

Minutes of the meeting of the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held digitally on Thursday, 24 September 2020

Present:

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

AGENDA

1. Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

There were no changes to the membership of the committee since the last meeting.

No formal apologies were received.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Minutes

Members approved as a correct record Minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2020.

3. Questions from the Public

There were no public speakers

4. Call in Notification: FP/794/08/20 Concession Contract for an Electric Scooter Hire Trial Scheme

Members noted the report.

5. Planning for the Future - The Planning White Paper

The panel for this item was:

Cllr Tony Ball, Cabinet Member for Economic Development.

Graham Thomas, Head of Planning

Matthew Jericho, Spatial Planning and Local Plan Manager

Members received a presentation from Cllr Tony Ball and officers. Key points included:

- The Planning White Paper (PWP) Is designed to reform an outdated planning system and boost growth. The focus will be on: planning for development, planning for beautiful and sustainable places and, planning for infrastructure and connected places.
- The PWP aims to correct imbalances in the current planning system by: streamlining and modernising the planning process, improving outcomes with regards to design and sustainability, reform developer contributions and, ensure more land is available when needed.
- Under proposals, housing quotas would be set by central government for each local authority.
- A greater focus would be placed on periodically reviewed local plans, with all available land designated as either growth, renewal or protected. Different planning restrictions would exist in each of these categories, with planning made significantly simpler and more streamlined in growth areas.
- A greater focus would be made on digital planning, with an opensource mapping software made available to allow greater access to planning opportunities.
- The infrastructure levy would replace s106 funding and Community infrastructure levy. This would be a flat rate set nationally based on the value of the final development.
- Members were informed that this was a time-sensitive item. This session formed part of the consultation response to central government from ECC. This would be submitted in late October.

Members discussed the presentation and papers with officers. Key points raised included:

- How land will be categorised – members were informed that land would be categorised as part of the local planning round with plans adopted by full council. With quotas being set by central government, councils would have to ensure that robust conversations around land designations took place, with enough land designated as growth land to ensure targets were met.
- Dilution of local planning processes and democratic accountability. With land designated as 'growth', the planning process will be significantly minimized with only basic permitted planning required.
- Sustainability assessments – these have been removed as a requirement with nothing to replace them. Members were informed that this was likely to streamline proposals, but little information given as to why these were deemed unnecessarily bureaucratic. Environmental questions raised in planning process similarly removed.

- Reduced consultation times – again, likely to streamline process.
- Exemptions to 106 and CIL funding – under the new infrastructure funding requirement there won't be any exemptions. However, as the value of levy will be determined after the structure has been built, local authorities will have to prospectively borrow to manage costs.
- Exemption of accessible and green spaces in document – officers agreed to raise this as part of response to consultation.
- Process for consultation response – Members were informed that this would be the only response from ECC and would be taken through PLT and local planning officers' network.

ACTION: Officers agreed to hold a member development session before consultation response submitted.

Cllr Grundy thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their time.

Cllr Erskine left the meeting at 11.28

6. Sustainable Travel in Essex – Update.

The panel for this item was:

Cllr Kevin Bentley, Cabinet Member for Infrastructure

Tracey Vickers, Head of Sustainable Travel

Members received a presentation from Cllr Bentley and officers. Key points raised included:

- ECC's transport agenda intends to achieve a shift to walking, cycling and public transport by increasing choice for residents.
- Aim is to improve health of Essex residents, as well as reduce congestion in major transport hubs.
- Residents should be encouraged, not forced. Positive adoption can only be achieved if people want to get involved.
- This can be achieved by better informing travellers through smart lighting, smart parking and smart deliveries for local businesses.
- Safer and smarter community safety and traffic management can regulate traffic flows, reducing congestion.
- Initial response to Covid funding has been spent on schemes in central locations, making pavements and cycle routes safer for people to use while maintaining social distancing.
- Application made for further central government infrastructure funding for schemes in Basildon, Braintree, Brentwood, Chelmsford and Colchester. Each area has a distinctive proposal designed to address unique need and characteristics of each town. The focus will be on making walking and cycling a meaningful alternative for shorter trips or part of a longer journey. Panels have been put together, chaired by local county councillors, to inform and influence the spending of funding in corresponding areas.

- ECC is responsible for community rail, sustainable travel planning, transport infrastructure, the overall transport strategy and active and sustainable transport. All these areas feed into an overall sustainable transport policy.
- The Essex Walking Strategy launched at the end of September. This aligns with overarching sustainable investment strategies to promote walking as a mode of travel for short trips.

Members discussed the presentation and papers with officers. Key points raised included:

- Likely timeline for approval of central government funding – Members were informed that officers were anticipating a decision in October.
- The lack of funding for Tendring or Loughton – the Cabinet Member assured committee members that Tendring wasn't omitted, it simply didn't feature in the initial wave of funding. It would feature in future funding bids. Members were also referred to the 'Tendring big bikes' scheme currently active in the area. The Cabinet Member informed members that this is a major policy change, with limited funding in the first instance. Change will be incremental.
- Areas of low population – A rural transport strategy is in development and expected.

Cllr Grundy thanked the Cabinet Member and Officers for their time.

7. Meeting dates for 2021

Meeting dates agreed

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next full committee day will be Thursday 29th October

9. Urgent Business

None received

10. Urgent exempt Business

None received

Close of meeting