
Minutes of the meeting of the Place Services and Economic Growth Scrutiny Committee, held in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex on Thursday, 20 October 2016

Present:

Councillor S Barker	Councillor C Guglielmi
Councillor K Bobbin	Councillor D Kendall
Councillor T Cutmore	Councillor D Louis (Chairman)
Councillor J Deakin	Councillor C Pond
Councillor I Grundy	Councillor A Turrell
Councillor T Hedley	

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 Huntman, Twitchen and Wood and Councillor Robinson who was substituted by Councillor Deakin.

2a Minutes 12.09.16

The Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 12 September 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2b Minutes 22.09.16

The Minutes of the Committee meeting held on 22 September 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 Declarations of Interest

With reference to Minute 5, Councillor Barker declared a personal interest in that she is Uttlesford District Council's representative on the North Essex Parking Partnership Joint Committee.

With reference to Minute 5, Councillor Grundy confirmed that he would take part in the item in his capacity as Vice Chairman of the South Essex Parking Partnership rather than as a Committee member.

With reference to Minute 6, the Committee drew attention to the fact that a majority of County Councillors are members of their respective Local Highways Panels.

4 Questions from the Public

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

"At the September Scrutiny meeting, it was suggested that members of the public with comments about proposals on the LHP agenda should send them to their County Councillor. That is only practical if the reports for proposals to be discussed are published before their meeting. Agenda headings on their own are generic and do not reveal the proposals to be discussed. The reports for Chelmsford LHP are processed by the County Council, who are responsible for this County Highway function.

The Cabinet Member Action 10th October by Vicky Presland signed by Councillor Johnson states "the panes are linked to the ECC Corporate Plan objectives including encouraging Essex residents to influence decisions and shape their communities". That objective is facilitated if LHPs publish reports before the meetings and works well for other Districts should be endorsed as standard good practice including Chelmsford"

Mr Hammond originally addressed the Committee at its meeting on 23 July 2015 (Minute 4) and subsequently at its meeting on 22 September 2016 (Minute 4).

Councillor Harris attended the meeting in connection with the Item concerning Local Highways Panels (Minute 6 refers).

5 Essex Parking Partnerships

The Committee considered report PSEG/27/16 setting out the Essex Parking Partnerships' formal response to its scrutiny report on the formal arrangements for the future operation of the Partnerships.

At the meeting the Parking Partnerships were represented by :

Essex County Council

- Councillor Johnson, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transformation.
- Liz Burr, Head of Network and Safety/Traffic Manager (Highways)

North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP)

- Councillor Mitchell, Chairman Joint Committee
- Richard Walker, Group Manager

South Essex Parking Partnership (SEPP)

- Councillor Grundy, Vice Chairman Joint Committee

The NEPP and SEPP representatives confirmed that the District Councils are in the process of formalising their own individual Council's approval for the proposed extension of the formal Joint Agreements. The formal approval of the two Joint Committees will be sought in December for forwarding to the County Council so

that a final decision can be made by the end of the year.

It was confirmed that as part of the executive review conducted by the Partnerships, all District Councils had been party to the consultation that had taken place, and had input into the development of proposals now being taken forward. Although there are a number of issues where the Parking Partnerships are taking action to improve their operation and communication, it was emphasised that the current focus had to be upon concluding the extension of the Joint Agreements.

During discussion the Committee cross examined the Parking Partnership representatives on their formal response that included reference to the following issues:

- **Access to meeting papers (recommendation 4)**

Members sought clarification on proposals to improve communication with councillors about meeting dates and papers. It was confirmed that email notifications from NEPP include a link to documentation, which was a more effective use of resources rather than attaching separate documents, and the SEPP is proposing to adopt the same practice in the near future.

The Partnerships are intending to provide regular briefing sessions to improve communication, and all County Councillors will be invited to attend.

- **Partnership Working and Enforcement**

The Partnerships' representatives drew attention to work being undertaken to enhance their operation through partnership working with others for instance working with IT suppliers to develop new technology for enforcement, and working with District Councils to deliver more enforcement capability.

Attention was drawn to pavement parking and differences in the resources and legislation available to London Boroughs compared to local authorities outside of London. It was noted that a briefing on pavement parking was being arranged for a future Committee meeting.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked the Parking Partnerships representatives for attending the meeting, and confirmed that no further action would be taken in respect of this scrutiny review.

