
Minutes of the meeting of the Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee, held in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex on Tuesday, 17 January 2017

Present:

Councillor D Louis (Chairman)	Councillor N Hume
Councillor B Aspinell	Councillor D Kendall
Councillor K Bobbin	Councillor S Robinson
Councillor T Cutmore	Councillor K Twitchen
Councillor I Grundy	Councillor A Wood
Councillor C Guglielmi	

The following Officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Christine Sharland	-	Scrutiny Officer
Lisa Siggins	-	Committee Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Hedley and Pond, Councillor Barker who was substituted at the meeting by Councillor Hume and from Councillor Turrell who substituted by Councillor Aspinell.

2 Minutes

The Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 24 November 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were submitted at this meeting

4 Questions from the Public

There were no questions raised by members of the public.

5 Greater Essex Growth And Infrastructure Framework

The Committee considered report PSEG/01/17 on the Greater Essex Growth And Infrastructure Framework (GIF) by way of the Cabinet's response to recommendation 4 set out in the 'Third Party Responsibilities and Flood Enforcement in Essex' scrutiny report namely the identification of infrastructure needs across the county. The recommendation focussed upon how the County Council is co-ordinating its activities to identify and address overall infrastructure needs in Essex.

At the meeting the Committee received a PowerPoint presentation on the GIF from Councillor Kevin Bentley, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth,

Infrastructure and Partnerships, and Graham Thomas, Head of Commissioning: Strategic Planning, Housing Growth & Development. An overview of the GIF was also set out in the briefing paper attached to report PSEG/01/17.

The GIF was initiated by Essex County Council and delivered with support from the Housing and Connectivity and Infrastructure and Growth Workstreams of the Greater Essex devolution programme. It provides a detailed evidence base, which can be used to develop priorities and lobby other agencies for support for planned growth. Infrastructure is defined broadly and includes flood prevention, health, education, social care, green space, and transportation. The principle of the GIF is supported by all 15 Local Authorities across Essex, and all, are actively engaged to refine the document to produce a strategic position for each district, the four sub-regions and an overall Greater Essex position.

The GIF will be finalised in due course, and its endorsement will be sought in March 2017. At the meeting Members took the opportunity to seek clarification on various aspects of the GIF from the Cabinet Member.

With particular reference to the NHS, Members were pleased to learn about the interest shown by the NHS at a regional level in the 20 year strategic plan, and were keen to support what appears to be emerging as a positive opportunity to develop improved relationships with other service providers including the NHS and the utilities. Currently the NHS produces 5 year strategic plans. It was anticipated that there will be more local discussion to facilitate action to bridge identified gaps.

The Committee suggested that Councillor Bentley provide a tailored briefing for the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) on the GIF in order to raise awareness of the strategic plan for Greater Essex, and foster more effective dialogue with the NHS in the planning of strategic infrastructure moving forward.

The GIF provides a key evidence base for strategic planning and infrastructure purposes across Essex over the 20 year framework up to 2036. Given the importance of the framework Cllr Bentley suggested that the Committee be updated on an annual or bi annual basis on the GIF, and the delivery of growth and infrastructure.

Councillor Bentley expressed his hope that other Essex Councils would raise their own Members' awareness of the GIF as he was doing through this Scrutiny Committee

On behalf of the Committee the Chairman thanked Councillor Bentley and Graham Thomas for an informative and interesting briefing.

While no specific issues were identified for further specific scrutiny investigation, a progress report on the GIF would be included in the Committee's future work programme.

The Committee received report PSEG/02/17 on this scrutiny report.

At its meeting on 22 September, Councillor Bentley, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Infrastructure and Partnerships, had provided an oral response to the Scrutiny Report entitled 'We can work it out: The case for a locally determined employment, skills, careers advice and welfare for work system in Essex'. At the following meeting on 20 October he provided a detailed written response to the sixteen recommendations set out in the scrutiny report. His letter and formal response were reproduced at the Appendix to report PSEG/02/17.

At this meeting the Cabinet Member answered Member's questions and drew attention to some of the detail in his written response as well as providing an update on related matters.

