

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL  
NOTES OF A MEETING OF COMMUNITIES SELECT COMMITTEE  
HELD ON TUESDAY, 15 JANUARY 2019  
IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING  
AT 7.00 - 7.57 PM**

**Members Present:** H Whitbread (Chairman), J Lea (Vice-Chairman), A Beales, K Chana, S Heap, S Heather, A Mitchell, A Patel, C Roberts, D Roberts, D Sunger, J H Whitehouse and W Marshall (Tenants and Leaseholders Panel)

**Other members present:** S Bakalov (EF Youth Councillor), S Kane and S Stavrou

**Apologies for Absence:** D Stocker

**Officers Present** P Pledger (Service Director (Housing & Property Services)), J Chandler (Service Director (Community & Partnership Services)), H Thorpe (Housing Assets Manager), R Smith (Area Housing Manager North), C Wiggins (Safer Communities Manager), N Ross (Police Officer) and J Leither (Democratic Services Officer)

**45. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (MINUTE ITEM 39 - 23.7.02)**

It was noted that there were no substitute members for this meeting.

**46. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**RESOLVED:**

That the notes of previous meeting of the Select Committee held on 13 November 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

**47. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made pursuant to the Members' Code of Conduct.

**48. SIX MONTH PROGRESS UPDATE ON THE WORK OF EFDC FUNDED POLICE OFFICERS**

Councillor S Kane presented a report to the Select Committee and advised that the Council's three funded Police officers became officially operational on 20 July 2018 following a formal ceremony to mark the event.

As a general rule, the team were tasked according to the District Community Safety Partnership (CSP) priorities, which were identified through the Annual Strategic Assessment and these were aligned to the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner's (PFCC) Policing Plan. Outside of this, the team were occasionally deployed to support EFDC Officers in their work, where formal tasking requests identified a risk of threat or harm to staff in carrying out their lawful functions. Close management of this process had ensured that the Council's police resources were targeted most effectively and efficiently.

Since the introduction of the team, close professional working relationships have developed between the officers and members of the Council's Community Safety Team, which had helped to promote fully integrated working between the police, ASB officers, CCTV, Safeguarding and ASB investigators. The officers have also worked with other front-line council service areas to support teams when Council officers have been faced with threats, intimidation and aggression.

Councillor Patel commented on the success of the three funded Police officers and asked if they were any plans to extend the team.

Councillor Kane stated that it was early days as the Council were only six months into a three year contract and would be looked at further into the contract.

Councillor Patel asked would the Council's Police officers be able to enforce obstruction by vehicles parking on pavements.

Councillor Kane advised that this would not come under their remit but NEPP were in the process of applying for the authority to enforce pavement parking.

Councillor Stavrou asked if this Select Committee, the Portfolio Holder or the Community Safety team had any influence on using the Community Payback Scheme.

The Safer Communities Manager advised that they had previously received feedback from Waltham Abbey Town Council and it was noted that it was hard to get the Community Payback Scheme to engage in anything constructive as there were many obstacles around safeguarding.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Select Committee noted the six month report on the work and range of operations of the Council's funded Police Team.

**49. CORPORATE PLAN 2018-2023 - PERFORMANCE REPORT Q3 2018/19**

The Community and Partnerships Service Director, J Chandler presented the Corporate Plan 2018-2023 Performance Report to the Select Committee, she advised that the Corporate Plan was the authority's key strategic planning document. The Plan laid out the journey the Council would take to transform the organisation to be 'Ready for the Future'. The plan links the key external drivers influencing Council services, with a set of corporate aims and objectives, grouped under three corporate ambitions.

A Corporate Specification for each year (previously called the Key Action Plan) detailed how the Corporate Plan was being delivered through operational objectives, which in turn linked to annual Service business plans. The previous regular performance reports that had covered the annual Corporate Plan Key Action Plan, Key Performance Indicators and Transformation Highlight Report had now been superseded by this single integrated performance report.

The success of the Corporate Plan was assessed through the achievement of a set of benefits, each measured through one or more performance indicators. This provided the Council with the opportunity to focus on what could be achieved for its customers – on how specific improvements would be addressed, opportunities exploited and better outcomes delivered. The Corporate Plan when viewed as a set

of benefits maps had one map for each of the ten corporate aims. A benefit was a measurable improvement from an outcome that was perceived as an advantage, and contributed to an organisational objective(s). All benefits from individual corporate objectives connected back to four key benefits, which were:

- K1 Improved customer value – recognising what customers' value about our services and placing them as the heart of everything we do;
- K2 Increased efficiency – focussing on our speed of delivery and getting things right first time;
- K3 Increased agility – reducing red tape, simplifying how we work through joined up services; and
- K4 Increased savings and income – delivery of resource savings and income generation, to keep Council Tax low.

