

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PLACE SERVICES & ECONOMIC GROWTH
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD ON 23
OCTOBER 2014**

Present:

Councillor S Walsh (Chairman)	Councillor D Kendall
Councillor D Harris	Councillor M Maddocks
Councillor A Erskine	Councillor C Pond
Councillor C Guglielmi	Councillor S Robinson
Councillor I Henderson	

Members also in attendance: Councillor K Bobbin; Councillor A Naylor; Councillor R Hirst, Cabinet Member for Libraries, Communities and Planning.

1. Membership of the Committee

The Chairman drew attention to the fact that at full Council on 14 October changes were announced to the Committee's membership, and Councillor Dave Harris had replaced Councillor Alan Bayley on the Committee.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Harris as a Committee member, and wished to record the Committee's appreciation to Councillor Bayley for his participation in meetings.

2. Apologies and Substitution Notices

Apologies were received from Councillors Twitchen (Councillor Maddocks substituting) Butland, Hedley, Metcalfe, and Wood. However, Councillor Metcalfe did in fact join the Committee for the briefing given by Councillor Hirst.

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 24 July 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Declarations of Interest

With reference to Minute 10, Councillor Pond declared a personal interest as he was a Member of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals; and Councillor Robinson declared a personal interest as he is a Trustee of an organisation that had made an application for Community Initiative Funding (CI F).

5. Questions from the Public

There were no questions raised by members of the public.

6. Work Programme

The Committee considered report PSEG/27/14 by the Scrutiny Officer updating Members on the work programme.

The Chairman gave an overview of the site visit that took place on 25 September to consider highways maintenance and the repair of potholes, and sought feedback from those Members who had taken part on the day. A full report on the visit would be submitted to the next Committee meeting.

With particular reference to passenger transport, some Members raised concerns about the lack of information they had received on various aspects of its provision and wish to engage in pre-scrutiny. The Committee had received a briefing on the theme of developing a better public transport network for Essex in July 2014 (Minute 9), and the Chairman undertook to arrange for Members to be updated on what progress had been made since that briefing on the afternoon of its next committee activity day in November.

7. Third Party Responsibilities and Flood Management

The Committee noted report PSEG/28/14 setting out the progress of the Task and Finish Group conducting this review.

It was suggested by Members who were not on the Group that drain clearance, and the flooding of cycleway and footpaths might also be taken into consideration as part of the review.

8. Jobs, Welfare and Skills

The Committee considered report PSEG/29/14 setting out the progress of the Task and Finish Group conducting this review.

During discussion Members were encouraged to refer to the Group any information that they might have on individuals' experience and the names of outside organisations that could provide useful evidence for the review.

9. Part Night Lighting Scrutiny Review (Minute 7/June 2014)

The Committee noted report PSEG/30/14 concerning the Cabinet Member's response to the recommendations set out in its Scrutiny Report on Part Night Lighting (PNL).

During the meeting Members alluded to various PNL issues raised in the scrutiny report itself as well as some local concerns including:

- Perceived increase in crime since the introduction of PNL,
- Update on various LED pilot schemes
- Impact on the local economy
- Councillor Pond advised that a number of County Councillors in Epping Forest District would be meeting with Councillor Bass to discuss the impact of the

variation to PNL in that area, and the ability of other organisations to contribute to street lighting remaining on during the night.

While the main purpose of this particular meeting was to note the Cabinet Member's response to the Committee's Scrutiny Report, it was agreed that the Cabinet Member should be invited to a future meeting to provide an update on PNL.

10. Cabinet Member for Libraries Communities & Planning

Councillor Roger Hirst, Cabinet Member for Libraries Communities & Planning, provided the Committee with an overview of his portfolio and answered Members' questions. A summary of his briefing is attached at the Appendix to these Minutes.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee noted that its next formal meeting was scheduled for 27 November 2014 at 10am.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 1.15pm.

Chairman

Appendix to Minute 10

Summary of overview of the Communities, Libraries and Planning Portfolio provided by Councillor Hirst, Cabinet Member

Councillor Hirst confirmed that his portfolio covers a wide range of topics with an overall budget in the region of £20.5million. For this particular briefing he focussed on the following issues:

Planning and Duty to Co-operate

The Council continues to support the development of the various district Local Plans and provide comments and responses to consultation. Only four Essex districts have adopted local plans in place. The remaining eight continue to progress their plans with the front runners (Uttlesford and Maldon) expecting examinations before the end of the calendar year. Of the four already adopted, three have now commenced reviews and are actively involved in cross border co-operation to support housing delivery. The County Council has attended Member meetings with Harlow and its neighbours and with Tendring / Colchester in support of cross-boundary co-operation.

