

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE PLACE SERVICES & ECONOMIC
GROWTH SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL,
CHELMSFORD ON 26 MAY 2016**

Present:

Councillor D Louis (Chairman)	Councillor D Kendall
Councillor K Bobbin	Councillor M Maddocks
Councillor A Durcan	Councillor C Pond
Councillor I Grundy	Councillor S Robinson
Councillor C Guglielmi	Councillor A Wood
Councillor J Huntman	

Councillor Henderson also attended the meeting for Minute 7 on the Jobs, Welfare and Skills Scrutiny Review.

The following Officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Christine Sharland	-	Scrutiny Officer
Lisa Siggins	-	Committee Officer

1. Chairman and Membership of the Committee

At the full Council meeting on 10 May 2016 Councillor Derrick Louis was appointed as Chairman of the Committee.

Councillors Simon Walsh, Andy Erskine and Ivan Henderson are no longer members of the Committee, and Councillors Ian Grundy, Jamie Huntman and Tony Durcan have been appointed to its membership. The Committee's formal membership is set out below:

Councillor D Louis (Chairman)	Councillor T Hedley
Councillor S Barker	Councillor J Huntman
Councillor K Bobbin	Councillor D Kendall
Councillor T Cutmore	Councillor C Pond
Councillor T Durcan	Councillor S Robinson
Councillor I Grundy	Councillor K Twitchen
Councillor C Guglielmi	Councillor A Wood

At the meeting the Committee paid tribute to Councillor Simon Walsh as its former Chairman for his capable and diligent leadership over several years as a Scrutiny Committee Chairman. At the aforementioned full Council meeting Councillor Walsh had been appointed as the Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste.

The Chairman also placed on record the Committee's appreciation for the positive contribution made by those councillors to the Council's scrutiny activity who are no longer members of the Committee, and welcomed those councillors who had now joined its membership.

2. Apologies and substitution notices

Apologies were received from Councillors Barker, Cutmore, Hedley and Twitchen.

Councillor Hedley was substituted at the meeting by Councillor Maddocks. However, Councillor Canning who was due to substitute for Councillor Barker had himself had to send his apologies as he was no longer able to attend.

3. Minutes

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

4. Appointment of Vice-Chairmen

Councillor Wood was appointed as a Vice-Chairman with the agreement of the Committee, together with Councillor Huntman in line with Minute 3/ May 2014.

5. Declarations of Interest

With reference to Minutes 8 and 10, Councillor Pond declared a personal interest in that he is a member of Epping Forest District Council and Loughton Town Council.

With reference to Minute 8 Councillor Grundy declared a personal interest in that he is a member of the South Essex Parking Partnership, and Councillor Durcan declared a person interest in that he is a former Vice-Chairman of the North Essex Parking Partnership.

6. Questions from the Public

There were no questions raised by members of the public.

7. Jobs, Welfare and Skills Scrutiny Report (Minute 5/ November 2016)

The Committee considered report PSEG/12/16 seeking its endorsement of the final scrutiny report of the Task and Finish Group that comprised Councillors Ivan Henderson, David Kendall, and Simon Walsh, and is the culmination of an in depth review of nearly two years duration. The scrutiny report sets out the Group's findings and recommendations based upon the evidence it obtained and analysed in line with

its agreed terms of reference. During the review the Group had met with a wide variety of local providers and practitioners, which reinforced the importance of understanding a number of traditionally distinct policy areas as a whole system.

The Committee was already familiar with the main findings of this scrutiny review as a result of a presentation in November 2015 (Minute 5), and at that time Councillor Bentley had encouraged the Group to deliver some strong recommendations.

At the meeting Councillors Henderson and Kendall shared some of their personal impressions of the evidence that they had uncovered during the investigation, and in doing so highlighted how national policies and practice may be translated at a local level as well as the experience of individuals in the current employment, skills, careers, and welfare to work systems. The Group was supported by Craig Elliott, Senior Policy & Strategy Advisor (Place).

The Group explained some of the problems that exist in the systems governing the employment, skills, careers advice and welfare to work that result in a maze of uncoordinated provision. By way of example:

1. The education and skills system delivers a mismatch between supply and demand, caused by poor incentives. Businesses may be left unable to find appropriately skilled and work ready recruits and unable to upskill their workforces.
2. Careers advice is patchy in schools. Some young people are left unable to make informed choices about their careers or educational needs, and there is a failure to signpost young people to vocational opportunities in local growth sectors.
3. The welfare to work system leaves too many local people stuck in the revolving door between unemployment and poorly paid jobs. The Department for Work and Pensions failure to find interdepartmental solutions with the skills system can undermine an individual's chances to upskill, progress in work and get themselves out of benefit dependency at a local level. Worse still, our most disadvantaged and vulnerable residents are left un(der)supported.

