
Minutes of the meeting of the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Thursday, 28 March 2019

Present:

Councillor I Grundy (Chairman)	Councillor J Moran
Councillor B Aspinell	Councillor C Pond
Councillor T Ball	Councillor R Pratt
Councillor A Erskine	Councillor W Schmitt
Councillor S Hillier	Councillor C Weston
Councillor P Honeywood	Councillor J Young
Councillor D Kendall	

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 Bob Massey sent his apologies, Councillor John Moran attended as his substitute. Councillor Terry Cutmore also sent his apologies.
3. A Code interest was declared by Councillor C Pond with regards to Agenda Items 4 (Future Libraries Strategy – Petitions Update) and 5 (Essex Libraries Update), in that he is an Honorary Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP). Councillor Ball reminded the Committee that he was Deputy Cabinet Member to Councillor Ray Gooding.

2 Minutes

It was noted that the agenda should in fact have referred to the minutes of the meeting held on 17th January 2019, which were thereafter agreed as an accurate record and were signed by the Chairman.

3 Questions from the Public

There were no questions from the public.

4 Future Libraries Strategy – Petitions Update

Members received and noted report (**PSEG/03/19**) from Peter Randall Senior Democratic Services Officer regarding petitions received by Essex County Council that relate to the Future Libraries strategy.

Members sought clarification regarding whether petitions are still be accepted now that the consultation had closed. Councillor Barker advised that they were being accepted and acknowledged and further advised that a press release had been made in this regard.

Members raised some further issues and were advised by Councillor Barker that most of these would be addressed during the presentation in the following agenda item.

The Committee were advised that petitions relating to Brightlingsea and Wivenhoe libraries were still open and consequently had not yet been submitted.

5 Essex Libraries Update

The Committee received a PowerPoint presentation and update from Councillor Susan Barker Cabinet Member for Customer and Corporate Alex Garnett Head of Customer Communities Optimisation and Liz Sutton, Senior Communication and Engagement Specialist.

The presentation included the following:

- A recap on why a new strategy is needed and what is being proposed
- The draft strategy journey timeline from 2016
- How people were informed
- The current situation – consultation analysis from 21- February until late April 2019
- Response to the consultation – 21,528 responses received of which 89% were online. As at 31st March there were 241,400 active library users. The responses rate therefore equates to about 9% of users and 1.5% of the Essex population. 97% of respondents to the consultation are library users.
- Details of the responses per district and by age group
- Current outreach by ECC library services
- Next steps – 21 February to late Spring 2019 the consultation will be analysed and will go through a thorough quality assurance, to ensure the content can be effectively used. Programme then focuses on insights, conclusions, actions and mitigations
- Early summer 2019 the final Strategy and key documents will be submitted for Summer Cabinet meeting

Following the presentation, members were invited to ask questions and the key areas raised included:

- Disappointment that the presentation had not been shared in advance with the Committee, which would have enabled them to prepare questions in advance – This was acknowledged by Councillor Barker

- Disappointment that the consultation was not shared with the Committee before it went live as had been stated by the Cabinet Member – Councillor Barker apologised for this but advised that this was unfortunately due to the incredibly short timeline involved
- Clarification regarding amendments to tiering where libraries are asking to be moved from tier 4 to 3 – Councillor Barker advised that any amendment to tiering would only be made if there was an error in the data that had been relied upon. She did however point out that the door is still open in this regard and that officers are continuing to work with relevant parties
- When the results of the consultation will be available to the public- it was confirmed that as stated in the presentation, the results are being analysed with the aim for the final Strategy and key documents to be submitted to Cabinet for approval in the summer
- Marketing of services by third parties in ECC owned premises- an example given was tutors offering private services within libraries for young people who had been expelled or suspended from mainstream schooling. Councillor Barker advised that she would look into this situation with officers and provide an update to the committee.
- What support would be offered to community groups /organisations who take over the running of libraries – Councillor Barker responded that each situation would be different and would depend on the individual circumstances

Councillor Aspinell advised that the Cabinet member had recently met with a library user group in his division and expressed his disappointment and concern that he had not been invited to attend the meeting as the local elected Member. Councillor Barker offered her apologies, outlining what had happened in the run up to that particular meeting.

It was confirmed that the PowerPoint presentation would be circulated to Members following the meeting.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked all those involved in the presentation and confirmed that a further update will be provided at the May Committee meeting.

6 Ringway Jacobs Update

The Committee received a verbal update from Councillor Tony Ball in his capacity as Chairman of the Ringway Jacobs Task and Finish Group.

Councillor Ball advised that a variety of topics were examined during the Group's discussions and that over 20 possible recommendations were identified. Two sub groups were formed, and he stated that an excellent contribution had been made by all those involved.

Members were advised that the final meeting of the Task and Finish Group would take place on 1st April and that the draft report will be considered by

this Committee at the meeting on 18th April. Members of the Corporate Scrutiny Committee have been invited to attend this meeting.

7 Air Quality Task and Finish Review – Final Paper

The Committee noted the final report (**PSEG/04/19**) of the Task and Finish Group on Air Quality, submitted to the cabinet member on 4th March 2019.

8 Date of Next Meeting

The Committee noted that the next activity day will be on Thursday, 18 April 2019.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 12.40 pm

Chairman