

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF SAFER, CLEANER, GREENER SCRUTINY STANDING
PANEL
HELD ON TUESDAY, 2 SEPTEMBER 2008
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.30 - 9.38 PM**

Members Present: G Pritchard (Chairman), R Frankel (Vice-Chairman), R Barrett, K Chana, D Jacobs, J Philip, Mrs P Richardson and Mrs L Wagland

Other members present: D Bateman, Mrs M Sartin, Ms S Stavrou and J M Whitehouse

Apologies for Absence: M Colling, Miss R Cohen and Ms J Hedges

Officers Present J Gilbert (Director of Environment and Street Scene), C Wiggins (Safer Communities Manager), T Carne (Public Relations and Marketing Officer) and A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer)

7. ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice Chairman took the chair for this meeting. Councillor R Frankel took the vacant Vice-Chairmanship.

8. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

The Panel noted there were no substitute members.

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

10. NOTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes from 24 June 2008 were noted and agreed as a correct record. The Panel noted that the promised report on Unauthorised Parking on Housing Estates will be brought to a future meeting.

11. TERMS OF REFERENCE/WORK PROGRAMME

The Director of Environment and the Street Scene, John Gilbert, took the Panel through the work programme. By the next meeting dates will have been added to the work programme.

Item 1, Safer, Cleaner, Greener (General), the Panel noted that they had completed the appointments on the waste side, with officers now in post. They are still looking for a Neighbourhood Officer to act as a liaison between the waste side and the neighbourhood team.

Item 2, Safer Communities, a) all the CCTV posts have now been filled.

Item 3, Essex Waste Procurement Process and Joint Committee, a) the last meeting of the joint committee was held on 26 August 2008, the minutes will be presented at the next meeting; b) there was a recommendation from the Cabinet for the adoption of this, and then onwards to full Council; c) there is a lot of work going on and, a report will be brought to this Panel later in the year.

Item 4, Waste Management Partnership Board, the Board was due to meet again on 16 September 2008; c) will come back to the Panel as a report; and d) noted that there is a survey in the Forester now about recycling and an interim report will be given to the next meeting of the Panel.

Item 5, Nottingham Declaration, noted that an action plan had been developed; an Officer Green Working Party had been established; new National Indicators are now in place, with lots of work to be done to reduce our carbon footprint.

A report on the consultation exercise on the green strategy is still to be produced by the Director of Planning and Economic Development.

Item 6, Residential Parking – the Council is currently carrying out parking reviews in Epping, Loughton Broadway and Buckhurst Hill.

Item 7, County Highways Matters, noted that another report was due to be produced for Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) shortly; and the County's revised Speed Management and the Freight Strategy were still to be produced.

Item 8, Bobbingworth Tip, an updating report went to Cabinet on 1 September for additional funding; this was due in a large part to the abnormally wet weather over the summer and the lack of topsoil due to the down turn in the building industry. The Management Group has now been delayed until the scheme is completed.

Councillor Mrs Wagland asked about the Buckhurst Hill parking review. Mr Gilbert replied that all the reviews were currently at the same stage. County Officers had listened to the concerns and have drawn up proposals to revise existing parking schemes. Local members would be taken through the proposals for them to comment on, it will then go back to the Portfolio Holder.

Councillor Mrs Wagland asked what input local people had. She was told that there will be a letter drop to all local residents saying what had happened and asking for their views.

Councillor Bateman said that residential parking on the Limes Farms Estate was getting tricky. Could some open spaces be opened up to provide extra parking? Mr Gilbert said he had missed his opportunity, as the report, presented by the Director of Housing, had already gone to the Cabinet. He suggested that the Councillor got in touch with the Assistant Director of Housing, Paul Pledger.

Councillor Bateman brought the double yellow lines that were painted down one side of Station Road, Chigwell, to the attention of the Panel. Apparently there was a car parked on the road during the lining operation and there is now an eight foot gap in the yellow lines. Mr Gilbert promised to bring this to the attention of County Highways.

Councillor Jacobs asked about item 3 and food waste, would it now go to full council, and was there any way to input his view into this? Mr Gilbert said that it may well end up there. As for input, he should answer the questionnaire on household waste. The

results would come back to this Panel and then go onto the main Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Jacobs then asked why more money was needed for Bobbingworth Tip. Mr Gilbert said that the contractor had to keep a presence on the site and we may have to pay for the top soil being imported.

Councillor Barrett asked about parking in Loughton. Mr Gilbert said that three reviews were going on at present including a wider review of the Broadway. The Cabinet had said that there was to be no more after these were completed, but they would look at smaller targeted reviews, where there was a deliverable outcome.

12. TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT ACT 2004

The Director of Environment and Street Scene, John Gilbert, introduced the report on the Traffic Management Act 2004 (TMA). Sections 85 and 86 came into force on 31 March 2008 and prohibited parking at dropped footways and double parking. It was noted that London had different rules so that there was no requirement for roadside signage or road markings indicating to drivers that these prohibitions are in place. The Government was consulting on whether it should amend the TMA to enable authorities outside of London to also enforce these new restrictions without the need to erect signage.

Mr Gilbert filled in the blanks for the table in paragraph 4 of the report. Under item 4 of the table the first figure should read £100,000 and the figure below it should read £5,00 to £10,000.

Councillor Mrs Wagland asked if the savings would include advertising. Mr Gilbert said that the adverts would still have to be done. Councillor Mrs Wagland said that this amendment would save about 10% of the queries that she received. Mr Gilbert said that would be a useful point to include in their return.

Councillor Frankel said he was attracted by this proposal, as this type of parking was against the Law and the Highway Code and we should not have to spend money enforcing it. He asked about the enforcement of double parking and was told that the police had to enforce this.

Councillor Jacobs said it was time that people took responsibility for their parking. Would the Council advertise this before the ruling came in? Mr Gilbert said that they would not but would hand out 'April Fool' tickets, not fining people but warning them not to do it again or they would be fined.

Councillor Pritchard said it would not stop people parking on verges. Mr Gilbert agreed and said that Housing was working on this at present.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel agreed to answer 'Yes' to Question 1 in paragraph 4 of the report that "there is no requirement for restrictions on parking for dropped footways and double parking outside London to be indicated with traffic signs and /or road markings."

13. POLICING GREEN PAPER

The Director of Environment and Street Scene, John Gilbert, introduced the report on the Home Office Green Paper "From the Neighbourhood to the National: Policing our communities together". The Green Paper focused on seven key areas:

- The local dimension;
- Reduction of bureaucracy and red tape;
- Development of Policing skills in the police workforce;
- Deployment of Policing resources;
- Government support for these proposed changes;
- Cross force co-operation; and
- Performance management.

It was noted that the changing relationship between the Police and local authorities were of the greatest concern. The Local Government Association had expressed fears about these changes whilst at the same time welcoming much of the content of the Green Paper.

The report focused on the key areas of answerability, responsiveness and accountability.

Answerability was about the working together, co-ordinated local teams, neighbourhood leads and managers, safer community partnership and visible sentencing.

Responsiveness was to be achieved through a 'Policing Pledge' which would ensure that the local Police service achieve certain pledged targets. Some of these targets would be locally determined, but every pledge would have standard elements relating to information on local officers, contact numbers, monthly meetings etc.

Councillor Batemen commented about the Police in Chigwell, who publicised the contact names and numbers of their local officers, but the names tended to change all the time. Could they not stay longer? Mr Gilbert said he could not answer that, but it was a valid point that could be raised in the Council's response. Councillor Pritchard said perhaps they could be rewarded to work and stay locally instead of continually moving.

ACTION: to raise the issue of officers not moving about so often and staying in an area long enough to build up a body of local knowledge.

Councillor Jacobs asked how they could guarantee the 80% figure of neighbourhood team time is spent in a neighbourhood. The Safer Communities Manager, Caroline Wiggins said that the neighbourhood teams would be based in their assigned neighbourhoods. Mr Gilbert said that the Police could shuffle the response officers around the district but the neighbourhood teams, unless it was for large scale emergencies stayed in their assigned areas. Councillor Jacobs replied that the PCSOs did not have enough powers and were too local. It was Policing on the cheap and was not effective. Mrs Wiggins said that the Home Officer were proposing changes to the core conditions of what the PCSOs can do. They could take some of the work load from the front lines officers and thus free up some of the regular Police Officer's time.

ACTION: to consider the core conditions of a PCSO.

Councillor Philips asked if the report defined how big a neighbourhood was. Mrs Wiggins said that Epping Forest was broken up into Policing wards, which are displayed on the Essex Policing website. Councillor Mrs Wagland commented that the point was would the Green Paper references match up to Essex Police's definition of what a neighbourhood was.

Councillor Jon Whitehouse said that the powers for the various officers were mentioned; they need a bit of streamlining and overlapping for the various officers to help them operate and enable them to cover for each other.

ACTION: to ask that the various type of officer's powers be reviewed.

Lastly there was Accountability. On this the Government was proposing radical changes to the existing democratic structures to make them more democratic and more effective in responding to local concerns. Local Authorities have indicated their displeasure on what the Green Paper was suggesting about this, like altering the make up of Police Authorities. The representatives on Crime and Policing Representatives (CPR) need not necessarily be a local representative but could be anyone. If the local authority had an elected Mayor, they would become, by right, the Chairman of the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP). Is this the government's way of forcing a local authority down a certain structural route? Will the police authorities be more democratically answerable?

