

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF SAFER, CLEANER, GREENER SCRUTINY STANDING
PANEL
HELD ON TUESDAY, 10 JULY 2012
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING
AT 7.30 - 9.50 PM

Members Present:	A Boyce, Mrs T Cochrane, L Girling, P Keska, Ms Y Knight, A Mitchell MBE, Mrs P Smith and P Spencer
Other members present:	Mrs H Brady, W Breare-Hall and G Waller
Apologies for Absence:	Mrs J Lea, Mrs M Sartin (Vice Chairman of Council), G Mohindra and S Murray
Officers Present	J Gilbert (Director of Environment and Street Scene), J Nolan (Assistant Director (Environment & Neighbourhoods)) and A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer)

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE CHAIRMAN

In the absence of the Chairman and Vice Chairman the Panel appointed a temporary Chairman and Vice Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That Councillor P Smith be appointed as Chairman for the duration of the meeting; and
- (2) Councillor Y Knight be appointed as Vice Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

2. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

It was reported that Councillor A Mitchell was substituting for Councillor J Lea and Councillor A Boyce was substituting for Councillor G Mohindra.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

4. NOTES OF LAST MEETING

The notes of the 10 April 2012 meeting were agreed as a correct record.

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE AND WORK PROGRAMME

Terms of Reference

The Panel noted that item 4 of the terms of reference referring to the Nottingham Declaration should be altered to take into account the fact that it has been replaced by the 'Climate Local Agreement'. This differed from the original Nottingham Declaration by giving local authorities the opportunity to sign up to a number of

strong pledges and to create their own more specific goals with regard to reducing and off-setting carbon emissions.

Work Programme

The Panel noted their work programme for the year. Councillor Girling asked that as part of their monitoring of the Highways, could they look at the traffic safety statistics for the district and was told that this could be arranged.

Councillor Spencer asked about item 15 and if Solar Panels on Council owned dwellings was this still under consideration. The Director for the Environment and Street Scene, Mr Gilbert replied that because of the reduction in the government's 'feed-in' tariff this had been discounted for any new council housing stock. With respect to the Council's own commercial building this was a matter being reviewed by the Director of Corporate Support Services (via Facilities Management).

6. FLOODING EVENTS IN APRIL 2012

The report updating the Panel on the recent flooding events in April 2012 was considered. It was noted that April was the wettest month on record since 1961 for the Roding (North London) and since 1920 for the Lower Lee. This caused river flows to rise dramatically during the third week of the month. Unfortunately, this resulted in significant internal flooding to eight properties in Ongar Road, Abridge. The very heavy rain also resulted in flash flooding and overwhelmed some drainage infrastructure in a number of locations across the district.

This Council was one of the few authorities in Essex to have its own land drainage team and the Engineering, Drainage and Water Team provide an out of office hours Emergency Flooding Response Service. The Council and its term contractor, Hugh Pearl Land Drainage Ltd, maintain a stock of filled sand bags for strategic redeployment and to support Council owned flood defence assets. The Council also kept a small stock of the lighter 'self-inflatable' sandbags that officers were able to deliver and deploy as necessary.

However, it was noted that we did not have the resources to offer help on a large scale. But we have done our best and avoided flooding in some areas and helped in areas where it had.

Since April the amount of rain had caused a different sort of problem from just that of rising/overflowing river and drainage ditches. The rain has caused a lot of surface water run-off to flow off the land and onto roads and overflowing drains which can't then carry the surplus water away.

Recently Thames Water, as the local water company, has been given responsibilities over the local sewerage infrastructure. So far, they have not proved to be as responsive as we were.

Our flood response officers (Mr Durrani's team) had spent most of the previous Sunday inspecting properties under threat, issuing sandbags etc. and doing the best they could in the circumstances. However, if properties have been flooded in the past then householders should be aware of the possibility of this happening again within the next few weeks. Once the current pressure on the system has dissipated, officers would go and check where possible.

The Committee wanted to express their appreciation to Mr Durrani and his team for their hard work during this extraordinary time.

Councillor Knight wanted to know if Highways were doing enough to clear the drains. She cited overflowing ponds at the Nazeing glass houses which were being pumped out onto the main roads. Also, people were dumping material down the drains. Mr Gilbert told her that this had always been a difficult area to deal with as the drains were easily blocked up and hard to get at and were expensive to deal with. He would find out the legal position regarding water being discharged onto the roads. As for dumping things down drains it depended on where they emptied as to who was responsible for them, either the Environment Agency, Thames Water or in some cases this Council.

