

# EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday 9 April 2024, 7.00 pm - 8.10 pm

## Council Chamber - Civic Offices

**Members Present:** Councillors D Sunger (Chairman), L Burrows (Vice-Chairman), I Allgood, C Amos, R Balcombe, R Baldwin, R Bassett, N Bedford, P Bolton, H Brady, R Brookes, E Gabbett, A Green, S Heap, S Heather, H Kauffman, P Keska, J Lea, J Lucas, M Markham, T Matthews, C McCann, J McIvor, L Mead, L Morgan, R Morgan, S Murray, C Nweke, M Owen, L Paine, J Parsons, A Patel, S Patel, J Philip, C C Pond, R Pugsley, K Rizvi, D Stocker, B Vaz, C Whitbread, H Whitbread, J H Whitehouse, J M Whitehouse, K Williamson, D Wixley and S Yerrell

**Members Present (Virtually):** -

**Apologies:** Councillor(s) D Barlow, P Bhanot, I Hadley, R Jennings, J Jennings, J Jogia, H Kane, S Kane, A Lion, C McCredie, Caroline Pond and R Sharif

**Officers In Attendance:** Andrew Small (Strategic Director, Corporate and Section 151 Officer), Jennifer Gould (Strategic Director and Chief Operating Officer), Gary Woodhall (Team Manager - Democratic & Electoral Services), Tom Carne (Corporate Communications Team Manager), Pat Seager (Chairman's Officer) and Rebecca Moreton (Corporate Communications Officer)

**Officers In Attendance (Virtually):** Georgina Blakemore (Chief Executive) and Vivienne Messenger (Democratic Services Officer)

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

### 74 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.

### 75 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

### 76 MINUTES

#### RESOLVED:

- (1) That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 20 February 2024 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**77 ANNOUNCEMENTS****(a) Announcements by the Chairman of the Council**

The Chairman hoped that everyone had had an enjoyable Easter break and highlighted that the festivals of Eid and Vaisakhi were also occurring this week.

As this was the Chairman's last Full Council Meeting as Chairman of Council, he reflected on his year and how much he had enjoyed it. In particular, the Chairman was delighted to host the successful Epping Forest District Council Civic Awards a few weeks ago, which recognised and celebrated some of our remarkable residents for their achievements, success and unwavering dedication to the area and their communities.

The Chairman informed the Council that he still had some events to attend before the end of his year, including The Scouts Association Day of Celebration and Achievement at Windsor Castle on 21 April 2024 and a Royal Garden Party in Buckingham Palace in May.

Finally, the Chairman referenced the 50th anniversary of the founding of Epping Forest District Council in 1974, on 1 April 2024. To commemorate the anniversary, a special edition of the Members' Bulletin had been prepared and contained the names of all the founding members of the Council. The Bulletin also detailed some of the most significant milestones of the last 50 years.

**78 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY)**

The Council noted that no public questions had been received for consideration at the meeting.

**79 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS UNDER NOTICE**

The following question had been submitted by Cllr E Gabbett under notice:

"What will the District Council do to support safer roads within Buckhurst Hill East and Whitebridge, this includes the time and effort you are investing in monitoring and lobbying the County Council to do more. We hear daily from our residents that they do not feel safe crossing our roads, during the day and at night, with the traffic speeds or navigating the potholes and closed bridge walkways. Can you please tell us what is being done to support safer roads in our community?"

The Portfolio Holder for Regulatory Services, Cllr K Williamson, provided the following response:

"Thank you for your question. I presume that this stems from the tragic accident that occurred in October 2021. Updating you on the current situation, the information I have is that the criminal investigation has been concluded and the Coroner's Court will be reconvened on the 15th August, following which Essex County Council will then take on board any recommendations.

As you are aware these matters are the responsibility of Essex County Council. You ask what is the District Council's role in supporting safety on our roads. This is led from our Local Highways Panel which meets on a regular basis, the next meeting is on the 24th June. Any comments you have to make would be appreciated.

You ask what I have done in monitoring and lobbying for safer roads. As a member of Buckhurst Hill Parish Council I have been part of the team that purchased two Speed Indicator Devices for deployment throughout the Parish, I have liaised with County Councillor Vance in

getting an agreement in place to fix these devices to Essex owned lampposts, following surveys to ensure that they are suitable and safe. Following this I worked closely with Officers at EFDC in the installation process. All of this work was a Pilot project run by ECC and is now available to all Town and Parish Councils throughout the District and Essex.

