oakwood Hill Estate, Loughton.
Cllr K Rizvi	Housing & Communities Portfolio Holder Cllr H Whitbread	Launch of Limes Farm Youth Club.
Cllr J McIvor	Housing & Communities Portfolio Holder Cllr H Whitbread	Use of Council-funded Police Officers to combat anti-social behaviour in North Weald.
Cllr J Parsons	Technical Services Portfolio Holder Cllr K Williamson	Measures being taken to combat fly tipping within the District.
Cllr I Allgood	Housing & Communities Portfolio Holder Cllr H Whitbread	Provision for new one-stop shop within Loughton following the closure of the Debden Cash Office.
Cllr J H Whitehouse	Leader of the Council Cllr C Whitbread	Update on the move of the Epping Library and a new café to the Civic Offices.

87 MOTIONS

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

88 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2023/24 AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE RESTRUCTURE

The Chairman of the Constitution Working Group, Cllr P Bhanot, presented a report on proposed changes to the Council's Scrutiny Committee structure for 2023/24. This involved the Stronger Council Select Committee being amalgamated with the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, and the two remaining Select Committees being renamed the Communities Scrutiny Committee and the Place Scrutiny Committee. In addition, it was also being proposed that nominations for all three Scrutiny Committees should be undertaken by the Appointments Panel in future, and that the position of Chairman for all three Scrutiny Committees should be filled by a member outside of the majority group.

The Internal Resources Portfolio Holder, Cllr S Kane, presented the rest of the report which sought agreement for the Calendar of Meetings for 2023/24, and that only the Chairman of a Committee should receive a paper copy of the agenda in future.

Cllr C Whitbread proposed an amendment to recommendation 1(f), seconded by Cllr J Philip, such that only the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee need be chaired by a Member outside the majority group not all three Scrutiny Committees. Some Members felt that all three Scrutiny Committees should be chaired by a Member outside of the majority group, as originally proposed by the Constitution Working Group, and one member suggested that this should be referred back to the Constitution Working Group for further consideration.

The amendment was carried.

Cllr C Whitbread proposed an amendment to recommendation (3), seconded by Cllr J Philip, such that the frequency of meetings for Area Plans Sub-Committees East and South should remain at their current four weeks. Both Sub-Committees met regularly and had full agenda for their meetings, and therefore it was sensible to retain their current four-weekly cycle. Area Plans Sub-Committee West and the District Development Management Committee would change to a six-weekly cycle of meetings as originally proposed.

The amendment was carried.

A small number of Members questioned the need for only the Chairman of a Committee to receive a printed copy of the agenda, and not the other members of the Committee as well. However, it was highlighted that the provision of paper agenda to Councillors incurred a cost to the Council and that it was time for Councillors to go digital.

Resolved:

(1) That the following proposed changes from the Constitution Working Group to the Council's Scrutiny Committee structure be approved:

(a) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be retained on the Council's Committee list;

(b) That the Stronger Council Select Committee be removed from the Council's committee list and its work programme be absorbed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;

(c) That the Stronger Communities and Stronger Place Select Committees be retained on the Council's committee list and their work programmes continue to be aligned with the corresponding key themes within the Council's Corporate Plan;

(d) That the two select committees be renamed as the Communities Scrutiny Committee and the Place Scrutiny Committee;

(e) That nominations for all three Scrutiny committees be undertaken by the Appointments Panel and recommended to the Annual Council meeting for approval each year – therefore, the first meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June would not be required;

(f) That the position of Chairman for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee should be filled by a member outside of the majority group but experienced in scrutiny matters;

(g) That the position of Vice-Chairmen for all Overview and Scrutiny Committees need not all be filled outside of the majority group; and

(h) That the Monitoring Officer be delegated authority to make the necessary revisions within the Constitution to implement the changes above;

(2) That only the Chairman of Committees receive paper copies of agenda for their meetings from 2023/24; and

(3) That, as attached at Appendix 1, the draft Calendar of Council Meetings for 2023/24 be adopted, subject to the following changes:

(a) Area Plans Sub-Committee East to meet every four weeks; and

(b) Area Plans Sub-Committee South to meet every four weeks.

89 GAMBLING ACT 2005 - STATEMENT OF LICENSING PRINCIPLES

The Chairman of the Licensing Committee, Cllr R Morgan, presented a report on the reviewing

of the Statement of Principles under the Gambling Act 2005. All licensing authorities were obliged to publish a statement of licensing principles which they proposed to apply under the Act, and the Statement had to be reviewed every three years. Some minor amendments had been made to reflect the latest guidance.

Resolved:

- (1) That the revised Statement of Licensing Principles under the Gambling Act 2005 be adopted.

90 AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22

The Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee, Cllr P Bolton, presented the Audit & Governance Committee Annual Report for 2021/22. The Committee had acknowledged that there had been issues with the external Auditor, hence it had been decided to seek a new provider.

The Finance Portfolio Holder, Cllr J Philip, thanked the Audit & Governance Committee for their diligence throughout the year. The position with the external Auditor was not acceptable, as the Statement of Accounts from two years ago had not yet been signed off. However, the failing of external Audit contracts was a national problem, and the Council would not want to see its fees rise as a result. Cllr J Philip stated that he would have further discussions with the external Auditor.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Audit & Governance Committee Annual Report for 2021/22 be noted.

91 ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION STRATEGY

The Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee, Cllr P Bolton, presented a report on the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy. Minor changes had been made in relation to the types of fraud to include some new responsibilities, and the Council was requested to approve the revised Strategy.

Cllr P Bolton added that the Council had yet to deal with any whistle-blowing issues, and that the Council's risk register was assessed on a regular basis with the general trend for the risks being downwards.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy be approved.

