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**Minutes of the meeting of the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Thursday, 26 September 2019**

**Present:**

Councillor I Grundy (Chairman)	Councillor B Massey
Councillor B Aspinell	Councillor D Kendall
Councillor T Cutmore	Councillor R Moore
Councillor A Erskine	Councillor R Pratt
Councillor S Hillier	Councillor W Schmitt
Councillor I Henderson	Councillor C Weston
Councillor P Honeywood	

**1 Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest**

The report of the Membership, Apologies and Declarations was received, and it was noted that

1. The membership of the Committee was unchanged since the last meeting;
2. Councillor C Pond had sent his apologies.

**2 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 August were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**3 Questions from the Public**

There were none.

**4 SELEP – PSEG update**

Members received report (**PSEG/15/19**) and presentations from Dominic Collins, Director Economic Development & Localities, Adam Bryan, SELEP Chief Executive Officer, and Dawn Redpath Head of Economic Growth. The presentations formed appendix A to report PSEG/15/19

The purpose of the presentations was to provide an update on the work of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP), as well as an outline of new legislation affecting the SELEP. Members were also given an overview of Essex County Council's role in relation to SELEP.

Members discussed with officers the federalised system through which the SELEP currently operates, and the measures, boards and processes built into the system to ensure accountability. Members also noted the ongoing corporate redesign process to further localise accountability processes.

It was noted that ECC is represented on the SELEP board by Cllr Kevin Bentley, with policy input also provided by Cllr Tony Ball.

Following the presentations, members were invited to ask questions and the areas raised included:

- Skills strategy – members stressed the importance of skills advice in schools throughout the County
- Criteria for LEP funding – the involvement of the Essex Federated Board, publication on the SELEP website, final decisions made by the Accountability Board.
- The different types of funding available – Dominic Collins agreed to circulate a list of capital programme projects to the Committee
- Essex Local Industrial Strategy aligned to SELEP- Members requested that the strategy come to PSEG with time for committee members to provide input.
- The route to funding – on a basic level, members wanted to understand better how an application moves through the accountability and award process, and how to track it. Members were signposted to the pages on the SELEP and ECC website where the information can be found.
- Members raised concerns around the funding corridors outlined in the presentation. Particularly the absence of areas of outer and rural Chelmsford set to be impacted by major developments over the next five years.

ACTION – members requested a further conversation around skills and opportunity funding.

ACTION – members requested early scrutiny of the Essex Local Industrial Strategy.

The Chairman thanked the officers for their contribution.

## **5 Grass Verge Maintenance**

Members received report **(PSEG/16/19)** a presentation from Peter Massie, Head of Essex Highways Commissioning and David Forkin, Head of Maintenance and Operations, Essex Highways. The presentation formed appendix B to report PSEG/16/19.

Officers also discussed current pilots in operation throughout the County and across the country, particularly focussing on examples from Braintree and Rotherham.

Following the presentation, members were invited to ask questions and the areas raised included:

- Normal cutting regime- in the majority of Districts within ECC, cuttings are undertaken by the District Councils and in practice this

occurs more often than where cuttings are carried out by ECC. ECC only provides funding to district councils for a maximum of two cuts, if any more are carried out (which they frequently are, for aesthetic purposes) then these are paid for by district councils.

- Maintenance responsibilities of grass verges – there is no specific budgets for defects and would depend on priority and on budgets available.
- Enforcement – where damage is carried out by builders/contractors enforcement is often very difficult. Members felt this should be dealt with by attaching conditions to planning permissions granted.
- Relationship with district councils – officers discussed the autonomy allowed by district councils who operate cutting regimes on behalf of ECC. It was noted that it would be difficult to mandate a specific cutting regime to each of the districts, but perhaps providing information around a more ecologically friendly cutting regime could be distributed.
- Complaints data – Members discussed complaints from local residents around poorly maintained verges.

ACTION – Officers to link in with Plantlife UK, an organisation with a great deal of expertise in ecologically sustainable grass verge maintenance. Following this, a conversation with the cabinet member should take place to determine whether further action is required.

The Chairman thanked the officers for their contribution.

## **6 Date of Next Meeting**

The Committee noted that the next Committee meeting will be on Thursday, 17th October 2019.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 12.55pm

**Chairman**