

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL  
NOTES OF A MEETING OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND PLANNING SERVICES STANDING  
SCRUTINY PANEL  
HELD ON THURSDAY, 13 APRIL 2006  
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING  
AT 7.30 - 9.50 PM**

<b>Members Present:</b>	D Stallan (Housing Portfolio Holder) (Chairman), M Woollard (Vice-Chairman), Mrs D Borton, A Lee, T Richardson, Mrs M Sartin (Environmental Protection Portfolio Holder), Mrs P Smith and Mrs J H Whitehouse
<b>Other members present:</b>	(none)
<b>Apologies for Absence:</b>	Mrs M Boatman and P McMillan
<b>Officers Present</b>	J Scott (Joint Chief Executive), J Gilbert (Head of Environmental Services), J Preston (Head of Planning and Economic Development), Ian White (Senior Planning Officer) and Z Folley (Democratic Services Assistant)
<b>Also in attendance:</b>	K Lawson (Essex County Council)

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**1. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)**

It was reported that Councillor Mrs J H Whitehouse had been appointed to attend the meeting as a substitute for Councillor D Kelly.

**2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

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

**3. NOTES OF THE LAST MEETINGS - 28 FEBRUARY AND 28 MARCH 2006**

Agreed.

**4. TERMS OF REFERENCE / WORK PROGRAMME**

The Panel were invited to allocate reporting deadlines where required to their work programme for the forthcoming year. Agreed the following deadlines be ascribed:

(item 5) Provision of Uniformed Wardens – September 2006

(Item 6) Traveller Policy – Ongoing

(Item 7) Planning Performance – monitoring of enforcement figures outcome – Ongoing

(item 3) Re use of buildings in Green Belt – decision deferred pending receipt of further information at next meeting.

Noted that information on Planning Performance would be reported in the Members Bulletin on a regular basis.

**ACTION:**

Democratic Services Assistant to update work programme.

**5. RE USE OF BUILDINGS IN THE GREEN BELT - PRESENTATION**

The Chairman introduced and welcomed Keith Lawson from Essex County Council who was in attendance to discuss policies for the reuse of farm buildings in the countryside and steps to ensure development in such areas was sustainable.

Mr Lawson referred to a recent newspaper article reporting action taken by residents in Broxbourne relating to the subject of the review and advised that the Area Office might offer to undertake work on the issues. He also reported that:

- (a) County Planning Officers/the Essex Planning Officer Association had carried out a study in response to central government efforts to encourage the diversification of farms. The study produced 12 years ago, explored planning, highways and environmental issues in view of the need to establish a county wide approach.
- (b) Commercial vehicle activity around farm buildings had increased arising from the increased economic activity in rural communities. There was a need to establish clear reasons for any actions to deal with the issues associated with such activities which was difficult to regulate.
- (c) The Council received a list of applications seeking changes to goods vehicle operators licenses which the District could make representations against if deemed necessary.

Mr Lawson reported a number of options for addressing the issues in the District:

- (d) The Panel could choose to update the County study/adapt it to suit local circumstances as it was still relevant.
- (e) Should the Panel wish to address specific site related issues such as those identified in the Nazeing/Roydon area, they might wish to undertake a study to scope to problems in the first instance.

The Principal Planning Officer reported that between 1 April 2001 and 31 March 2006, 146 applications had been submitted for change of use in rural areas. Only 6 of these related to sites in Nazeing. A further 5 concerned Roydon. The Head of Planning and Economic Development reported information indicating that the majority of cases for change of use was for residential development rather than commercial activity. He suggested that this information might not provide enough evidence to suggest that issues around the conversion of farm houses for business purposes was a growing significant trend and required a change in policy.

**Agreed** that further information be obtained on how many of the 146 consents reported had been taken up and the nature of them in particularly their size and whether they were for commercial purposes. **Agreed** that this also detail businesses operating without consent/breaches of planning conditions and cover the last 10-15

years. The Head of Planning and Economic Development/Principal Planning Officer undertook to collate this more specific information for the next meeting in June 2006.

A Councillor undertook to undertake her own research on problems concerning vehicle activity in the Nazeing area and report back to the next meeting. It was also agreed that the County study be made available for the next meeting.

Noted the benefits of carrying out a desktop study to identify the key issues regarding business activity in Nazeing and Roydon, for example concerning glasshouses/package houses, transport links, implications of the expanding industrial base of Broxbourne, issues generated by sites on which redundant agricultural buildings had been converted for use. Mr Lawson advised that the investigation might also seek information on the number of employees serving the businesses concerned, impact of conversions on 'areas of stress' and unauthorised sites. Feed back could be obtained from the Parishes.

**Agreed** that further consideration be given to the review at the next meeting following the receipt and consideration of the detailed information requested at this meeting.

**ACTION:**

Head of Planning and Economic Development/Principal Planning Officer to produce report for the next meeting in June 2006 and make available the Essex Planning Officer Association study.

**6. WEST ESSEX AREA WASTE MANAGEMENT JOINT COMMITTEE - MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 22 FEBRUARY 2006.**

The Panel considered a summary of the decisions taken at the meeting of the Joint Committee held on 22 February 2006.

The Head of Environmental Services drew attention to the progress to date with the system design approach.

**7. REVIEW OF ENGLAND'S WASTE STRATEGY**

Members noted that following the discussions at the last meeting of the Panel, officers had formulated responses to the questions identified in the consultation document. The Head of Environmental Services invited Members to consider each response with a view to incorporating any changes made and submitting them to the consultation by the deadline of 9 May 2006. The following comments were made:

**Agreed** that the response to question 2 state that this matter was best dealt with by disposal authority.

**Agreed** that it be made clear that the response to Question 7 covered question 6 as well.

**Agreed** that the word 'results' substitute 'affects' in the answer to Question 9.

**Agreed** that Question 10 refer to the attitude of many residents towards managing household waste.

**Agreed** that the response to Question 29 have regard to the desire to see an increase in the amount of commercial waste recycled and that consideration would need to be given to how such waste was managed carefully.

**ACTION:**

Head of Environmental Services to amend the responses as indicated.

Responses as amended to be placed in the Members Bulletin for comment prior to submission.

**8. NEIGHBOURHOOD/COMMUNITY WARDENS**

The Panel considered information on Community/Neighbourhood Wardens in connection with the review to be undertaken on this subject. Noted that Councillor Mrs J Whitehouse had agreed to produce a report for the next meeting in June 2006.

**Agreed** that Glenn Mayes of Essex Police and a representative from the Eastern Warden Resource Service be invited to the next meeting.

**Agreed** that an officer report be submitted on existing powers.

Noted that the Panel might wish in the new year to set up an informal smaller sub-group to undertake fact finding visits which would be open to any Member who wished to attend. Noted the need to formulate a work plan with a deadline of September 2006 for the 2007/08 budget.

**Agreed** that a general invitation to the next Panel meeting be placed in the Members Bulletin nearer the time.

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

There were no reports to be made to the next meeting of the OSC on 25 May 2006.

**10. LAST MEETING OF THE YEAR**

The Chairman thanked the members of the Panel for their regular attendance at its meetings over the last year and contribution to the discussions. He also thanked the officers involved in supporting the meetings for all their hard work and looked forward to the forthcoming year.

**11. FUTURE MEETINGS**

Noted that the next meeting of the Panel would be held on 26 June at 7.30p.m in Committee Room 1.