
Minutes of the meeting of the Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee, held in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex on Thursday, 22 September 2016

Present:

Councillor S Barker Councillor D Louis (Chairman)
Councillor K Bobbin Councillor C Pond
Councillor T Cutmore Councillor S Robinson
Councillor C Guglielmi Councillor A Turrell
Councillor J Huntman 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 for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Grundy and Twitchen.

2 Minutes

The Committee was advised that the Minutes of its previous meeting held on 12 September 2016 would not be available for approval until its next meeting on 20 October 2016.

3 Declarations of Interest

With reference to Minute 10, the Committee noted that a majority of County Councillors were members of a Local Highways Panel.

With reference to Minutes 6 and 7, Councillor Barker declared a personal interest in that she is Uttlesford District Council's representative on the North Essex Parking Partnership Joint Committee and on the Essex Flood Partnership Board.

With reference to Minute 8 Councillor Kendall declared a personal interest in that he is Secretary of the Brentwood Bus and Rail Users Association, and a Trustee of Brentwood Community Transport in his capacity as a Brentwood Borough Councillor

4 Questions from the Public

At the meeting John Hammond, a Chelmsford resident, read out the following statement to the Committee:

"I would like confirmation that it will be stated in the new Terms of Reference for Local Highway Panels that agenda reports should be put on the internet before the meeting. Also, that the public will at least be able to attend meetings and preferably have an opportunity to make suggestions about agenda items. That would bring Chelmsford LHP into line with the good practice already adopted by other LHPs. As Chairman of the Chelmsford Cycling Action Group, it has become apparent to me that if the details of schemes are not right, they do not deliver value for money. It would be helpful if there is an opportunity for the Panel to consider this."

The Committee concurred with the Chairman's proposal that the question posed by Mr Hammond should be put to Councillor Johnson as Cabinet Member when he addressed the Committee for the item on Local Highways Panels (Minute 10 refers).

Mr Hammond had submitted a public question on the same topic to the Committee at its meeting on 23 July 2015 (Minute 4).

5 Jobs, Welfare And Skills Final Scrutiny Report

The Committee considered report PSEG/22/16 concerning the Cabinet's response to its approved Jobs, Welfare and Skills Scrutiny Report.

Councillor Bentley, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Partnerships, was in attendance to provide an oral response to the Scrutiny Report and its recommendations. In summary he welcomed the report and highlighted the following matters:

The key players include businesses, education providers and students of all ages.

- The Essex Employment and Skills Board ('the Board') now plays an important role in Essex. It is made up of representatives from business across the county, and has one politician in its membership. It will be appropriate to channel a number of the Committee's recommendations through the Board, and he suggested that the Chairman of the Board be invited to a future meeting to present on its work.
- A common criticism is the mismatch between the skills of the local population and those required by employers.
- It is important that particular areas of growth are considered in terms of what jobs may be created and the types of skills that will be required. For example public monies have been invested in a new campus attached to

Harlow College to promote various aviation engineering skills required at Stansted Airport; the development of low carbon and wind energy industry has led to the setting up of the Harwich Centre by the Colchester Institute; and Epping College is now offering new NVQs due to the local opportunities created by the development of the glasshouse industry for growing vegetables around Waltham Abbey.

Councillor Bentley welcomed the Committee's support. However, he stressed that the County Council is not necessarily accountable for delivering jobs and skills as referred to in some of the recommendations in the scrutiny report because where the Government has not devolved statutory powers to local authorities. He urged the Chairman on behalf on the Committee to write to the Secretary of State to lobby for greater control around jobs and skills to be devolved to Local Authorities.

During discussion the Committee questioned the Cabinet Member on various issues that included:

- A request for a formal launch of the Scrutiny Report to encourage public debate and raise awareness of what the Committee had found. Councillor Bentley confirmed that any launch would be a matter for the Committee to take forward.
- A request for a detailed written response to the sixteen recommendations set out in the scrutiny report that also identified who would be responsible for taking forward each one. Councillor Bentley undertook to provide a co-ordinated response on behalf of the Cabinet.
- The need to provide more effective support to young people to acquire GCSE success in Maths and English, as the lack of those qualifications could harm their prospects for future employment.
- Concerns were expressed around the critical need to promote the development of medical skills, and encourage qualifications for careers in the Care Sector with proper recognition of such work as a valued profession.
- Adult Community Learning Centres are vitally important and need to be utilised more.
- The Committee's support for the devolution of skills control was emphasised.