I think there is a basic misunderstanding in your question regarding the role of Ward Councillors who were elected to represent their residents. I have checked with our County Councillor who has not received any emails, phone calls, messages or any communication from yourself. It could be said that whilst we have been working some have regrettably been shirking. I think your Party Leader has let you down by not suggesting that this is an inappropriate question at this time.”

## **80 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 reported that he had met with representatives from the other North Essex Councils, and stated that the group was becoming more consolidated. The Leader had also met with the new Youth Councillors following the recent round of Youth Council elections. The Leader also highlighted the progress being made with the construction of the new Epping Sports Centre.

The report of the Leader of the Council was noted.

### **(b) Place Portfolio Holder**

The report of the Place Portfolio Holder.

### **(c) Finance & Economic Development Portfolio Holder**

The Portfolio Holder requested all Councillors to respond to the questionnaire sent by Ernst & Young, the Council's new external Auditors, as they could not begin any auditing work until all Councillors had responded.

The report of the Finance & Economic Development Portfolio Holder was noted.

### **(d) Housing & Strategic Health Partnerships Portfolio Holder**

The report of the Housing & Strategic Health Partnership Portfolio Holder was noted.

### **(e) Community Health & Wellbeing Portfolio Holder**

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

### **(f) Contracts, Service Delivery & Improvement Portfolio Holder**

The report of the Contracts, Service Delivery & Improvement Portfolio Holder was noted.

### **(g) Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder**

The report of Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder was noted.

81 **QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS WITHOUT NOTICE**

<u>Question asked by:</u>	<u>Question asked to:</u>	<u>Subject of the Question:</u>
Cllr R Brookes	Housing & Strategic Health Partnerships Portfolio Holder, Cllr H Whitbread	Request for the leaseholders at The Broadway to have a meeting with the Portfolio Holder and Officers.
Cllr R Morgan	Finance & Economic Development Portfolio Holder, Cllr J Philip	Update on the expenditure through the Shared Rural Prosperity Fund.
Cllr S Murray	Leader of the Council, Cllr C Whitbread	Details of the remediation works arising from the overflowing of sewerage treatment works into the River Roding.
Cllr K Rizvi	Finance & Economic Development Portfolio Holder, Cllr J Philip	Update on the current state of the Council's finances.
Cllr S Heap	Leader of the Council, Cllr C Whitbread	Details of communications with residents regarding the Shared Services initiative with North Essex councils.
Cllr H Kauffman	Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder Cllr K Williamson & Finance & Economic Development Portfolio Holder, Cllr J Philip	Traffic road management in the area, particularly at the Epping Forest Shopping Centre & roadworks around the District.
Cllr L Morgan	Housing & Strategic Health Partnerships Portfolio Holder, Cllr H Whitbread	Have officers performed any enforcement action for EDMO's?
Cllr A Patel	Housing & Strategic Health Partnerships Portfolio Holder, Cllr H Whitbread	When will the development at James Brokenshire Court be ready for tenants to move into?
Cllr E Gabbett	Leader of the Council, Cllr C Whitbread	The Council's commitment to building a more diverse workforce.
Cllr H Brady	Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder Cllr K Williamson	Celebration of the work of the Highways Rangers
Cllr J M Whitehouse	Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder Cllr K Williamson	Update on the recent PAS review.
Cllr J McIvor	Finance & Economic Development Portfolio Holder, Cllr J Philip	Retention of the ability for residents to pay their Council Tax by cash.
Cllr C C Pond	Leader of the Council, Cllr C Whitbread	Liaison with TfL over the difficulties faced by

		disabled passengers in using Loughton underground station.
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## 82 MOTIONS

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

## 83 REPORT OF THE CABINET - PAY POLICY STATEMENT

The Leader of the Council, Cllr C Whitbread, presented a report from the Cabinet on the Council's Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25.

The Council is required to produce a Pay Policy Statement for each financial year, setting out the details of its remuneration policy, under section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011. Specifically, it should include the Council's approach to its highest and lowest paid employees and is published annually on the Council's website. The Pay Policy Statement was considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 18 March 2024, and is recommended for approval.

### **Resolved:**

- (1) That the Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25 be approved.

## 84 REPORT OF THE CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP - REVIEW OF ARTICLE 17 - ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The Vice-Chairman of the Constitution Working Group, Cllr J H Whitehouse, presented a report on the review of Article 17 – Access to Information – within the Constitution.