6 Local Highways Panels

The Committee considered report PSEG/28/16 concerning the Local Highway Panels (LHPs) Members' Guide 2016/17 Consultation Draft.

The Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, Councillor Johnson attended the meeting together with Anne James, Essex Highways, to update the Committee on proposals to change the operation of the LHPs.

With particular reference to the new **terms of reference (TOR)** it was confirmed that they were still going through the governance process before their final approval could be confirmed. Once approved the TOR would be published as a public document.

At the beginning of the meeting (Minute 4 refers) concerns had been raised by a member of the public about the transparency of LHP meetings and the availability of associated papers, which made it difficult for residents to influence the way a scheme may be designed.

Councillor Harris was also in attendance for this item to offer his praise for the proposed new Members' Guide. However, he also raised concerns about the transparency of LHP meetings. Not all County Councillors sit on their LHPs and there have been occasions where they had been unaware of schemes that would affect their local areas. While he felt that the scheme request validation forms were a positive way forward, he suggested that all local County Councillors should be party to sponsoring such schemes and positive steps should be made to make them aware of proposals affecting their divisions.

The Committee noted that there were different practices adopted by individual LHPs concerning their meeting arrangements, and whether or not members of the public were permitted to attend, ease of access to meeting papers, and issues for County Councillors who were not part of the formal membership of LHPs including the ability to keep track of scheme proposals.

It was apparent that there was some confusion on the different practices adopted by individual LHPs. All County Councillors are able to attend LHP meetings but unless they are appointed to a LHP's membership they did not have voting rights. Similarly there was different practice in respect of enabling the public to attend meetings. The Cabinet Member confirmed that the new Terms of Reference once approved will supersede existing arrangements and will set out the new working practices. Nevertheless he reiterated that the LHP meetings were not intended to be formal public meetings.

With regard to the draft **Members' Guide** Councillor Kendall took the opportunity to seek clarification on various points that he was proposing to submit into the current consultation including:

- Differences between budgets (revenue, maintenance, capital)
- Differences between vehicle activated signs
- Guidance on the use of Section 106 monies

On these above issues it was agreed that more clarity could be incorporated in the guidance to provide greater understanding of how schemes may be managed.

With reference to Section 106 Monies Councillor Johnson confirmed that following earlier discussion with the Committee in February, he had issued a directive to all LHPs that had the benefit of such monies to include a standing item on their

agenda for a LHP to review at every meeting.

On behalf of the Committee the Chairman thanked both Councillor Johnson and Anne James for their contribution.

7 Jobs Skills and Welfare Scrutiny Report

The Committee received report PSEG/29/16 setting out Councillor Bentley's, the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Infrastructure and Partnerships, detailed written response to the sixteen recommendations set out in this Scrutiny Report entitled 'We can work it out: The case for a locally determined employment, skills, careers advice and welfare for work system in Essex'.

The Chairman confirmed that Councillor Bentley was unable to attend this particular Committee meeting. While the Committee welcomed his written response, Members stated that they would prefer him to attend a future meeting to answer their verbal questions and provide an update.

Councillor Louis confirmed that he was in the process of approving a letter to be sent to the Government to lobby for the devolution of skills control.

Councillor Kendall who was a member of the original Task and Finish Group reiterated his request for a formal launch of the Scrutiny Report and in doing so drew attention to the fact that the Cabinet Member had advised that this was a task for this Committee to consider. He also sought the Committee's concurrence for the Scrutiny Report to be sent to:

- Essex Chamber of Commerce
- The Federation of small businesses
- National LGA
- All contributors to the Scrutiny Report
- Councillors Henderson and Walsh as members of the former Task and Finish Group

Furthermore Councillor Kendall sought reassurance that on an officer level a person would be identified as accountable for taking the delivery of the recommendations of the Scrutiny Report forward, and maximise the benefits that could accrue from the Scrutiny Committee's in depth investigation.

With specific reference to Minute 5/ 22 September 2016, it was agreed that the invitation to the Essex Employment and Skills Board to attend a Committee meeting should also seek the Board's feedback on the Scrutiny Report.

On behalf of the Committee the Chairman confirmed that it was intended that a press release would be issued in due course, and the Scrutiny Report should be circulated as suggested above.

8 Work Programme

The Committee noted report PSEG/30/16 concerning the Committee's work programme.

9 Date of Next Meeting

The Committee noted that there would be a formal Committee meeting on Thursday 22 November 2016.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 12.20 pm

Chairman