
Minutes of the meeting of the Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee, held in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex on Thursday, 24 November 2016

Present:

Councillor S Barker Councillor D Louis (Chairman)
Councillor T Cutmore Councillor M Mackrory
Councillor M Danvers Councillor C Pond
Councillor I Grundy Councillor S Robinson
Councillor C Guglielmi Councillor A Turrell
Councillor J Huntman Councillor A Wood

The following Officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Christine Sharland - Scrutiny Officer
Lisa Siggins - Committee Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Hedley, Twitchen and Kendall who was substituted at the meeting by Councillor Mackrory. Originally Councillor Maddocks was scheduled to substitute for Councillor Twitchen but had to send his apologies on the day.

2 Minutes

The Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 20 October 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 Declarations of Interest

With reference to Minute 5 on Fuel Poverty Councillor Barker declared a personal interest in that her son is an Energy Officer at Basildon District Council.

4 Questions from the Public

There were no questions raised by members of the public.

5 Fuel Poverty

The Committee considered report PSEG/31/16 on Fuel Poverty, together with a PowerPoint presentation from Paul Hinsley, Acting Head of Environment Team.

In October 2014 a motion on Fuel Poverty was referred by full Council to Councillor Walsh as the former Chairman of the Scrutiny Board. A copy of the motion was attached at Appendix A to the report, and a literature review at Appendix B. More recently the Scrutiny Board had referred the motion to this Scrutiny Committee.

In response the Committee's briefing had been organised by way of a progress

report about work undertaken by Essex County Council and its partners on action being taken to address fuel poverty across Essex.

In his presentation Mr Hinsley confirmed:

- A household is considered to be fuel poor if its required fuel costs are above average (the national median level); and, if the residents were to spend that amount, then they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line.
- 21% of all households living in properties with the lowest energy ratings (E, F or G) are fuel poor. This is compared to only 2% of households that live in properties with the highest energy ratings (A, B or C).
- 20% of households in the private rented sector are fuel poor.
- 78% of households in fuel poverty are classed as vulnerable, that is one containing children, the elderly, or someone with a long term illness or disability.
- An overview of fuel poverty in Essex, including a district by district breakdown. It was pointed out that fuel poverty was high in rural areas.
- Current differences in tariffs including for those who are on pre-pay meters. The action being taken in Essex to address the issue and make residents aware of the options available to them.
- Future opportunities e.g. Essex Energy Partnership, Community Energy Schemes, and sharing best practice with District and Borough Councils.

The Committee discussed their concerns about the issue of energy companies charging customers higher rates when on pre-paid meter schemes, which was linked to such customers being considered to be "high risk" with low credit ratings. The Committee felt strongly that this was both unfair and disproportionate. However, attention was drawn to the fact that prepayment tariffs are being phased out and replaced by smart meters.

The Committee took the opportunity to discuss energy switching and whether or not customers are aware of their options by the energy providers. It was felt that Councillors, working in partnership, could help to make residents and their communities more aware of the options open to them to reduce their fuel bills.

In summary the Committee agreed that it would be helpful if Members could be advised on how they could raise their local residents' awareness of the benefits of reviewing their own household fuel tariffs, and the replacement of pre-payment meters.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked Paul Hinsley for a very informative and interesting briefing on fuel poverty in Essex.

6 LED Lighting

The Committee received a Report PSEG/32/16 with a briefing paper appended thereto, which was in response to the request made by the Committee on 22nd September (Minute 9).

At the meeting the Committee received a briefing, including a PowerPoint Presentation from Councillor Johnson The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport who was supported by Keith Tovee, Asset Manager - Lighting and Richard Dimmock, Street Lighting Operations Manager

During the presentation the following issues were covered:

- LED lighting is street lighting that uses light emitting diodes (LED) as its light source
- It is a more efficient delivery of light for the energy used compared to existing discharge lighting 50%+ savings expected.
- It has an extended LED life compared to existing discharge lighting (4-6 years to 20 years).
- It has become more of a standard design with installation costs now in line with existing discharge lighting
- Phase 1 in the County has been completed as a successful pilot where 1562 lanterns were converted to LED technology
- Phase 2 has concentrated on "all night" operating lighting - with a programme to invest £9.222m on the replacement of approx. 19,000 street lanterns to LED technology. As of 18th November 2016; 3305 have been completed
- Phase 3 options are currently under discussion with an option being focusing on high energy street lighting which attract high maintenance costs. These currently operate a part night protocol.
- LED in Maintenance Operations - LED technology is currently being fitted in illuminated sign lights (approximately 40% by April 2017) Promoting to convert the remaining sign lights to LED in 2017/18
- LED Effects on Maintenance - LED technology helps to resolve lamp and control gear issues and could resolve up to 50% of the defects currently received. Due to less energy being consumed this could reduce the stress on the aging private electrical network

Members were shown photographs which illustrated the difference between the effects of conventional and LED lighting on road conditions and actual samples of LED lights were shown at the meeting.

On behalf of the Committee the chairman thanked Councillor Johnson and Mr Tovee and Mr Dimmock for an informative briefing session.

7 Pavement Parking

The Committee considered report PSEG/33/16 on Pavement Parking. Members had requested the briefing at its meeting on 22 September 2016 (Minute 9).

At the meeting the Committee received a briefing, including a PowerPoint Presentation from Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, who was supported by Liz Burr, Head of Network and Safety/Traffic Manager Highways.

The presentation summarised the following key issues:

- The pertinent legislation and an overview of pavement parking, including consideration of obstruction to pedestrians and traffic flow, practicalities around Traffic Regulation Orders.
- Specific local issues for Essex. There is difference in legislation between Essex and London, which has a separate ban for pavement parking.

Members took the opportunity to ask questions in order to clarify their understanding the complex issues associated with pavement parking, and the implications associated with the use of Traffic Regulation Orders as a tool to restrict or permit such parking. It was confirmed requests for parking restrictions would have to be undertaken through the appropriate Essex Parking Partnership.

On behalf of the Committee the Chairman thanked Councillor Johnson and Liz Burr for providing Members with an informed and

8 Work Programme

The Committee noted report PSEG/34/16 concerning the Committee's work programme, and agreed the change of date for the January meeting from 19th to 17th January 2017.

9 Future Meeting Dates.

The Committee noted report PSEG/35/16 setting out the following future meeting dates:

- 22nd June 2017
- 20th July 2017
- 21st September 2017
- 19th October 2017
- 23rd November 2017
- 14th December 2017
- 18th January 2018
- 22nd February 2018
- 22nd March 2018
- 19th April 2018

10 Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that there would not be a formal meeting in December. However, it

was agreed that proposals for a workshop being planned as part of corporate review of scrutiny workshop should be moved from Thursday 15th to Tuesday 13th December 2016 following Cabinet and Member Development session.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 2.20 pm

Chairman