

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF SAFER, CLEANER, GREENER SCRUTINY STANDING
PANEL
HELD ON TUESDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER 2009
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.30 - 9.28 PM

Members Present: G Pritchard (Chairman), , M Colling, R Frankel, D Jacobs, R Law, Mrs E Webster, D Wixley and A Boyce

Other members present: Mrs M Sartin and Ms S Stavrou

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

Officers Present J Gilbert (Director of Environment and Street Scene), L MacNeill (Assistant Director (Operations, Administration & Finance)), C Neilan (Conservation Officer) and A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer)

21. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

It was reported that Councillor D Wixley was substituting for Councillor R Barrett and Councillor A Boyce for Councillor Ms R Cohen.

22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor D Wixley declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 by virtue of being on a relevant Committee of the Loughton Town Council and agenda item 7 of the agenda by virtue of being a Tree Warden for the Loughton Area.

23. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The notes from 23 July 2009 were agreed as a correct record.

24. TERMS OF REFERENCE / WORK PROGRAMME

The Terms of Reference were noted.

Items on the Work Programme were updated by the lead officer, John Gilbert. The Panel noted that:

Item 2 – Safer Communities- the CCTV policy was not yet ready and will go to a future meeting.

Item 3 – Essex Waste procurement – the joint committee would be meeting in the near future;.

Item 4 – Waste Management Partnership Board – the Waste Management Partnership Board minutes for 20 July 2009 were attached to this agenda and that a new KPI on recycling in flats and similar buildings was agreed at the last Finance and Performance Management Standing Panel.

That the commencement of the new food and garden wheeled bins was immanent. It was noted that the Environment and Street Scene Call Centre had received an unprecedented 601 telephone calls in one day enquiring about this new service. Once the service was up and running it was hoped that this would settle down.

Item 10 – Crime and Disorder Scrutiny meetings – the first of these meetings is due in October 2009. An item will be put in the members bulletin asking if members had any specific questions or topics for the crime and disorder panel to look at.

Item 11(a) – Waltham Abbey Sports Centre – this was being called in and would be discussed at the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting to be held on 3rd September 2009.

Item 11(b) – Youth Initiatives and Play Strategy – the Panel was informed that the facilities were on target for completion. The Panel noted that the Hoe Lane installation had been recently vandalised, and was currently being repaired.

25. WASTE MANAGEMENT PARTNERSHIP BOARD MINUTES

The Panel noted the minutes of the Waste Management Partnership Board Meeting for 20 July 2009. They also noted that:

- SITA had recently appointed a new manager, who had transferred in from Maidstone;
- Under item 9 of the minutes the fourth line should read 'decreased' instead of 'increased'.

Councillor Pritchard asked what was happening about weed spraying. John Gilbert replied that in the past EFDC had received funding from the County for three sessions of spraying a year. This year there was only enough money for two sessions. Talks are being held between County and EFDC officers, asking if county would let this Council decide when to do the spraying as this would be more efficient.

Councillor Jacobs said the minutes in item 6 used the word 'statics' what was statics? He was informed that this referred to the street cleaners who operated in an area with manual brooms and barrows. Councillor Jacobs then asked if street cleaning was improving and was told it was. SITA had completed a review of the cleaning schedules and this resulted in a number of 'statics' being reinstated, although the review itself was still work in progress.

Councillor Jacobs asked what if people wanted larger bins than the 180 litre bins that were being distributed. He was told that there would be no larger bins for garden refuse, but, if thought necessary, households could be issued with a second bin of the same size. The potential difficulty was that SITA would have to collect two bins instead of one, and may charge the council. Officers were still in discussions with them.

Asked if Essex had any 'In Vessel Composting' (IVC) sites Mr Gilbert said that it did not, but there were some smaller facilities available. It was also estimated that Essex would get an IVC plant in the near future.

Councillor Jacobs, referring to a visit to be organised to the Sandy IVC, asked if this would be open to all, he was told that it would be.

Councillor Frankel asked if kerb side caddies would be issued on request. Mr Gilbert said they would not, but if a resident did not have space for a wheeled bin, they could ask for a kerb side caddy for their food waste. Officers will talk to the householder to make sure that they understood what was required.

Councillor Mrs Webster commented that at different times of the year there would be more garden waste than others, and some months there would be only food waste and no garden waste. Mr Gilbert said that officers did at first think about issuing kerb side caddies to everyone but SITA had a problem with this. Officers will have to see how it goes; in most years garden waste does not trail off altogether in winter.