The Committee's consideration included the following points:

- ECC is working with the construction industry to promote skills required by this industry, and to address the skills gap.
- A new college is being constructed at Stansted airport specialising in aviation training.
- Work is in progress to promote qualifications in the care and health sector.
- Work is in progress to improve transport connectivity in respect of schools and further education establishments.
- Essex has some of the lowest NEET numbers in the country, but it will be impossible to achieve a zero rate as there are some people who are very hard to reach eg they travel a lot and cannot be contacted.
- The Local Government Association has written to the Council's Leader to invite Essex County Council to take part in a project. The Cabinet Member confirmed a response was in hand.
- Councillor Bentley confirmed that a suggestion for an Essex MP to be approached to sponsor the scrutiny report was a matter for the Committee to address rather than the Cabinet Member. The Committee discussed an option that a letter be sent to Robert Halfon MP, Harlow given the interest he has shown in the topic of jobs and skills, albeit he has already been written to as a Government Minister.
- A copy of the final version of the White Paper report will be sent to the Committee.
- The Chairman confirmed that of the five letters sent to the Government, he has received one response from Damien Green MP, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions dated 6 December 2016.

The Committee noted that Suzanne Jude, Chairman of the Essex Employment and Skills Board has accepted an invitation to attend the February Committee meeting to provide information on its activities, as well as feedback on the Scrutiny Report.

On behalf of the Committee the Chairman thanked Councillor Bentley for his update and clarification of some of the outstanding issues from the Scrutiny Report, so that the Committee could move forward in drawing this particular

investigation to a conclusion.

7 Third Party Responsibilities And Flood Enforcement Scrutiny Report

The Committee received report PSEG/03/17 on the Cabinet response to recommendations 2 and 3 set out in this Scrutiny Report, which was endorsed in November 2015 (Minute 8).

On 22 September 2016 (Minute 6) Councillor Walsh, Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste, and Councillor Johnson, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, had submitted a detailed written response to recommendations 2 and 3 insofar as they related to their Cabinet portfolios. The original response was attached as a briefing paper to report PSEG/03/17. However, the Committee decided at that time that it wished to invite the Cabinet Members to a future meeting to answer in person its questions on their written responses. Consequently Councillors Walsh and Johnson, attended this meeting to provide oral updates and answer questions including those set out in report. They were supported respectively by Peter Maisie, Head of Commissioning Essex Highways, and Lucy Shepherd, Lead Local Flood Authority Manager.

Councillor Johnson confirmed that the Highways Enforcement pilot project in Maldon had been successful and is being rolled out across the County. However, the Enforcement Team was small with limited resources so there would have to be prioritisation of work involving strict criteria. Questions on gully cleansing were raised, and although answers were given it was pointed out that gullies were not the focus of scrutiny review.

Councillor Walsh confirmed there is an approved Enforcement Strategy in place. It will be updated this year and take account of the capital programme. He indicated that he would update the Committee on this matter later in the year.

In response to questions on sharing of flood expertise with local planning authority teams for the consideration of planning applications, it was confirmed that all District Councils had been offered a service level agreement (SLA) for £2000 during this financial year but only 50% had taken up opportunity. Details on the package being offered at £2000 and identity of Councils using the service would be forwarded to Committee Members.

It was agreed that Lucy Shepherd would provide information on SLAs with District Councils for circulation to the Committee, and information on Environment Agency investment on Essex coastal defences.

On behalf of the Committee the Chairman thanked Councillors Johnson and Walsh, and Ms Shepherd for attending, and clarifying outstanding issues so that monitoring of this investigation could be drawn to a conclusion.

8 Call In Of Decision - FP/686/12/16 Proposed One Way 7.5 Tonnes Weight Limit On Oak Road, Rivenhall

The Committee noted report PSEG/04/17 and its addendum explaining the delay

in proceedings as agreed by both parties to the call in.

9 Call In Of Decision - FP/687/12/16 Proposed 20mph Speed Limit On The Three Arch And Eastham Estate, Brentwood

The Committee noted report PSEG/05/17 and its addendum regarding the recent call in.

It was noted that call in by Councillor Kendall had been withdrawn as Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation, had changed his decision so that a proposal for a traffic regulation Order to introduce a speed limit at Brentwood would be now published.

10 Work Programme

The Committee noted report PSEG/06/17 and arrangements underway for the Committee's meetings in February and March 2017.

11 Date of Next Meeting

The Committee noted that there would be a formal Committee meeting on Thursday 23 February 2017.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 12.12 pm

Chairman