It was hoped that the findings set out in the scrutiny report could be built upon, with the County Council taking a lead in addressing those areas identified for action.

Drawing the item to a close the Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member for his feedback, and answering Members' questions.

It was **agreed** that

1. The Chairman send a letter on behalf of the Committee to lobby the Government on the devolution of skills in Essex.

2. Councillor Bentley on behalf of the Cabinet would co-ordinate a detailed written response to the Scrutiny Report and its recommendations prior to the Committee's next meeting.
3. That consideration be given to inviting the Chairman of the Essex Employment and Skills Board to a future meeting to inform the Committee about the Board's activities in Essex

6 Third Party Responsibilities and Flooding Enforcement Scrutiny Report (Minute 9/May 2016)

The Committee noted report PSEG/23/16 setting out the Cabinet Members' responses to some of its recommendations arising from this Scrutiny Report. Following some general discussion around the topic, the Chairman proposed that the Cabinet Members be invited to attend a meeting to answer questions arising from their response.

7 Essex Parking Partnerships

The Committee considered report PSEG/24/16 concerning the anticipated Essex Parking Partnerships' response to its recommendations as set out in its Scrutiny Report approved in May 2016 (Minute 8).

Prior to the meeting Members' had been shown a draft response that was in the process of being developed with the Chairmen of the Partnerships' Joint Committees and Councillor Johnson, the County Council's Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport. However, following a brief discussion at the formal meeting itself, the Chairman suggested that the Partnerships' representatives be invited to the Committee's next meeting in October to answer Members' questions.

8 Passenger Transport Update (Minute 10/March 2016)

At the meeting Helen Morris, Head of Commissioning for Essex Connected Infrastructure, provided the Committee with an oral update on passenger transport matters

Ms Morris reminded Members that following the consultation on the Local Bus Strategy Review in Autumn 2015, the proposals for revising contracted local bus services in Essex (those funded by the County Council) had been approved by Cabinet in November 2015. Bus services were tendered and awarded in February 2016 with the revised network introduced in April. This is a 5-7 year strategy that has now been underway for 14 months.

The Committee was updated on what has been achieved since the Strategy had been approved:

- Bus Board – there are new notice provisions for the termination of service provision with 90 days "informal notice"
- A multi operational quality partnership is now in operation on "Route 8"

- enabling passengers to board using a ticket purchased for other operators.
- The implementation of “real time” passenger information has been delayed due to technical issues eg several bus routes have the same number. Currently it has been rolled out on 50% of routes.
- Two operators have implemented the use of technical kit on board their buses, which enable passengers to track buses by the use of an “app”.
- A Transport for Essex Quality Standard has now been introduced with gold, silver and bronze level awards for operators depending on the service they deliver.
- Local Bus network review. Services were tendered and awarded in February 2016 with changes, with some significant changes in certain areas, introduced on 11 April. The aim was to maintain overall quality and improve efficiency. Three new demand responsive routes have been introduced, which replace a once or twice weekly service with one that is available every day. Passengers may pre book a service from a local collection point.
- Digital tickets are currently being developed at present, and it is hoped that this new service will be available shortly.
- The Park and Ride Broomfield Hospital Shuttle pilot is proving to be popular.
- The summer “kids go free” offer on the two Chelmsford Park and Ride services was very popular.
- There is continued partnership working with Chelmsford City Council in respect of the Park and Ride services.
- The total transport project is underway, and its aim is to make rural transport cost effective.

During discussion Members raised various matters, which included:

- A request that in future hard copies of consultation papers (with envelopes) should be made available and the public be made aware when consultations are in progress.
- School bus services. It was confirmed that the cost of electronic ticket machines are too prohibitive. Concern was expressed about school children standing on long journeys when there are no seats available. It was acknowledged that this may occur occasionally where there are ‘unknown passenger numbers’ but it should not occur otherwise.
- With reference to concerns that there may be out of date timetables at bus stops, it was confirmed that bus operators are encouraged to either update them or remove them entirely to avoid passenger confusion.