Councillors Henderson and Kendall referred to some scepticism that the Group had shared at the outset of the review because they had not been sure what they could achieve by conducting a scrutiny review. However, the way that the review itself evolved had been enlightening given the broad range of individuals and organisations interviewed. The review was undertaken from a strategic standpoint and took into account the impact of national policies upon individuals and local conditions in practice. Overall the Group felt that there should be more accountability at a local level and the County Council was well placed to take on a key role in the co-ordination of many of the matters investigated, and to target resources more effectively. By way of example attention was drawn to 'Energising Harwich', a local project where training is geared towards the needs of local employers and 90% of those individuals undertaking its courses subsequently found employment; young people need to be better informed about what job opportunities exist across Essex; and there needs to be better continuity in the services provided.

The Group's recommendations, as set out in the scrutiny report, fall into two main categories: Those that propose ECC Cabinet should lobby Central Government, and others that propose action by the Cabinet itself.

Councillor Pond drew attention to the role of the County Council's Adult Community Learning (ACL) that has not been referred to in the scrutiny report. The remit of the scrutiny review had led the Group to take a strategic approach to the issues undertaken and to engage with external bodies, rather than to focus in any depth on the County Council's own services such as the ACL. Nevertheless the Group acknowledged that the ACL does play a role in skills development, and would consider the inclusion of a suitable reference to its work in the final report.

The Committee **agreed** the publication of the final Scrutiny Report 'We can work it out: The case for a locally determined employment, skills, careers advice and welfare to work system in Essex', which includes the following recommendations:

A. That the Cabinet be recommended to lobby Central Government in the following matters:

- 1. To work more effectively with Essex County Council and the employer-led Essex Employment and Skills Board to shape local provision for jobs, skills and welfare across the county to meet local needs.**
- 2. To transfer responsibility for employment, skills, careers advice and welfare to work to Essex County Council, so that it may determine multi-annual, area based budgets that deliver a more effective and responsive skills system, with the ability for capacity and provision to be adjusted to reflect changing local needs.**
- 3. To create a statutory duty that requires all education, employment, skills and welfare to work providers delivering in Essex to be accountable to Essex County Council.**
- 4. To implement a single overarching strategy framework across the Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, Department for Education and other relevant Departments to support systemic change that gives autonomy to local areas to design, commission and deliver local provision that meet local needs.**
- 5. To introduce national indicators and incentives for schools, which recognise the parity of vocational and academic attainment, and measure employability as well as employment outcomes.**
- 6. To remove existing barriers to data sharing between Government departments and local partners:**
 - a. To enable more effective multi-agency working with those individuals with the most complex needs; and**

- b. To track the success of interventions and individuals more effectively in order to evaluate the medium term economic and social impacts (costs and benefits) of employment, education, skills, careers advice and welfare interventions locally. Based on this evaluation, the best interventions to meet local needs long term can be determined.**
- 7. To delegate greater autonomy to Jobcentre Plus district managers through the place based budgets so that where appropriate budgets can be pooled with local partnerships to deliver better outcomes for local communities.**
- 8. To enable greater local determination of national funding streams for more effective support of local projects, which deliver sustainable job outcomes in key growth sectors; and extend multi-agency and key worker approaches to vulnerable people (e.g. through Essex County Council's Family Solutions) to enable them to move from unemployment and dependency to employment and independence.**
- 9. To work with Essex County Council to develop a locally bespoke Work and Health Programme, based on appropriate unit costs, to improve the employment prospects for the long term unemployed and for those with health problems.**
- 10. To co-invest with Essex County Council, using health and welfare funding, in employment and skills provision with a view to reducing more costly demand pressures for the National Health Service and Department for Work and Pensions in the future.**

B. That the Cabinet be recommended for Essex County Council to act:

- 11. To work in partnership with local schools and employers to deliver clearer vocational pathways for young people aged 14 and over, improving careers advice and expanding the successful local education and industry programme to all schools to improve advocacy and signposting to young people by the end of March 2018.**
- 12. To develop a work experience programme involving public, private and voluntary sector organisations to support Essex pupils to be more work-ready, offering more opportunities for placements within Essex County Council by the end of March 2018.**
- 13. To work closely with skills, welfare to work and transport providers to identify ways of improving the transport connectivity that enable local people to access employment and skills opportunities.**
- 14. To collaborate with local Clinical Commissioning Groups (NHS) and other Health partners to support those with physical and mental health**

issues into employment.

15. To consider the feasibility and delivery of the following pilot projects by March 2018:

- a. To create a clearer vocational route for individuals from age 14, working with schools and skills providers;
- b. To expand multi-agency and key worker approaches, employed by Essex County Council's Family Solutions Service, to wider cohorts of disadvantaged and vulnerable residents in Essex.
- c. To develop industry focused careers information for schools, supporting Recognition of Quality Awards for Careers Advice accreditation and extending the education and industry programme and Employability for Life resources to all Essex schools.
- d. To develop invest to save initiatives through early intervention and prevention, and to reduce welfare dependency and costs to health services in the future.
- e. To investigate the feasibility of an Essex County Council traded Connexions type service.

