

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PLACE SERVICES & ECONOMIC
GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL,
CHELMSFORD ON 23 JULY 2015**

Present:

Councillor S Walsh (Chairman)	Councillor D Kendall
Councillor K Bobbin	Councillor V Metcalfe
Councillor G Butland	Councillor C Pond
Councillor T Cutmore	Councillor S Robinson
Councillor A Erskine	Councillor K Twitchen
Councillor C Guglielmi	Councillor A Wood
Councillor T Hedley	
Councillor I Henderson	

1. Apologies and substitution notices

No apologies were received, and all Committee Members were present.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 28 May 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

With particular reference to Minute 7/ May 2015 concerns were raised about county councillor membership on the local highways panels (LHPs). As the Committee was taking part in a planning session later in the day and a scrutiny review of the LHPs would be discussed, there was acquiescence for the membership issue to be taken up at that session.

3. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Twitchen reminded the Committee that she is a deputy to Cabinet Member for Libraries, Communities and Planning, and so when the Committee may scrutinise an issue falling within that portfolio she would not take part in the consideration of that issue and would withdraw from the meeting

During discussion in respect of Minute 9, reference was made to the Youth Strategy Boards so the following Members declared personal interests as they were members of a board in their relevant districts: Councillors Hedley, Henderson, and Walsh.

4. Questions from the Public: Local Highways Panels

At the meeting John Hammond, a Chelmsford resident, addressed the Committee as follows:

‘I would like to make some suggestions for best practice for Local Highway Panels.

In the Cabinet Member Actions for Local Highways Panel Schemes it states "The Panels have been developed to support the Localism agenda and are linked to the ECC Corporate Plan objectives, including encouraging residents to influence decisions".

Districts such as Braintree, Harlow and Uttlesford helpfully provide information by putting dates of Panels on the internet, including agendas and full reports in advance of each LHP, and minutes soon after. They also allow the public to attend the meetings for questions and suggestions.

I would like to request that the same good practice should happen for Chelmsford. At the moment, dates of forthcoming LHP meetings are not revealed, and reports sometimes only appear a month after a meeting.'

The Committee concurred with the Chairman's proposal that Mr Hammond be invited to contribute to the forthcoming scrutiny review on Local Highways Panels in respect of the issues he had raised today.

5. Place Services and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2015/2017

The Committee considered report PSEG/11/15 proposing topics for inclusion in its work programme for 2015/2017.

As reported to Committee in March 2015 (Minute 5) work has been ongoing to develop a manageable work programme leading up to the next County Council elections in 2017. The said report provided background on the work programme and the Committee's experience over the past year, and proposed those topics to be reviewed moving forward. The identified topics are ones where it is considered that there is an opportunity for the Committee to perform a useful scrutiny role.

The Chairman confirmed that the work programme had been developed through discussions with Group Spokesmen, Cabinet Members and relevant officers, and took account of the resources available.

In practice it is not intended to hold a formal monthly meeting, which is a resource intensive activity and may not always be the most effective forum for considering individual topics in any depth. However, the outcomes of work undertaken using other formats will be reported through formal agenda and any scrutiny reports will require the endorsement of the full Committee. Planning sessions will be arranged for Committee Members to engage in planning scrutiny reviews, and committee activity. In the first instance formal meetings have been scheduled on a quarterly basis, with visits, seminars, in depth task and finish group work, etc. being proposed on other scheduled activity days.

