
Minutes of the meeting of the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held Online on Thursday, 23 April 2020

Present:

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

Councillors M Durham, J Moran and S Robinson were also present.

The following officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Peter Randall	Senior Democratic Services Officer
Joanna Boaler	Head of Democracy and Transparency
Paul Turner	Director, Legal & Assurance
Emma Tombs	Democratic Services Manager
Lisa Siggins	Democratic Services Officer

- 1 Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest**
The Chairman opened the meeting by paying tribute to the late Councillor Terry Cutmore, and on behalf of the Committee extended his sympathy to Councillor Cutmore's family as this very sad time.

1. The membership of the Committee was unchanged since the last meeting;
2. No apologies were received.
3. There were no declarations of interest.

2 Minutes 20 February 2020

With regards to Minute 4 (Update on Visit Essex and Marketing) Councillor Pond raised a point of clarification in that bullet point 5 should read:

Members raised the issue of Greater Anglia, who are owned by the Dutch State Railways, providing their rail/ship passengers with free tickets to any Dutch station. The same should apply for passengers from Holland to any destination in East Anglia.

Members asked officers to explore negotiating for a similar deal across East Anglia.

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 February were thereafter agreed as a correct record.

3 Questions from the public

There were none.

4 Essex Climate Change Commission - Update

Members received report **(PSEG/03/20)** and a presentation from Samantha Kennedy, Director Environment and Climate Change Action and Philip Oldershaw, Senior Strategy Advisor. Councillor Simon Walsh, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change Action was also in attendance for this item.

The presentation can be found [here](#).

In addition to the information contained in the presentation Members were advised that there would be representation on the Commission from 6 ECC cross party members: Councillors Walsh, Mitchell, Bentley, Lissimore, Henderson and Abbott. Councillor Ian Grundy, as Chairman of the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee has also been invited to join the committee as an official observer.

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

- Impact of Covid-19 19 restrictions with regards to engagement and planned Commission meetings - virtual meetings have been scheduled which will allow the commission to move forward as planned
- Concerns regarding continued social distancing and restrictions on public transport having an adverse effect on the environment with increased car usage. - Officers advised that it is felt that different working practices will be encouraged to remove pressure on public transport.
- Public access to Commission meetings – whilst the current plan is not to allow public questions at the actual meetings, options for public engagement are currently being considered.
- Formulation of data outlining the effect of new ways of working due to Covid-19 and consolidation of environmental gains into the Commission's work programme. – Ms Kennedy advised that she will be looking into how to capture ECC's activity during the Covid-19 restrictions.
- Feedback process to this Committee- it was confirmed that that there is commitment to regular updates and feedback with continued engagement.

- Engagement with Districts/Boroughs – it was confirmed that there is commitment to engage effectively with districts. The internal policy and strategy team will lead on this.
- Progress of work already undertaken by ECC as set out in report **(PSEG/03/20)**. It was confirmed that work is currently underway regarding the progress made thus far and that this can be shared once completed.
- How will the Commission measure its success – It was confirmed that a final report will be made which will include a set of recommendations. It will then be for ECC to develop a mechanism to monitor and measure success against recommendations. The exact method for this has not yet been determined
- Negatives as a result of Covid-19 restrictions, such as increased use of IT, cloud storage and social media. Councillor Walsh pointed out that these should be considered alongside reported environmental gains to determine the holistic environmental net gains from the last two months.
- Identification of sites for planned tree planting – it was confirmed that 500 potential sites have been identified but at this stage it is too early to confirm sites. This information can be shared at a later date. Members were advised that it is felt that the best impact is to plant to develop new woodlands.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Walsh and the officers for their attendance at the meeting

5

Essex Developers' Guide to Infrastructure Contributions

Members received report **(PSEG/04/20)** and contributions from Councillor Tony Ball, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Graham Thomas, Head of Planning and Joy Thomas, Infrastructure Planning Manager.

Councillor Ball introduced the item and explained why it is necessary to update the Guide:

- The current Essex Developers Contribution Guide was written in 2015 and published in 2016. It is several years old and therefore needs to be updated.
- There have been significant changes to legislation which came into effect on 1st September 2019.
- There are new infrastructure requirements which historically have not been addressed, for example in relation to the provision of specialist education facilities.

Graham Thomas and Joy Thomas then proceeded to advise the Committee:

the purpose of the Guide

- Essex has provided a developer contribution Guide to assist developers since 2003.
- The Guide sets-out the costs to provide necessary infrastructure required of new development, to ensure we support the district and borough councils in the delivery of good quality places for people to live, work and enjoy.
- The Guide provides detailed cost information to support the planning policies as set-out in District Local Plans.
- It provides clarity on cost expectation for the construction and house builders in Essex to enable them to bring forward planning policy compliant development.

Consultation that has been undertaken

- Consultation in November/December 2019 for 6 weeks was extensive and included developers, the Essex Developers' Group, Planning Portfolio Holders, all Members of ECC, EPOA, and all Essex local authorities.
- Several meetings with the Essex Planning Officers' Association, collectively and followed in January/February with meetings with all local councils who wanted a meeting
- A second round of consultation was held in March for 3 weeks with Essex local authorities.
- Many helpful points have been raised in response to the two rounds of consultation and changes have and will be made to the updated Guide.

Members were invited to ask questions and the areas raised included:

- Concerns around the triggers for contributions by developers set out in Table 5 of Appendix 1- some members felt that these figures was too high.- It was explained that help will be offered to Local authorities in connection with smaller scale developments and that this will not be the sole mechanism with a programme of support rolled out. It was further explained that this is new guidance which may be reviewed.
- Whether comments made by Districts/Boroughs had been accepted and incorporated and if not, has feedback been passed back to local partners - - Members were advised that the review process is still in progress and a number of changes will be incorporated as a result of the consultation with Districts/Boroughs. It was further confirmed that the next step would be Cabinet Member Action (CMA) which would include all relevant information and clarity in order to provide a proper audit trail.
- Impact of the current economic situation as a result of the Covid-19 lockdown. - there was concern that some developers will try to

renegotiate terms due financial difficulties encountered. Mr Thomas explained that it is likely that new Government planning reforms are likely to be introduced to cover this, but there are no details of such at present.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Ball and the officers for their attendance at the meeting.

6 Date of next meeting

The Committee noted that the next Committee meeting will be on Thursday, 21st May 2020.

7 Urgent Business

Councillor D Kendall raised the following issues:

- The reopening of our Recycling Centres - the timing and how it will be managed
- The reopening of our Country Parks following the announcement made by the Communities Secretary at the weekend that all parks should be opened.

The Chairman confirmed that he had noted the questions and that they would be submitted to Councillor Walsh, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change Action.

The meeting ended at 12.17 pm

Chairman