Councillor Girling wanted to know if there was an 'at risk' register for potential flooding areas in the district. He was told that the Environment Agency have a flood plain plan or he could contact the County, who are now responsible for the strategic management on flooding.

ACTION: Members of the Panel agreed that they like to have an update in the winter on the rainfall experienced this year and to update the panel on the current arrangements.

7. ESSEX FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY CONSULTATION

The Panel noted that Essex County Council had been made a Lead Local Flood Authority by the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. They have to produce a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy explaining the nature of flood risk, the roles of the different stakeholders involved, including householders and the county-wide actions taken to improve knowledge, awareness and decision making about flood risk in Essex.

Using information available from the Environment Agency (EA) (e.g. map of surface water flooding) and historical flood evidence, the document had attempted to prioritise areas of locally important flood risk. This is to enable efficient use of resources for areas at greater risk of flooding.

A three tier ranking system was developed. Tier 1 was the highest priority area where more than 1000 people are predicted to be at risk, Tier 2 was the medium priority area where between 1000 and 500 people are predicted to be at risk and Tier 3 was the low priority area where less than 500 people are considered to be at risk. When Tier 3 areas are named they will be put in a future member's bulletin for information.

The document had identified 18 areas within Essex that have been classified as locally important flood risk areas (all Tier 1 and 2). Loughton (Tier 1) and Waltham Abbey (Tier 2) are included in the list of locally important flood risk areas. The document did not indicate what actions would be undertaken for these important areas but it implied that the 18 areas will be prioritised for further investigation in the future.

The Panel then reviewed the draft response from EFDC officers to the consultation document.

It was noted that officers still needed to know what the county would do in the management of Tier 1, 2 & 3 and they were still awaiting to know how they would allocate their resources.

Asked if this had produced any benefit for the district Mr Gilbert said it was too soon to say, officers were still waiting to know how resources were to be allocated by county.

Officers also thought that there needed to be a certain amount of resilience and householders needed to take responsibility for their own properties as much as possible. They should use EFDC and County for advice as the bigger agencies are short on money. Every landowner should keep their ditches and drains clear; the same would apply to people that abut watercourses.

The Panel wanted it noted that the response to the consultation was excellent and reflected the level of expertise in our District. They hoped that County would take them to heart and answer our points.

RESOLVED:

That the draft consultation response to the Essex County Council Local Flood Risk Management Strategy be agreed.

8. PROGRESS ON INTRODUCTION OF RECYCLING IN FLATS

The Panel noted the report updating them on the progress made on the introduction of recycling in flats. They noted that there were a total of 420 blocks of flats in the district. All residents of flats are able to take part in the dry recycling services offered by the Council by presenting their recycling in clear sacks. The Council has also implemented a programme of 'bespoke' waste and recycling facilities in flats, involving surveying a block of flats for suitability of placing communal containers for collection and reaching an agreement with the managing agents. So far, 302 have already benefited from the installation of individual recycling services. Wheeled bins were on order for another 7 blocks and final agreements are being signed up with the managing agents for a further 30 blocks of flats, following which, containers would be installed. This would take the total number of flats recycling up to 339.

The Panel noted that some blocks of flats have a high level of contamination levels, caused by some residents not using the containers correctly. This could end up being put into landfill sites which costs the council and was not good for the environment. Staff always try to explain the reasons for proper use of the recycling containers so that they did not have to escalate to more draconian methods of enforcement. The Chairman asked if we ever got any feedback from the residents on this. She was told that they did not. The government was now asking all Local Authorities to sign up to a charter to publically state where they take their recycling to. But this threw up problems with commercial confidentiality. However, there was a need to provide more feedback and praise to residents.

Councillor Knight asked if there were any records on enforcement figures. She was told that the number of enforcement notices issued since February 2011 was 10. It has always been our policy to advise/educate residents before fixed penalty notices were used. The same principal applied to fines for parking and dog fouling etc. and we do not have a quota system for these. We now target specific areas when we know that there are problems, but we do advertise in these local areas before we go in.