A Community Safety Fund was being made available to CRPs to enable them to address local priorities, so there was a need to enhance accountability, but this was not the way to do it.

The problems would be greater in two or three tier authorities. The Council understood why the Government wanted to see more accountability, but it would be better to enhance the structures in place currently than to create new structures.

Councillor Mrs Wagland said that sometimes people had to say things that the Police did not want to hear, and this could be very difficult. There were also problems with the Neighbourhood Advisory Panels (NAPs) in her area. At the Panels the Police position tended to get rubber stamped. Local communities are poor on issues of accountability on an individual level and on balance she was disinclined that this would be a solution. Mrs Wiggins said that some NAPs were good at holding the Police to account but some were not. The Community Partnership was currently looking at the make up of NAPs. They are not consistent and they did not know why Councillors could not attend them. Councillor Mrs Wagland said if there was something seriously wrong with the local Police, she could not see an individual taking them on. However, Councillors with the back up of their council and constituents could do this.

Councillor Ms Stavrou said that NAPs depend on the people concerned with their processes. Individuals could turn it into a personal agenda. NAPs have no teeth and no budget and they have been set adrift. She could not see where NAPs were mentioned in the Green Paper. They had just got going and now they were going to change it.

Councillor Jon Whitehouse said they needed to look at things from a local and a county level. There was nothing in the paper that changed what a Police Authority does. Local accountability was not there. The Green Paper did not differentiate between strategic accountability and local accountability and allied to this, most money came from central government.

Councillor Jacobs added that these were complex issues but they needed to simplify things and it seemed to him that the Panel agreed with the LGA's point of view. Councillor Frankel agreed. The Green Paper was full of buzz words and dealt with major crimes and terrorism. Local Authorities needed to deal with theft and traffic offences. He was glad it dealt with IT issues. The Policing system seemed to be bogged down in forms and paperwork, unlike the commercial world. He was glad to see that that they were now going for IT. Mrs Wiggins added that Essex Police were currently involved in a national pilot using the new IT system.

Councillor Philip said that the Police Authority needed to concentrate on local accountability. The IT was necessary but he hoped it would not be like the National Health IT system debacle.

Mr Gilbert, in summing up the Panel's deliberations, said that:

- they were concerned with core activities of the various officers and their ability to cover for each other;
- that local Police Officers should be encouraged to stay in post and build up a local expertise;
- they were generally satisfied with the responsiveness aspects of the report, except where it failed to define what a neighbourhood was;
- under accountability, the Panel were as concerned as the LGA;
- they were not convinced that it solved the problems that the Green Paper identified, and did not bridge the gap between national and local accountability;
- NAPs needed to have teeth (and a budget) to deliver even a semblance of accountability;
- there were concerns about budgets being allocated;
- there were concerns about local accountability;
- and concerns for the individuals on the Panels to stand up to a big organisation like the Police; and
- they were however, glad to see the Police would be getting new IT systems.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel's response to the Home Office Green Paper be as set out above.

14. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the items of business set out below on the grounds that they would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972:

<u>Agenda Item No</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Exempt Information Paragraph Number</u>
9	Minutes of the Waste Management Partnership Board	3

15. MINUTES OF THE WASTE MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP BOARD

The Panel received the minutes of the first Waste Management Partnership Board meeting. Councillor Mrs Sartin was the Chairman of the meeting which reviewed the Charter between SITA and the District Council.

The Panel were happy to agree the changes as noted in item two of the minutes.

They noted that in the first six months:

- the volume of materials collected was over 25% of what was expected;
- the dry recycling figures went up from 25 to 27%;
- there was an unavoidable increase in fuel costs; and
- there was a difficulty with the black bag collection at flats.

A Councillor questioned why the collection of black sacks were more expensive than the use of wheeled bins. He was told that this was because the sacks were collected weekly and were therefore more expensive than the two weekly wheeled bin collections. The district was looking to moving towards a fortnightly collection in flats.

It was noted that the Council's waste stream went up instead of down because of the volume of green recyclable material, although they were happy to take bottles and plastics.

A customer survey on waste was currently taking place in 'The Forester' and it was noted that it was a complex issue to consult on. Councillor Mrs Sartin said that a lot of effort had gone into producing the questionnaire and they thought they had got it right. But it should be noted that consultation was just part of the process.

It was also noted that:

- the planned food waste collection would be on a weekly collection schedule; and
- a visit to a recycling plant was being planned for any member that wished to attend, although places would be limited to 25.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel noted the minutes of the first Waste Management Partnership Board meeting and agreed the changes as noted in item two of the minutes.

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

A verbal report on the matters discussed was to be made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

17. FUTURE MEETINGS

The dates of the future meetings, as set out in the agenda, were noted.

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