She advised that a Task & Finish Group had been set up to review the way the Corporate Plan performance was reported, in order to make it easier to understand. Currently, the reports generated were misleading.

Councillor A Patel sought clarification of performance indicator M2.1, Number of safeguarding concerns and why the performance indicator was red. C Wiggins replied that factors which contributed were gathering information, building a case history and send a detailed report to Essex County Council who would decide whether there was a valid case to investigate. J Chandler commented that this performance indicator, along with several others were currently being reviewed.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the Select Committee reviewed and noted the progress of the Corporate Plan 2018-2023 – Performance Report Quarter 3 progress in relation to its areas of responsibility.

#### **50. FIRE SAFETY POLICY**

The Housing Assets Manager, H Thorpe presented a report to the Select Committee he advised that in January 2018, the Select Committee considered a report on Fire Safety in Council-owned Accommodation. The outcome of that meeting led to the following recommendations:

- that a feasibility study be undertaken into retro-fitting sprinklers into the Council's Sheltered Housing sites, Norway House and Hemnall House;
- that a change in approach would be adopted whereby the Council would promote a "Stay Safe" Policy to replace the previous "Stay Put" Policy;
- that Leaseholders continued to be offered a 75% towards the cost of a replacement fire protected front entrance door; and
- that a detailed Fire Safety Policy for Council owned residential accommodation be prepared and brought back for further consideration.

**Hemnall House** would significantly benefit from the retrofitting of sprinklers, as it had both a mix of vulnerable residents, and was an old building that presented significant compartmentation issues which were unlikely to be easily or cost-effectively addressed due to the age of the building and nature of the construction.

**Norway House** had a mix of vulnerable residents but had a significantly more robust level of compartmentation. However, this property had been subject to a number of

small fires and therefore the retrofitting of sprinklers should be considered based on life safety risk.

**Highwood Lane and Hilltop Court** were both general needs and were reliant on effective compartmentation. Residents were also assumed to be more mobile, but the likelihood of accidental fires could be higher than compared to other premises. Therefore, the retrofitting of sprinkler systems would present a benefit in terms of life safety. However, statistical evidence to date from EFDC, the Hackitt Review and NFCC definitions would suggest that these premises do not fall within the High-Risk category.

**Sheltered Schemes** all contained the most vulnerable residents. These schemes all have the benefit of high standards of both active and passive fire protection and 24/7 monitoring. The retrofitting of sprinkler systems into these schemes would present a benefit in terms of life safety, although with high levels of existing active and passive fire protection coupled with increased compartmentation and 24/7 monitoring, benefits may not be as evident as with the other schemes.

Based on the risk assessments within the report, and working with the Essex Fire and Rescue Service, the Housing Assets Manager had obtained an estimate for the installation of a retro-fitted sprinkler system at Norway House, which would protect the communal areas as well as individual rooms, of around £145,000 (excluding the chalets) and £40,000 at Hemnall House. Using this information, the Select Committee was asked to consider the benefits of installing a sprinkler system into its “High Risk” accommodation, taking account of cost and benefit, and made a recommendation to the Cabinet as necessary.

#### “Stay Put” or “Stay Safe”

The report to the Select Committee in January 2018 concluded that the Council would seek to adopt a “Stay Safe” policy for all of the Council’s flat blocks, with the exception of the Sheltered Housing sites, where an evacuation Policy would remain in place.

However, since that decision was reached, further discussions had taken place with the Essex Fire and Rescue Service, who firmly advocate the “Stay Put” policy following the release of the Hackitt review into the Grenfell Tower fire. Whilst the Essex Fire and Rescue Service would not make a recommendation one way or the other, they urged the Council to refer to their website, which continued to advise residents to “Stay Put”.

Therefore based on the advice contained on the Essex Fire and Rescue Service website, it was recommended that the Council reverts to its policy of advising residents to “Stay Put” in the event of a fire.