The Chairman thanked Ms Morris for her detailed update to the Committee on passenger transport matters, and for addressing Members’ questions.

9 Committee Workshop 30 June 2016

The Committee noted report PSEG/25/16 concerning the workshop held on 30 June for Members to share their impressions of scrutiny activity.

At the meeting Robert Fox, Scrutiny Officer advised the Committee about the forthcoming Art of the Possible **#scrutiny** event on 17 October, which was

intended to provide Members and officers with an opportunity to collaborate on exploring what scrutiny can learn from social media about people's real life experiences. Young carers and mental health were two topics so far identified for consideration at the event.

The Committee discussed various 'Place' topics that could be focussed upon at the event, and agreed that the use of social media to explore Pavement Parking be put forward for the Art of the Possible scrutiny event.

At the meeting the Chairman also invited Members to identify those issues that they would like to include in the Committee's work programme:

- Response to Scrutiny Report on the Essex Parking Partnerships Response to Jobs, Skills and Welfare Scrutiny Report
- Local Highways Panels
- Third Party Responsibilities and Flood Enforcement in Essex Scrutiny Report
- Passenger Transport
- Waste, Tovi Park, and Recycling Centres for Household Waste LED Lighting
- Pavement Parking
- Collection of Waste (Promote unified services across Essex)
- Fuel Poverty (reference from full Council)

The Chairman proposed the following itinerary:

October 20

- Essex Parking Partnerships
- Job, Skills and Welfare Scrutiny Report - detailed written response to recommendations
- Third Party Responsibilities and Flood Management Scrutiny Report - Cabinet Member to be invited to meeting to answer Members' questions

November 24

- LED Lights Update
- Essex Employment and Skills Board
- Pavement Parking- preliminary report

December 15

- Local Highways Panels – response to consultations
- Pavement Parking- more in depth consideration
- Passenger Transport

10 Local Highways Panels

The Committee considered report PSEG/26/16 concerning proposed changes to the operation of the Local Highways Panels (LHPs), and in particular their Terms of Reference, a new Members' Guide, and scheme requests and validation

Councillor Johnson, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport had been invited to the meeting to update the Committee. He was supported by Vicky

Presland Development Management Group Manager (Essex Highways) and Anne James (Essex Highways).

Terms of Reference

The Committee was informed that an amended draft new Terms of Reference had been produced. It took into account a number of comments that had been received, and would shortly be submitted for Cabinet Member approval.

The key changes related to:

- Membership. It was confirmed that all County Councillors would be invited to LHP meetings, but not all would have voting rights.
- There would advance publication of material for LHP meetings. However, the meeting themselves were not formal public meetings
- Road Safety Prioritisation
- Clarification regarding which schemes qualify for funding

With reference to the public question referred to in Minute 4 s and other specific questions around advance publication of meeting papers, it was pointed out that in the majority of cases the secretariat for LHPs was provided by the individual District Councils, and so there may be some variation in working practice. It was further confirmed that LHP papers are published on the ECC website.

Draft Members' Guide 2016/17 Consultation Draft

Copies of the draft Members' Guide were circulated at the meeting. All Committee Members were encouraged to submit their comments on the Guide to the Cabinet Member as part of the forthcoming consultation. Being mindful that the Committee had not had a proper opportunity to read the draft Guide it was proposed that the Cabinet Member should attend its next meeting in October.

Scheme requests and validation

Anne James gave a PowerPoint presentation on the new Scheme Validation Process that was being developed as an improved approach to delivering solutions to identified local problems. She illustrated the use of the new web based materials, and confirmed that there will be a new scheme request user guide together with indicative costs and timetables.

In general the Committee welcomed the clarification that was emerging around LHP activity, and the reassurance they had received that Members would be consulted on new operational proposals, and feedback would be given by the Cabinet Member at future meetings.

11 Date of Next Meeting

The Committee noted that the next committee activity day would be place on Thursday 20 October 2016.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 3.10 pm

Chairman