The Council is reviewing Stansted Airport's proposals to grow its capacity and has met with partner authorities to discuss our response to the consultation, which is broadly supportive of the plans to increase usage of the existing runway.

Councillor Hirst advised that he would be attending a Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group (SASIG) meeting, and its objectives are:–

- To promote the need for long-term, sustainable aviation policies that lead to a reduction in the environmental impact of aviation whilst securing appropriate social and economic benefits;
- To increase understanding of the local and global impacts of aviation on the environment and communities;
- To identify and promote the changes needed to move towards sustainable aviation practices within the industry and Government; and
- To work with other organisations and the Government on the formulation of policy advice.

Minerals and Waste Planning

At the July Full Council meeting the Minerals Plan was signed off and is now being implemented.

The Member Reference Group for Minerals and Waste has now started meeting to commence activity on the Waste Plan. The next stage of consultation on this Plan will take place later in the year.

Gypsies and Travellers

The Essex County Traveller Unit (ECTU) has had successful year during 2014, and in a report being drafted for the next ECTU Joint Committee some of the key points to be included are:

- Generally the vast majority of encampments have been visited within one working day (over 95%)
- 80 of the total 103 encampments have been dealt with by negotiated departure
- 87% of Section 77 actions when taken have been completed within 10 working days
- Health: ECTU continues to signpost families on authorised sites towards healthcare including inoculations/immunisations, GP/Dentist registrations, long-term conditions identified (86), advice on healthy eating, and general health checks
- Education working with Educational Welfare officers: including numbers of children helped into school and home education
- Home Fire Safety visits
- Site safety visits

Flood Plans

Over past year there has been various flash flooding in different parts of the County. Canvey Island, in particular, was hard hit on 20 July, and the County Council has been working on a multi-agency response, and a Section 19 report analysing the causes and detailing possible actions has been produced. £470k additional funding has been approved from the Highways budget towards addressing flooding issues on Canvey.

The Section 19 report referred was referenced at a recent multi-agency meeting hosted by the local MP Rebecca Harris in Westminster. In terms of the report this was subject to a review by the Governments' Chief Scientific Officer who generally agreed with the report's findings.

The Council's own library in Witham has been flooded and had to be closed for several days

The County Council, together with other Essex Authorities has put together a response to the DEFRA SUDS Team in respect of the future delivery of Sustainable Flood Drainage Systems. As a Lead Local Flood Authority (**LLFA**) the County Council has a keen interest in the effective implementation and maintenance of SuDS. A number of concerns have been identified in the proposals.

Trading Standards

Trading Standards has conducted a campaign during the V festival cautioning against legal highs. The result was a good record on underage sales tests and very little novel psychoactive substance activity was observed. The visible police presence was a success.

In the Halite case a group of traders were sent to prison for conning elderly people. Two key money launderers have been tried and sentenced, and others are due in court

October/November. All are pleading not guilty. The Police are continuing to investigate the Proceeds of Crime. There are also other ongoing cases around money laundering, which are being prosecuted

In Person Services

Councillor Hirst has established a Members Reference Group for the In Person Services programme, which is looking for opportunities across the County to bring public services together in Community Hubs eg the Colchester Library. While all libraries are being reviewed he stressed that there are no proposals to close any libraries.

Country Parks and Environment The Council is developing a new vision for Country Parks. In December 2013 the Committee had received a briefing on the Country Parks Service and been advised of the ongoing work to review that Service. As part of the review new attractions are being considered as well as variable Charging for car parks, which will be subject to consultation in due course.

The Environment Team is involved in a multi-million pound Heritage Lottery bid for external funding to continue the improvement of green infrastructure in the south of the County – the result of this bid should be known shortly.

Culture and Heritage

The Essex Records Office (ERO) has provided a series of important engagement events over the summer to commemorate World War 1, including a recent event starring Tony Robinson. These events have introduced thousands of new residents to the wide range of services that are provided by the ERO.

The Essex Network of Artists' Studios Events and Traces: an exhibition of commissioned work by ENAS Member Artists was launched in September.

Communities and Voluntary Sector

The deadline for the submission of applications for funding from the Community Initiatives Fund has now closed and panel visits will be held in November.

The Council's Voluntary Community Sector (VCS) Framework was endorsed by the Cabinet in October, and implementation plans are now being developed.