92 JOINT ARRANGEMENTS & EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

The Council noted the reports provided from the Grange Farm Centre Trust, the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, and the Loughton Broadway Town Centre Partnership. Cllr H Kane added that the Royal Gun Powder Mills would be opening on Saturday 15 April 2023 with many activities available for visitors, and that the Waltham Abbey Town Centre Partnership had been very active in recent months.

(1) Question from J Nutton to Cllr N Avey, Contracts and Commissioning Portfolio Holder and wider Council Members:

"Despite having first brought this to the Council's attention prior to Covid Lockdowns - the state of the pathway between Centre Drive and Epping Tube Station is worsening and little, if anything, was being done to clear the litter or remove the graffiti (see attached pictures attached to the agenda). I would appreciate your views on this matter and some help in getting the problem resolved as soon as possible.

I would also like to ask the Council for an update on their 'Litter Strategy' that was passed last year, as there doesn't seem to have been any movement on this since. In the meantime, Epping and the surrounding streets are becoming a dumping ground."

Response from Cllr K Williamson, Technical Services Portfolio Holder, on behalf of Cllr N Avey:

"In response to the questions that you raise regarding the state of litter and graffiti on the pathway between Centre Drive and Epping Tube Station and what is being done, I can confirm that the location of the litter is not on the pathway, the pathway is kept clear and clean. The location of the litter is between fences on private land; therefore, it is the landowner's responsibility to remove this litter. Most of the litter is inaccessible due to fences that the private landowner has put up.

EFDC's Environmental Protection Team and Waste Management Team are working on a joint project to resolve the litter and graffiti issue and improve the area. As this is not public land, we require the co-operation of the private landowner to proceed and remove the rubbish and graffiti, which can take a considerable amount of time. The rubbish cannot be accessed as the landowner has erected a fence which traps the litter and will need to be removed to access the litter. Please be rest assured that we are working to improve the situation and remove both the litter and graffiti as soon as possible.

In terms of the litter strategy, EFDC continues to support national campaigns such as 'Keep Britain tidy' and clean up days through volunteering, supporting groups with equipment and collection of waste and use of social media. EFDC provides support to litter pick schemes with the public and internal and external partners by providing equipment, advice and guidance and the collection of litter. EFDC uses and promotes the Love Essex (an umbrella brand that acts on behalf of the Essex Waste Partnership and the Cleaner Essex group) messages via various media platforms. Through the Love Essex brand, we aim to inspire Essex residents to reduce the amount of waste they throw away, recycle more, and reduce environmental crimes such as littering and fly-tipping."

(2)) Question from D Saunders to Cllr H Whitbread, Housing & Community Portfolio Holder:

"Can the Cabinet Member for Housing and Community tell me about the £5million regeneration works for the Limes Farm Estate, and in particular, provide an update on the progress made to date and what is due to happen next?"

Response from Cllr H Whitbread, Housing & Community Portfolio Holder:

“We are pleased to confirm the regeneration works to the Limes Farm Estate have recently commenced (30 January 2023) with the site compound now set up and the early stages of scaffolding ongoing.

The Council's successful contracting partner's undertaking the works are Equan's Regeneration Ltd and they have been appointed following a successful procurement process to undertake the below planned maintenance and regeneration works:

- Roof repairs
- A review of all rainwater goods and remediation as necessary
- External cladding/brickwork and concrete repairs as necessary
- Replacement window and balcony doors
- Replacement of Front Entrance Doors with new Fire safe FD30 doors.
- Overcoating of walkway surfaces.
- Improvement works to the external staircases
- Balcony works as necessary to ensure all are watertight
- External communal lighting upgrades
- New controlled access systems
- Repairs to pram sheds
- Fire Risk Assessment works
- Redecoration of all previously painted surfaces including internal communal areas
- New vinyl floor coverings to internal communal areas
- Repair of public footpaths around the estate
- A review of below ground drainage and repairs as necessary
- Regeneration improvements, these include, new benches, new soft landscaping areas, new estate signage, outdoor gym space.

By way of a more recent works progress update see below:

- Scaffolding is ongoing to Yellow and Green blocks as well as block 216-230 Limes Avenue.
- 90% of windows and doors have been measured to these blocks.
- The window replacement pilot has been installed and agreed. Windows to green block have subsequently been ordered and await install.
- Fire safety works are ongoing
- Agree the level of works to the balconies and walkways
- Paint samples across the estate have been agreed. These allude to previously painted areas and will best match the existing colour scheme.
- The upgrade of controlled access entrances to blocks is ongoing.

In terms of what happens next:

- The project will continue to deliver the above works in accordance with Equan's programme. The completion date is early January 24. Most window and front entrance door installations will take place over the Spring/Summer months this year
- The project will continue daily communications with residents. Our next official residents progress meeting is 12 April 23.”

	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24
Council	25		25			3		19		20		9	23
A&G		29	27				30			16	28		
Cabinet	30		10	21		9	13	4	15	5	18		
O&S			18			24			23			23	
Communities		27			26				16		5		
Place			4		19				9	27			
Appointment Panel	11,18												9, 16
Constitution Working Group			13			19					14		
LCLC		15								1			
Licensing Committee				15							19		
Licensing Sub-Committee (Day Time)	16	6	11	1, 29	12,26	3,31	7,28	5,19	30	6,20	12	2,23	
DDMC		28		9	20		1	13	24		6	17	
Area Planning Sub-Committee South		21	19	16	13	11	8	6	3, 31	28	27	24	
Area Planning Sub-Committee East		7	5	2, 30	27	25	22	20	17	14	13	10	
Area Planning Sub-Committee West	31		12	23		4	15		10	7	20		

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