The work programme moving forward includes a number of projects that are already underway or were scheduled to begin this year, issues that have been identified over the past year, and emerging priorities based on local and national considerations. In summary the reviews are:

- Third Party Responsibilities and Flood Management Task and Finish Group
- Jobs, Welfare and Skills Task and Finish Group
- Local Highways Panels
- Recycling Centres for Household Waste
- Ringway Jacobs Contract
- Parking Partnerships
- Passenger Transport Strategy
- Pavement Parking
- Utility Companies and Highways Schemes
- LEPs
- Commissioning Strategies: Environmental Aspirations
- Bradwell Nuclear Facility
- Strategic Planning
- Essex Replacement Waste Local Plan
- Aviation Policy & Airports Surface Access Study
- Solid Recovered Fuel

With particular reference to the Passenger Transport Strategy, during discussion Members referred to last Full Council meeting and noted that Councillors Henderson and Pond had been appointed to the proposed new Bus Strategy Commissioning Board, which was due to meet the following week. However, concerns were raised about the lack of clarity regarding its terms of reference and its relationship/ impact upon the work of the Scrutiny Committee. The Chairman undertook to find out further information in this regard.

The Committee **agreed** to the proposals set out in report PSEG/11/15, and the inclusion of the topics set out above in its work programme for 2015/17.

6. Financial Inclusion Scrutiny Review Update

The Committee considered report PSEG/12/15 concerning an update from the Council's Leader on matters relating to the recommendations that arose from the original scrutiny review on Financial Inclusion.

The Committee **agreed** that no further action be taken in relation to this particular review.

7. Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy, and Visit To Tovi Eco Park, Basildon

The Committee noted report PSEG/13/15 providing an overview of its recent consideration of matters relating to the Waste Management Strategy.

On 25 June 2015 the Committee's activity day comprised a visit to the new Waste Facility at Tovi Eco Park, Basildon, and a series of briefings to update its membership on matters relating to the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy for Essex. Councillors Keith Bobbin, Graham Butland, Tony Hedley, David Kendall, Chris Pond, Stephen Robinson, Kay Twitchen, Simon Walsh and Andy Wood attended on the day.

The purpose of the visit was to provide an opportunity for the Committee to learn about the current position on the disposal and collection of household waste in Essex, and various influences upon the Waste Strategy in the longer term. The facility visited at Tovi Eco Park (also known as Courtauld Road) is a Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) facility for residual waste and, although not fully commissioned as yet, it provided an insight into the key role it will perform in Essex.

The Chairman expressed his thanks to all the officers involved in organising what was a very informative visit.

At the meeting there was some discussion about of the current level of recycling targets. While many Essex Waste Collection Authorities (WCAs) are achieving high levels of recycling, fluctuations in the various markets for recyclates are having an impact. In some cases WCAs are now having to pay contractors to recycle, which will have important financial implications for those Councils' budgets as contracts are renewed for waste and recycling collections.

8. Third Party Responsibilities and Flood Management Task and Finish Group– Progress Report

The Committee noted report PSEG/14/15 and received an oral update from the Group on this review.

The update included details of a recent visit to Sturmer to meet with the Sturmer Flood Action Group, who are part of a County Council pilot project 'Where Does Water Go?', a project to map ordinary watercourses in Essex at a local level.

Attention was also drawn to changes published recently on flood management on the Council's website, which should make it easier for the public to find out key information they may require.

It was confirmed that the Group is in the final stages of its investigation, and that a final scrutiny report will be submitted to the Committee in the autumn for its endorsement.

9. Jobs, Welfare and Skills Task and Finish Group – Progress Report

The Committee noted report PSEG/15/15 and received an oral update from the Group on this review. As part of the review the following areas had been investigated:

- National Work Programme - reference was made to the fact that it is a national programme, and a lack of accountability at a local level.
- Job Centres – the Group has spent time at two job centres that has provided a better understanding of the issues under review, and the relationships between different service providers and the implications for individuals.
- Apprenticeships

- Skills
- Careers Service – there is variation in the provision and quality of careers advice and support provided by different schools. It was pointed out the Youth Strategy Groups might be a potential resource to assist children this matter, and that businesses could be encouraged to provide work experience opportunities.

It was confirmed that the Group is in the final stages of its investigation, and that a final scrutiny report will be submitted to the Committee in the autumn for its endorsement

10. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee noted the next committee activity day was scheduled for Thursday 24 September 2015

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 11.32 am

Chairman