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## **Minutes of the meeting of the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Thursday, 18 July 2019**

### **Present:**

Councillor B Aspinell	Councillor B Massey
Councillor A Erskine	Councillor R Moore
Councillor I Henderson	Councillor J Moran
Councillor S Hillier	Councillor C Pond
Councillor P Honeywood	Councillor R Pratt
Councillor D Kendall	Councillor J Moran

- 1 Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest**  
The report of the Membership, Apologies and Declarations was received, and it was noted that

1. The membership of the Committee was unchanged since the last meeting;
2. Councillor T Cutmore had sent his apologies, Councillor J Moran attended as his substitute. Councillor W Schmitt also sent apologies.
3. A Code interest was declared by Councillor Chris Pond, as a member of the chartered institute of librarians.

**2 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

- 3 Questions from the Public**  
A total of 6 members of the public registered to speak. For a complete account, please follow this [link](#) to the meeting page to listen to the audio recording.

**4 Questions from Councillors who are not members of the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor Colin Sargeant asked a number of questions relating to the negotiating process between ECC and those residents' associations looking to take on responsibility for community libraries, the timescales of these negotiations, the amount of grant funding available and the role of volunteers moving forward.

## 5 Future Libraries Services Strategy

The following witnesses were in attendance to support this item:

Councillor Susan Barker – Cabinet member for Customer, Communities, Culture and Corporate

Councillor David Finch – Leader of the Council

Councillor Mark Durham – Deputy Cabinet Member to Councillor Susan Barker

Suzanna Shaw – Director Customer & Technology Operations

Juliet Pirez – Head of Libraries

Liz Sutton – Senior Communication and Engagement Specialist

Katy Chambers – Customer and Revenue Optimization Manager

Alyesha Roachford – Project Manager

Philip Oldershaw – Senior Strategy Advisor

Members received report PSEG/13/19 and a presentation from Councillor Barker and supporting officers. This outlined the process taken in developing the recommendations to be considered by the Cabinet on 23 July 2019 and an outline of data and consultation responses.

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

Questions were raised by committee members in relation to matters summarised below:

- The role of local communities in funding community run libraries.
- The data included in the cabinet papers around public support for the overall strategic ambition.
- The role of volunteers in future libraries proposals.
- The number of full-time equivalent staff currently employed by ECC (this was identified by officers as 225 FTE) and the impact on these individuals of a move to a more volunteer driven service.
- A specific question around the current site of Shenfield library was asked. Assurances were provided that the administration had no current plans to sell off any sites.
- Continuation of the currently operated courier service
- Display of library stock centrally, digitally, in order to boost service usage.
- The Cabinet Member's response to the recommendations of the Task and Finish session held on 30 May 2109.
- Inter-lending between rural and urban libraries.
- The provision of service level agreements (SLAs) between community groups taking on community libraries and ECC.
- The number of qualified librarians employed by ECC. This was confirmed as six.

Assurances were also sought in relation to current arrangements and expressions of interest already received. Members of the committee were assured that should community groups withdraw expressions of interest the libraries would remain open and run by ECC.

Similarly, Committee members sought assurances in relation to current library sites. The Cabinet Member and Leader assured members that, unless an alternative site, more beneficial to local communities was not identified, they would endeavour to retain the current portfolio of properties.

A full audio broadcast account of this discussion can be found [here](#) .

### **ACTIONS:**

Following discussion the Chairman proposed two actions which were unanimously agreed by the committee:

- That a Task and Finish group be set up to continue to scrutinise and provide challenge to the proposals moving forward and through implementation.
- That a visit be arranged for the committee to a community run Essex library.

The Cabinet Member and Leader were thanked, alongside officers, for their attendance at the meeting.

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### **Date of Next Meeting**

The Committee noted that the next scheduled Committee meeting will be on Thursday, 26 September 2019 at 10.30am in Committee Room 1.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 12.50 pm

**Chairman**