

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & ENVIRONMENT POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD ON 24 FEBRUARY 2011

Membership

Councillors:

* S Barker (Chairman)	* D Kendall
* B Aspinell	* M Mackrory
A Brown	* G McEwen
* R Callender	* L Mead
* P Channer	G Mitchinson
* J Dornan	* J Roberts
* R Howard	
* A Hedley (substituting for J Schofield)	

* Present

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Peter Martin, Leader of the Council, to the meeting.

1. Apologies and Substitution Notices

The Committee Officer reported that apologies had been received from Councillors John Schofield, Anne Brown and Guy Mitchinson, and a notice of substitution as set out in the above membership.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2010 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Susan Barker and Penny Channer declared an interest in Minute 7 on the Council's Posy Office Initiative as Post Offices had been re-opened in their Divisions.

4. Call in Procedure: Changes in the Council's Constitution

The Committee noted report EDE/01/11 on the Council's revised Call In Procedure.

5. Call in of Decision on the Withdrawal of Saturday Operation at the Sandon Park and Ride Site, Chelmsford (Decision Ref: FP321-10-10)

The Committee noted report EDE/02/11 on the call in of this decision. At the meeting the Chairman advised Members that this call in had been withdrawn, and invited Councillor Martin to make a statement.

Councillor Martin reported that following representations received from Chelmsford Borough Council and other Borough Council Members, the decision to withdraw the Saturday service was being re-considered to investigate if there was another way forward. He added that the Borough Council was prepared to assist with the funding of the service during a period of consultation with that Council and other stakeholders. In addition, there were now other issues he has been made aware of such as the possible closure of car parks in the town centre.

Councillor Mackrory reported that when the decision was first published he had requested financial information but had decided to proceed with the call in as he was dissatisfied with the information provided. He added that he was also disappointed with the lack of marketing of the service and consultation with town centre businesses.

6. Call in of Decision on Epping Forest Permitted Parking and Special Parking Area (Decision Ref: FP430-01-11)

The Committee noted report EDE/03/11 setting out the background on this call in that was subsequently withdrawn.

7. Post Office Initiative (Minute 66/December 2010)

The Committee considered report EDE/04/11 concerning its proposed review of the Council's Post Office Initiative.

Following Full Council on 22 February, Councillor Martin confirmed to the Committee that given the present financial position it had been decided not to continue with the project. He could not justify extending the scheme past the existing ten post offices that had re-opened. However, there is a financial commitment to these post offices for a three year period. It was confirmed that approximately £800k of the original budget had been spent to date with the remaining £700k still committed to the project.

Discussions are underway with Post Office Limited concerning how the re-opened post offices may be sustained, but Councillor Martin was unable to confirm if the post offices would remain open.

The Committee was disappointed to hear the scheme was to finish, and noted the worthwhile benefits it brought to the local communities. No further action on the scrutiny review was proposed.

8. Banking on Essex (Minute 66/ December 2010)

The Committee considered report EDE/05/11 concerning the proposed monitoring of its original scrutiny report on Banking on Essex.

Following Full Council on 22 February, Councillor Martin confirmed to the Committee that he believed Banking on Essex to be an innovative scheme

that had helped a number of small businesses survive, grow and create jobs. However, it was not a scheme that the Council could continue to support in the present financial climate. He added that central Government is now requiring banks to increase their lending to small businesses.

The Committee accepted Councillor Martin's explanation, and no further action on the scrutiny review was proposed.

Members noted that they had not received regular monthly updates on Banking on Essex as proposed discussed with witnesses as part of the original scrutiny review.

9. Forward Look

The Committee considered report EDE/06/11 on its latest work programme including four new scoping documents on:

1. Corporate Carbon Reduction
2. Highways Service Transformation
3. Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL)
4. Park and Ride Schemes

With reference to the scoping document for a new scrutiny review on the Park and Ride Scheme, it was agreed that the following issues be added to the section 'Issues to be addressed':

- To consider the availability of car parking in Chelmsford.
- To consider what work has been undertaken with retail businesses in Chelmsford in terms of identifying if there are any marketing incentives to promote the Park and Ride Scheme.

The Committee agreed that it would like to consider a review of the new Civil Parking Arrangements that are being introduced in Essex in April 2011. A scoping document would be developed for Members' consideration in due course.

In addition the following suggestions were put forward by Members for further investigation as potential scrutiny reviews:

- Community Infrastructure Levy;
- Credit Unions – Essex Savers
- Citizens Advice Bureaus and the Council's support in terms of the provision of debt advice.

10. Dates of Future Meetings

The Committee noted that its next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, 17 March 2011 at 11.00am. The Chairman confirmed that there would be a full day of activity commencing with the Carbon Reduction Task & Finish Group commencing at 9.15am.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11.15 am

Chairman