

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PLACE SERVICES & ECONOMIC
GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL,
CHELMSFORD ON 24 MARCH 2016**

Present:

Councillor S Walsh (Chairman)	Councillor D Kendall
Councillor S Barker	Councillor M McGeorge
Councillor S Canning	Councillor C Pond
Councillor T Cutmore	Councillor S Robinson
Councillor A Erskine	Councillor K Twitchen
Councillor C Guglielmi	Councillor A Wood
Councillor I Henderson	

Also in attendance:

Councillor Ray Howard.

The following Officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Christine Sharland	-	Scrutiny Officer
Lisa Siggins	-	Committee Officer

1. Membership

At the full Council meeting in February 2016 Councillors Butland and Metcalfe were replaced as members of the Committee by Councillors Barker and Louis. The full Committee membership is set out below:

Councillor S Walsh (Chairman)	Councillor I Henderson
Councillor S Barker	Councillor D Kendall
Councillor K Bobbin	Councillor D Louis
Councillor T Cutmore	Councillor C Pond
Councillor A Erskine	Councillor S Robinson
Councillor C Guglielmi	Councillor K Twitchen
Councillor T Hedley	Councillor A Wood

2. Apologies and substitution notices

Apologies were received from Councillor Louis, who was substituted at the meeting by Councillor S Canning; Councillor Bobbin, who was substituted at the meeting by Councillor M McGeorge; and Councillor Hedley.

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 21 January 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Declarations of Interest

With reference to Minute 6, Councillor Barker declared a personal interest in that she is Uttlesford District Council's representative on the North East Parking Partnership Joint Committee. Councillor Cutmore declared a personal interest in that he acts as a substitute on occasion for his District Council representative on the South East Parking Partnership Joint Committee.

With reference to Minute 10 Councillor Kendall declared a personal interest in that he is Secretary of the Brentwood Bus and Rail Users Association, and a Trustee of Brentwood Community Transport in his capacity as a Brentwood Borough Councillor

5. Questions from the Public

There were no questions raised by members of the public.

6. Essex Parking Partnerships (Minute 5/January 2016)

The Committee considered report PSEG/06/16 that incorporated an interim report setting out the information obtained so far through the scrutiny review on the Essex Parking Partnerships.

At the meeting the Committee received a briefing, including a PowerPoint presentation, from the Partnerships highlighting some of the key features arising from the Executive Review on proposals to continue their operation. An executive summary had also been circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting.

The Parking Partnerships were represented by the following individuals:

Essex County Council

- Councillor Johnson, Cabinet Member for Highways Delivery
- Liz Burr, Head of Network and Safety/Traffic Manager (Highways)

North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP)

- Councillor Mitchell, Chairman

South Essex Parking Partnership (SEPP)

- Councillor Pratt, Chairman Joint Committee
- Nick Binder, Manager

With the benefit of the information obtained at its meeting in January about the management and operation of the Partnerships, the Committee now focussed its attention upon the findings of the Executive Review and sought clarification from

those contributors present on various matters including business planning, communication, and increased collaboration between the two Partnerships.

The Chairman thanked the Partnerships' representatives for their positive contribution to the Committee's consideration of the Executive Review. He confirmed that following the meeting the Scrutiny Officer would draw up a scrutiny report setting out the Committee's own conclusions and recommendations on the emerging proposals from the Executive Review, which would be forwarded to the Partnerships for their consideration before any final decisions are made.

7. Highways Update

The Committee noted report PSEG/07/16 providing an overview of its briefing held on 25 February that focussed upon the highways performance framework, and was an opportunity for Members to ask questions of the highways Cabinet Members on related issues.

At the meeting it was confirmed that information requested by Members at the briefing on key performance measures would be circulated to them in due course.

8. Third Party Responsibilities and Flood Enforcement (Minute 8/November 2015)

The Committee noted report PSEG/08/16 and in particular the Deputy Cabinet Member's acknowledgement of the Scrutiny Report.

9. Work Programme 2015/2017 (Minute 9/January 2016)

The Committee received report PSEG/09/16 concerning the Committee's forthcoming activities.

Members noted it was proposed to vary the date originally scheduled for committee activity on 23 June as that date now co-incides with the EU referendum polling day. Instead it was agreed that the site visit to find out about surface road dressing in practice would go ahead on Thursday 9 June.

Other changes to the work programme included the cancellation of the planned formal meeting on 21 April and instead the holding of a formal meeting on 26 May.

10. Passenger Transport: Update

The Committee received report PSEG/10/16 and an oral update from Helen Morris, Head of Commissioning for Essex Connected Infrastructure, on passenger transport matters.

In June 2015 the Cabinet approved 'Getting Around in Essex – a bus and passenger transport strategy', and a key commitment in that Strategy was a review

of the local bus network, which forms 15% of the overall bus network and is supported by taxpayers. Following a review of that network a Local Bus Consultation was launched on 17 September comprising an overview of routes and proposed changes to the Essex County Council (ECC) Contracted Bus Network on a district by district basis, and a questionnaire. Following the consultation, the proposals for revising contracted local bus services in Essex (those funded by the County Council) was approved by Cabinet on 19 November 2015.

Ms Morris included the following in her update:

➤ **Outcome of the Local Bus Review**

- The aim was to at least maintain overall service levels whilst making savings of 18% with a key part of the review to identify low use costly services.
- Services were tendered and awarded in February 2016
- Quality assessments were included in the tender process
- A consultation is now under way in respect of the intention to withdraw the identified low use routes.
- Changes, which are significant in certain areas, will be introduced on 11 April. This will include changes to Bus numbers and the updating of timetables with communication to local residents of the changes. Digital timetables will be updated in advance.

➤ **Fare Increases**

- Fares set by ECC have not increased since 2009
- Most recent fare increases have been due to commercialism of routes, where services are taken over by a commercial operator
- For the 15% of the network supported by ECC, using taxpayers' money, for around half of those routes the fares are set by the contractor and so we will see fare increases for those. In respect of the remaining 50% fares will be set by ECC. There will a consultation launched within the next two months regarding fare increases. Fares have not increased since 2009 and are now necessary in order to preserve the largest possible bus network. If we do not increase fares we would have to cut routes. Fare increases are likely to be implemented in September.
- It was stressed that there will be no impact on passengers who have concessionary passes and will only impact on fare paying passengers. ECC offers significant discounts on season tickets for school services.

➤ **A Transport for Essex Quality Standard**

- A Transport for Essex Quality Standard is being introduced which will have gold, silver and bronze level awards
- Key considerations will include driving training, vehicle conditions, and customer service including handling of complaints
- It will be neutral in terms of size to allow applications from small operators as well as larger ones.

➤ **Future Pressures**

- There are ongoing budgetary pressures and it is anticipated that this will continue to have an impact on the Bus budgets. Members were reminded that the local bus service is a discretionary not statutory one.

➤ **General Issues**

- ECC continue to work with Bus operators to improve the service provided to disabled passengers
- ECC continue to work with Bus operators to provide a clear complaints process to passengers
- 'Getting Around in Essex' is a 7 year strategy which includes improvement of usage to help mitigate service reductions
- The bus route network tends to be historical but ECC are working with operators with the introduction of new routes being a long term goal.

The Chairman thanked Ms Morris for her detailed update to the Committee on passenger transport matters, and for addressing Members' questions.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee noted the next committee activity day was scheduled for Thursday, 21 April 2016, when task and finish group activity would take place rather than a formal meeting of the full Committee.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 12.55 pm

Chairman