
Minutes of the meeting of the Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee, held in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Thursday, 23 February 2017

Present:

Councillor D Louis (Chairman) Councillor C Pond
Councillor K Bobbin Councillor S Robinson
Councillor T Cutmore Councillor A Turrell
Councillor I Grundy Councillor A Wood
Councillor D Kendall

The following Officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Christine Sharland - Scrutiny Officer

Lisa Siggins - Committee Officer

1 Apologies and Substitution Notices

Apologies were received from Councillors Barker, Guglielmi, Huntman and Twitchen.

2 Declarations of Interest

With reference to Minute 5 Councillor Kendall declared a personal interest in that he is member of the Brentwood Chamber of Commerce, and to Minute 7 he declared a personal interest in that he is Secretary of the Brentwood Bus and Rail Users Association.

3 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 January were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

With reference to Minute 6, Councillor Kendall asked for it to be recorded that in response to a question to the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Infrastructure and Partnerships as to whether or not he supported the feasibility work being done round an ECC Traded Connexions type service, Councillor Bentley confirmed that he felt that this was an issue for schools and academies to deal with.

4 Questions from the Public

There were no questions raised by members of the public.

5 Essex Employment and Skills Board

The Committee considered report PSEG/07/17 and received a briefing from Alison Calnan and Dave Bell, both Vice Chairmen of the Essex Skills and

Employment Board (ESB) and Peter Cook (the County Council's Head of Adult Community Learning) on the role and activities of the Board; and its reaction to the Scrutiny Report 'We can work it out: The case for a locally determined employment, skills, careers advice and welfare to work system in Essex' ie the Jobs, Skills and Welfare Scrutiny Report.

An overview of the ESB was set out in a briefing paper appended to Report PSEG/07/17.

The Board plays a key role in determining strategic economic priorities, making investments and delivering activities to drive growth, increasing the pipeline of skilled workers and creating local jobs and Apprenticeships. On behalf of Essex it feeds into the SELEP (South East Local Enterprise Partnership) on employment and skills issues

It was highlighted that the Board provides a vital 'employer voice' with representation from employers as well as the education sector.

The Board is informed by feedback from local businesses and collecting local data, and then via national and regional reports it highlights where there are skills shortages, recruitment challenges and mismatches between the training people have and what is required. The ESB responds to these challenges by developing new and innovative solutions, and delivering its existing programmes, in order to achieve its mission *'to build the most productive and responsive skills system in the country'*.

The Board reaffirmed the fact that the jobs and skills landscape is complex, confusing, and hard to navigate, which is reflected in the Committee's Scrutiny Report around the complexities around the jobs and skills market. It was pointed out that some of the information, which is made available on the internet is provided at a national rather than local level. However, if local portals are introduced it can cause further confusion for students.

During discussion at the meeting the Board highlighted its work with schools, colleges and local businesses in connection with careers advice. Members requested further details on those schools that engage with the Board's activities.

Councillor Pond sought clarification on criticism contained in the recent Ofsted report into the Essex Adult Community Learning (ACL). Although there is not formal interaction between the ACL and the ESB, it does exist through existing networks and representation of various bodies. Peter Cook as Head of ACL confirmed that clarification is being obtained from Ofsted on a number of issues. He pointed out that 43% of students went on to further education or employment.

Subject to the circulation of information referred to above, the Chairman confirmed that this particular scrutiny review was now concluded, albeit consideration may be given in the future to the inclusion of a new review relating to economic growth and employment.

On behalf of the Committee the Chairman thanked the Board's representatives

and Peter Cook for taking part in the meeting, and for providing Members with a better understanding of the Board's role in enhancing the market for skills and employment in Essex.

6 Corporate Information Services and Communications Support to Frontline Services

The Committee considered report PSEG/08/17 on the above matter arising from recommendation 5 contained in the Committee's 'Third Part Responsibilities and Flood Enforcement in Essex' scrutiny report, and received a briefing from Councillor Canning, Cabinet Member for Digital Innovation, IT and Customer Services, Andrew Webb, IS Technical Business Relationship Manager, and Kathryn Dedman, SUDs approval Body Manager on the support provided by the Council's Information Services (IS) and Communications Teams to the Flood and Water Management Team. A detailed briefing paper was appended to report PSEGS/08/17, which focussed on the key lines of enquiry set by the Committee.

In the Scrutiny report, attention had been drawn to the relationship between a frontline service, in this case the Flood and Water Management Team (FWMT), and some of the corporate services it has to rely on to deliver its services. Raising public awareness about third party responsibilities and flood enforcement is an integral part of the County Council's flood management programme, and it was evident that it will have to rely quite heavily upon the effectiveness of the internet, online services, and social media.

Councillor Canning confirmed that the Council is currently reviewing its IT and support services as a whole. With the future acquisition of new improved technology, it is hoped that there will be the means to provide better collaborative working opportunities with others.

He confirmed that the market is looking at new SMARTER ways of working, which will improve the sharing of information between organisations albeit such work is in its early stages,.

Officers explained how IS was provided in practice and illustrated how progress had been made since the scrutiny report was published, and the achievements made with the delivery of FWMT services.

At the meeting the Committee took the opportunity to ask questions to improve its understanding of how IS is delivered in practice.

On behalf of the Committee the Chairman thanked Councillor Canning and the officers for attending and for providing an informative briefing.

7 Passenger Transport

The Committee received report PSEG/09/17 and an update from Deborah Fox, Head of Commissioning, Connected Essex Infrastructure (Passenger Transport)

on passenger transport matters affecting Essex. A detailed briefing paper was appended to the aforementioned report.

Ms Fox highlighted the progress made since the launch of 'Getting Around in Essex- a bus and passenger transport strategy' in June 2015, and reminded Members that it is a seven year strategy.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the current 'Getting Around in Essex' joint procurement relating to 79 registered local bus network services and six school transport arrangements with contracts due to expire on 31 August 2017. Public consultation on the relevant local bus services took place between August and September 2016.

Members raised concerns about the withdrawal of commercial services and considered that it would be beneficial to look at how the whole process is managed, and how to improve local awareness of those services that may be under threat.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked Ms Fox for an informative briefing.

8 Call In Of Decision - FP/686/12/16 Proposed One Way 7.5 Tonnes Weight Limit On Oak Road, Rivenhall

The Committee received report PSEG/10/17 confirming that no further action will be undertaken in respect of the call in of this particular decision.

9 Work Programme

The Committee noted report PSEG/11/17 and planned arrangements for the Committee's meeting in March 2017.

10 Date of Next Meeting

The Committee noted that there would be a formal Committee meeting on Thursday 23 March 2017.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 12.10 pm

Chairman