#### Fire Safety Policy

Attached to the Agenda at appendix 2 was a copy of a draft Fire Safety Policy, which the Select Committee was asked to consider in detail and recommend its endorsement to the Cabinet. This took account of a “Stay Put” policy in general needs flat blocks and HMPO’s, with an evacuation policy for all Sheltered Housing sites.

Councillor K Chana expressed concern regarding the compartmentation in the buildings and how it would stop the fire from spreading upwards

H Thorpe advised that it would depend on the construction, Norway House was predominantly a brick and block built construction whereas Hemnall House was an older property with wooden floors between the two stories and plasterboard walls and it was felt that Hemnall House was the highest risk temporary accommodation block.

Councillor K Chana asked if the fire resistance could be increased between the two floors.

H Thorpe replied that the fire resistance could be increased but this was a very expensive procedure but the retro-fitted sprinkler system would negate that.

Councillor A Patel asked what was the cost comparison between the retro-fitted sprinkler system that the Council were proposing to install and what Councillor K Chana had suggested.

H Thorpe advised that the cost for the retro-fitted sprinkler system in Hemnall House was estimated to be around £40,000 and Norway House was estimated at £145,000 (excluding the chalets). There was also the possibility of funding from Essex Fire and Rescue Service of £20,000 towards the installation of the retro-fitted sprinkler system in Hemnall House and £50,000 towards Norway House if the recommendation was agreed. As for compartmentation in Hemnall House it was difficult to provide any figures without carrying out intrusive surveys into the block to determine the construction of the floors and ceilings.

The Chairman, Councillor H Whitbread asked when the funding from Essex Fire and Rescue service would be available.

H Thorpe advised as soon as the recommendation was agreed by Cabinet an application would be submitted to Essex Fire and Rescue Service, the funding they have is limited and it would be dependent upon them approving the scheme that was recommended.

Councillor J H Whitehouse expressed concerns regarding Hemnall House and the recommendation of the 'Stay Put' Policy, apart from 3 flats the others are on the ground floor therefore surely it would be safer to get out.

P Pledger advised that the 'Stay Put' or 'Stay Safe' policy was discussed at length with the Essex Fire and Rescue Service and we brought this to the Select Committee previously but the Hackett report on the Grenfell Tower fire was not published at that time therefore we could not give a recommendation either way. The Hackett Report had now been published and it made no changes to the recommendation of 'Stay Put'. The Essex Fire and Rescue Service advised that the Council could recommend the 'Stay Safe' policy but if a fire occurred and the investigation proved the Council's policy was at fault the Essex Fire and Rescue Service would prosecute the Council. Therefore the Council recommends 'Stay Put' but it would be up to the individual if they decided to stay or leave the premises.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the Select Committee considered the benefits of installing a sprinkler system into its "High Risk" accommodation, taking account of cost and benefit and life safety risk and a recommendation be made to the Cabinet as necessary;

(2) That the Council reverts to a “Stay Put” policy in all its general needs flat blocks, at Norway House and at Hemnall House, whilst maintaining its advice to residents in each of its Sheltered Housing sites to evacuate in the event of a fire; and

(3) That the Select Committee considers the Fire Safety Policy set out in Appendix 2, and recommends its endorsement to the Cabinet.

#### **51. TERMS OF REFERENCE/WORK PROGRAMME**

(1) Terms of Reference

The Select Committee noted their terms of reference.

(2) Work Programme

There Select Committee noted amendments to the work programme.

Item 11 – New Housing Strategy Key Action Plan 2018/19 would go the meeting on 12 March 2019.

Item 13 – 6-month Progress Report on implementation of the Ageing Population Study Action Plan would go the meeting on 12 March 2019.

Item 14 – HRA Financial Plan 2012/20 would come under the remit of P. Maddock and would go the meeting on 12 March 2019.

Items 15, 16 and 17 were relating to the Communities Directorate but as new Directorates were now in place these items would be updated.

Item 23 – Review of the future use of sheltered/grouped housing scheme sites would be deferred for up to 12 months.

Item 25 – 6-month Progress Report on EFDC funded police officers would go the first meeting of the next municipal year which should be in June 2020.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the Terms of Reference were noted; and
- (2) That the amendments to the Work Programme were noted.

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

The Chairman confirmed that she would make a brief summary of the meeting's progress to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee regarding:

- (a) The Six-Month Progress Report on EFDC funded police officers; and
- (b) The Fire Safety Policy.

#### **53. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Communities Select Committee would be held on 12 March 2019 at 7.00pm in Committee Room 1.