16. With particular reference to the forthcoming Work and Health White Paper, the Committee wishes to be afforded an opportunity to input into the County Council's consultation response to the Government and Select Committees, and for the conclusions reached in this scrutiny report to be reflected in that response.

Councillors Henderson and Kendall thanked everyone who had taken part in the scrutiny review and those officers who had provided support to the Task and Finish Group.

The Committee congratulated the Group upon an extremely thorough and important piece of scrutiny investigation. They also reinforced the need to follow up outcomes that arise from the recommendations.

It was confirmed that as part of the next stage in the publication of the scrutiny report, a plan was being developed for its launch to ensure that its findings were acted upon that would include:

- Publication of the scrutiny report.
- Developing a pamphlet to lobby and engage a variety of stakeholders including Essex MPs, LGA and other local authorities, relevant government departments and relevant parliamentary select committees.
- Raising awareness of the issues identified in the scrutiny report through press releases.
- Promoting Essex as a forward thinking local authority in this field.

The Committee would be kept informed of any follow action taken, together with the Cabinet Member's response to the recommendations.

The Chairman thanked the Group for their presentation and offered thanks to all those officers involved in the Report.

8. Essex Parking Partnerships (Minute 6/March 2016)

The Committee considered report PSEG/13/16 enclosing its final scrutiny report of its review of the future of the Essex Parking Partnerships for its formal endorsement.

At its meetings on 21 January 2016 (Minute 5) and 24 March 2016 (Minute 6) the Committee cross examined the Essex Parking Partnerships in order to understand more about those bodies, and to consider the Executive Review of their formal arrangements and operation prior to any decisions being made on the future of the two Partnerships namely the North Essex (NEPP) and South Essex (SEPP) Parking Partnerships.

Following its March meeting the Committee had met to develop its conclusions, which were now captured in the scrutiny report attached to report PSEG/13/16. Members had been consulted previously upon the content of the draft scrutiny report.

At the meeting attention was drawn to concerns around operational issues and in particular enforcement. For instance weekend and evening enforcement appeared to be poor. It was suggested that the Essex Parking Partnerships could liaise with District Councils on how “off street” parking attendants might be utilised in respect of the enforcement of “on street” parking restrictions.

The Committee **agreed** the publication of the ‘Scrutiny Report on the Future of the Essex parking Partnerships’, including the following recommendations:

- 1. That the Essex Parking Partnerships and ECC Cabinet Member be advised that on balance the Committee support the proposed four year extension of the NEPP and SEPP agreements.**
- 2. That the ECC Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport Delivery be advised that the Committee considers that the County Council should not withdraw its subsidy from the Parking Partnerships until such time as they are able to be wholly self-financing.**
- 3. That the Essex Parking Partnerships be urged to provide greater clarity on the role of external funding upon the implementation of new schemes.**
- 4. That the NEPP and SEPP publish a regular newsletter for all elected county and district councillors to ensure that they are kept informed of local parking issues and proposals within each Partner Authority area; and in addition circulate to those councillors all agenda and minutes associated with the Joint Committees.**

5. **That the Essex Parking Partnerships review current practice with a view to further improvements being made to raise public awareness of their role and activities.**
6. **That the Committee support the introduction of a job description for the Partner Authorities' representatives on the Joint Committee, and propose that it should include a responsibility for ensuring that all elected members of their respective administrative areas are kept informed in advance about NEPP/SEPP activity, and the dates of Joint Committee meetings.**
7. **It was requested that the Partnerships' formal response to these recommendations be forwarded to the Committee before any final decisions on their future are determined.**

In addition when forwarding the scrutiny report to the Essex Parking Partnerships, the Committee wished to draw the Partnership's attention to mitigating any shortfall in parking enforcement for instance "off street" parking attendants as mentioned above.

9. Third Party Responsibilities and Flood Enforcement Scrutiny Report

The Committee noted report PSEG/14/16 concerning an interim response from a Cabinet Member to this Scrutiny Report.

The Committee confirmed that it will continue to monitor outcomes arising from the recommendations, and the Cabinet's full response to the scrutiny report would be submitted to the Committee in due course.

10. Call In Of Decision: FP/495/04/16 - Proposed Traffic Regulation Order Changes – Langston Road Retail Park, Loughton

The Committee received report PSEG/15/16 concerning the recent call in of the above decision.

At the meeting it was confirmed that the call in had been withdrawn following an informal meeting. A note of the informal meeting including the Cabinet Members' written confirmation of actions to be taken as a result of the Call In had been published on the Council's website with the Committee's agenda for this meeting.

11. Committee's Work Programme 2015/2017

The Committee received report PSEG/16/16 setting out committee activity over the next few months.

The Chairman confirmed the cancellation of the Committee's formal meeting scheduled for 21 July. Instead an activity day would be held on 30 June that would take the form of a workshop to review the Committee's achievements and lessons learned to date, and to consider its work programme for the next six months.

There was general support for taking forward a scrutiny review of Local Highways Panels as a priority.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee noted that a site visit to consider highway surface dressing would be taking place on Thursday 9 June 2016.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at noon.

Chairman