26. TREE STRATEGY

The Assistant Director Environment and Street Scene, Laura Macneill, introduced Epping Forest's Tree Strategy. This was requested at the June meeting of this panel.

The Council's current strategy was entitled "Trees – Information, Objectives and Policies" which was finalised in August 2008. The panel noted that the Council used to be very reactive to tree problems but are now taking a proactive stance and would like to make sure that they got the right tree in the right place. The council has now developed a database for the whole district and is able to provide help and advice on trees.

Section 2 of the strategy set out what the Council was responsible for and outlined the difficulties with estates owned by Essex County Council and the need for a management programme.

The Panel noted that:

- officers tried to get round to each street tree once every four years to tidy it up;
- it was emphasised that the Council had nothing to do with the Forest itself;
- there was a list of useful contact numbers in section 5;
- every enquiry received was logged onto a computer system, visited by an officer and prioritised for the work needed;
- a 'green infrastructure group' meets once a quarter when they consider their key objectives;
- virtual plaques have been established for special trees in the district;
- officers are presently updating the County's rescinded TPOs;
- officers are currently working on area community tree strategies, but it took a lot of time to complete one;
- the Local Plan has policies for trees in it;
- there was the 50 favourite trees project and officers are presently recording all the veteran trees in the district and putting them on the council's website;
- photo's were inconsistent in their headings, some were labelled by site and some not;
- the Arboretum could also do some more publicity within the strategy;
- the last sentence in appendix three had a typographical error in, it should say 'wary' and not 'weary';
- Epping was not identified on the map following appendix 4;
- Stapleford Abbots was spelt wrong on the map;
- there was nothing about conservation areas in the strategy.

Councillor Pritchard said the strategy was very good, but could the roles of trees in respect to carbon footprint etc. be discussed in there. He would expect EFDC to have

a better footprint than other areas. It also does not give targets for the number of trees that are wanted in the future and it should set targets for the nature reserves. There should also be a date set to refresh the strategy, something like the summer of 2010.

Councillor Mrs Webster said the strategy was excellent work. Was there something the Council could do to stop developers taking trees down before putting in a planning application; could the council pre-empt this destruction? The Landscape and Arboriculturist Officer, Chris Neilan, replied that it was difficult. If officers got any information about something like that about to happen then they may be able to put a tree protection order (TPO) on the appropriate tree(s). It was also a criminal offence to damage preserved trees or damage highway trees. Prosecutions do happen but were not publicised, perhaps they could be put in the Forester.

Some members were dismayed about appendix three and the frivolous health and safety warnings given as this could bring the Council into disrepute. Mr Gilbert said that in these litigious times the Council could not completely ignore this and had to take a balanced view.

Councillor Ms Stavrou liked the strategy as it set out exactly what EFDC thought about its trees and its heritage. She would like this type of information to be given to new councillors when they attend their planning training sessions. This was thought to be a good idea by the Panel.

Councillor Frankel asked about trees that cause damage to properties, this could lead to legal battles etc. Did this strategy document help in that respect? Ms Macneill replied that the Council was usually asked to do a condition report when something like that cropped up. They would then take it to County or Housing and from there to the insurance companies. Mr Neilan added that they had a special way to deal with preserved trees. Insurance companies usually tended to ask that the offending tree was cut down first, without looking for causes. Officers would gather the relevant information and take it to a Planning Sub-Committee for their decision. Local policies allow them to do this. If consent to cut down a tree is given then officers ask for a replacement tree of a more suitable size and variety.

Councillor Pritchard asked if there was some way of encouraging landowners to plant more trees. Mr Neilan said that Country Care did a lot of work along those lines. There was a landscape study being done and within that they could point out areas which needed more trees. This strategy did not have that kind of information in it. Maybe what was needed was something like a landscape document. Ms Macneill said that this could be taken back to the 'green infrastructure working group' and they could outline what a new document should contain. They could also look at carbon capture etc.

RESOLVED:

- (1) The Panel noted the Tree Strategy document.
- (2) That the Panel review this document again in April 2010 with an interim report and again in September 2010, linking it to a bio-diversity strategy.

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

To report to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on the conclusions reached at this meeting on the strategy that was considered.

28. FUTURE MEETINGS

The dates of the future meetings of the Panel were noted.

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