Councillor Knight asked if the council had ever considered having an educational road show for blocks of flats, new tenants or management agencies. Mr Gilbert replied that they already have a road show that goes out in the summer and have considered a welcome pack for new tenants, but it is resource intensive. We must not lose sight that we are the 8th best recycling authority in the UK and the 2nd best in Essex.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made on recycling of waste in flat blocks be noted.

9. SCG ACTION PLAN - OUTTURN FOR OCTOBER 2011 TO MARCH 2012

The Panel noted the Safer Cleaner Greener Action Plan for 2012/13 and the outturn for 2011/12.

They noted that:

- Some crime figures had increased, but Anti Social Behaviour figures had been reduced as the new team set up could intervene early and sort problems before they escalate;
- The Nottingham Declaration had been replaced by the 'Climate Local Agreement'; and
- The Panel was still waiting for the Climate Diversity Action Plan to be brought to them.

RESOLVED:

That the Safer Cleaner Greener Action Plan for 2012/13 be noted.

10. CCTV 5 YEAR ACTION PLAN

The Assistant Director, Environment and Street Scene, Jim Nolan, took the Panel through the CCTV Delivery plan. They noted that within the last two years they had brought all the council CCTV in the district together and made them comply with the law.

They also noted that:

- There was an update tabled for Debden once the final works were completed;
- When this had gone live maybe members would like to see it in action;
- The Epping High Road system had been successfully commissioned over the last few months;
- The system helped monitor activity for the police in matters of major drug crimes;
- It had been used to monitor public disorder in the high street;
- It had helped find a missing person;
- The system is not monitored continuously, but everything was recorded; and
- The Police now had 24 hour access to the monitoring suit.

Councillor Cochrane asked if the CCTV would be extended on Loughton High Road. She was told that the system on Loughton High Road was getting old and showing its age, officers were looking to spend some S106 money to update the system; a full report would be produced in the autumn.

Councillor Girling asked if we were able to promote the success of our CCTV to the public. Mr Nolan replied that we had done so in the past via the Essex Police website and by press release and articles in 'The Forester'.

Councillor Girling then asked if CCTV could be used for parking offences. He was told that that it could not and that we would need a special order to do so.

Councillor Waller, the Portfolio Holder for Safer Greener and Highways mentioned that it was the intention of the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) to purchase mobile CCTV to monitor safety in the vicinity of schools. It would be helpful to have feedback from members on the positioning of these. Councillor Girling added that we needed to use this intelligently for highways problems as well as schools etc.

It should be noted that the NEPP use of CCTV was outside the scope of EFDC's CCTV 5 year plan.

RESOLVED:

That the progress on the CCTV 5 year Service Plan be noted.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS UPDATE

The panel noted the change to the Nottingham Declaration which had been replaced by the 'Climate Local Agreement'. The agreement differed from the Nottingham Declaration which gave local authorities the opportunity to sign up to a number of strong pledges but to create their own more specific goals with regards to reducing and off-setting carbon emissions.

RESOLVED:

The Panel noted the various updates on Environmental matters.

12. IAA MEMBER WORKING GROUP MINUTES

The Panel noted the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) Working Group minutes for the meeting held on 10 May 2012. The financial benefits of transfer sites to us was noted and that a local facility for composting was also better for us. The recent changes to the PFI agreement had now been signed off and the new contractor facilities would come on stream by 2014. Officers were hopeful it would produce savings for the district.

Councillor Breare-Hall, Portfolio Holder for the Environment, said that when the IAA group received the report on the recycling of commercial waste he would report back to this Panel.

RESOLVED:

That the draft set of minutes of the IAA Working Group for 10 May 2012 was noted.

13. BOBBINGWORTH TIP LIAISON GROUP MINUTES - MARCH 2012

The Panel noted the latest draft minutes of the Bobbingworth Former Landfill Site Local Liaison Group, dated 28 March 2012.

It was noted that the site had just been granted Queen Elizabeth Field Designation and a draft deed of dedication was awaited from the QEII Trust.

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

Noted that the change in the name of the Nottingham Declaration to the 'Climate Local Agreement' and subsequent change to the Terms of Reference should be notified to the O&S Committee.

15. FUTURE MEETINGS

The Panel noted that the next meeting would be dedicated to crime and disorder topics. Possible subjects for discussion would be a review of the Police Blueprint and/or a review of CCTV and how it can be used during the hours of darkness.

Members were asked to submit any Community Safety issues to officers before the October meeting for consideration.

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