The Council noted that the Key Decision List had recently been restyled and for reasons of public transparency it had been decided that it should be referred to in the Constitution as the Forward Plan, rather than the Key Decision List. Currently both names were used which might cause confusion as to whether the Forward Plan was the same document as the Key Decision List. In addition, it was previously a legal requirement to publish the Forward Plan at least 14 days prior to its start date; however, this stipulation was removed by the Access to Information Regulation enacted in 2016.

Cllr J H Whitehouse also highlighted that, in revising this Article, it was noticed that it contained references to practices that the Council had long since ceased to do. These included placing a hard copy of the agenda in the Welcome Area, referring to the Section 151 Officer as the Chief Financial Officer and the posting of notices at the Civic Offices. Therefore, it was recommended by the Constitution Working Group that the updated version of Article 17 be approved for inclusion in the Constitution.

### **Resolved:**

- (1) That the updated version of Article 17 – Access to Information – be approved for inclusion in the Constitution.

## 85 REPORT OF THE AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED MEMBERS

The Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee, Cllr P Bolton, presented a report on the appointment of two new co-opted members to the Committee.

Cllr P Bolton reminded the Council that, under Article 11 of the Council's Constitution relating to the Audit and Governance Committee, there should be two co-opted members of the Committee. A competitive recruitment and selection process had been completed, and based on their professional expertise, experience and background as relevant to the role and responsibilities of the Audit and Governance Committee, S Heiberg and H Singh were selected as suitable candidates for the role.

Cllr P Bolton highlighted that Mr T Jarvis had been a long-standing co-opted member of the Audit & Governance Committee, whose term of office came to an end on 30 November 2023, and the Council should recognise the contribution of Mr T Jarvis over many years to the Audit & Governance Committee.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That S Heiberg and H Singh be appointed as the two new co-opted members of the Audit & Governance Committee; and
- (2) That the contribution of Mr T Jarvis as a co-opted member of the Audit & Governance Committee over many years be commended.

**86 REPORT OF THE AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - ANTI-FRAUD & CORRUPTION STRATEGY**

The Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee, Cllr P Bolton, presented a report requesting approval of the Council's Anti-Fraud & Corruption Strategy.

Cllr P Bolton reported that the strategy remained largely unchanged, but the policy was now aligned with the UK Government's Economic Crime Plan 2023/26. The Audit & Governance Committee reviewed the revised Anti-Fraud & Corruption Strategy at its meeting on 15 February 2024 and the Strategy is recommended to the Council for approval.

The Finance & Economic Development Portfolio Holder, Cllr J Philip, added that the key fraud risks detailed in the Strategy were particularly relevant to the Council and not just generic local authority risks, and also encouraged Members to attend meetings of the Audit & Governance Committee to be better informed of the risks faced by the Council.

**Resolved:**

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

**87 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Cllr D Wixley, informed the Council that there had not been a meeting of the Committee since the last Council meeting. The next meeting was scheduled for 23 April 2023, at which the Youth Council would be attending, and Cllr D Wixley urged Members to attend to learn of the the Youth Council's achievements throughout the year.

Cllr D Wixley added that there had been five meetings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee throughout the municipal year, and he thanked the members of the Committee for their contributions, particularly the Vice-Chairman Cllr J McIvor, and the Officers for their support.

Cllrs C Whitbread and S Murray thanked Cllr D Wixley for his Chairmanship of the Committee throughout the municipal year.

**88 JOINT ARRANGEMENTS & EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

There were no updates from Councillors appointed to represent the Council on outside bodies.

**89 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

It was agreed that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the item of business set out below on the grounds that it would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the following paragraph(s) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended):

<u>Agenda Item Number</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Exempt Information Paragraph Number</u>
18	Epping Forest Operations Hub	3

**90 REPORT OF THE CABINET - EPPING FOREST OPERATIONS HUB**

The Portfolio Holder for Contracts, Service Delivery & Improvement, Cllr R Balcombe, presented a private report regarding the construction of the Epping Forest Operations Hub.

Cllr R Balcombe stated that this had been considered by the Cabinet at its meeting on 18 March 2024, and Barnes Construction had been appointed for the design and build of the Operations Hub at North Weald Airfield. Unfortunately, the allocation within the Capital Programme for the construction of the Hub would have to be increased and, as this was an amendment to an existing budgetary approval, the Council was requested to approve the additional monies within the Capital Programme for the construction of the Hub.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That the inclusion of a maximum additional allocation within the Capital Programme in the sum of £1,733,000 be approved for the construction of the Operations Hub at North Weald Airfield.

**CHAIRMAN**

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