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**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, 17 May 2018**

**Present:**

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

The following officer was present in support throughout the meeting:

Robert Fox - Senior Democratic Services Officer

**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 has changed since the last meeting with the membership now being as follows:

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

2. Councillor C Weston had sent her apologies;
3. Councillor W Schmitt declared an interest in relation to item 5 Country Parks Car Park Charging; and Councillor T Ball declared an interest as the Cabinet Member Deputy for Education related to any school contract bus issues raised under item 4 the Air Quality Review Update;
4. The Chairman of the Committee thanked the previous Chairman, Councillor

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Eddie Johnson for the work he had undertaken in the previous year; and also thanked the previous Members of the Committee who have been replaced.

## **2 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 22 February 2018 were agreed as an accurate record and were signed by the Chairman.

## **3 Questions from the Public**

There were no public questions.

## **4 Update on an Air Quality Policy**

Councillor Simon Walsh, Cabinet Member for Environment and Waste was in attendance for this item, alongside Mark Ash, Director for Waste and Environment and Paul Hinsley, Acting Head of Environment Team.

In introduction Councillor Walsh with reference to the previous attendance at the committee stated an overarching picture on air quality had been presented in order to introduce the Committee to the topic. The intention this time is to look at what Essex County Council can realistically influence and to present what activity is taking place in order to take the review forward. Councillor C Pond confirmed the Committee had taken the opportunity on the last activity day to watch the BBC TV programme *Fighting For Air* which had been referred to at the previous presentation to the Committee on air quality.

Mark Ash informed the Committee the Air Quality team and Highways Essex have a significant role to play due to the majority of air pollution comes from the transport infrastructure. He stated there is an ongoing debate within the Local Government Association regarding what local authorities can change. The establishment of Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) on bus routes and minor congested routes to record particulates is one example of where action plans can be developed to reduce pollution. Paul Hinsley stated Saffron Walden has AQMAs that are positioned due to traffic and the effects of buildings. The AQMAs are positioned to enable metrics to look at the direct impact upon resident lives. The receptors to measure pollutants are placed within defined distances, heights and levels; in Harlow, for example the receptors are positioned between 5 and 8m up lamppost columns which allows for real-time air quality monitoring.

Policies are in place that are in the gift of Essex County Council to make a difference, plus there is work which could be done in conjunction with Planning Authorities. There is also the question as to whether there could be lobbying activity with the Mayor of London's office due to air quality issues which impact upon Essex which are initiated in London. A study was undertaken by Oxford City Council which estimates 18 people die prematurely in the city each year due to air quality – therefore, there are issues the County Council can learn from other authorities.

Councillor D Kendall stated the Committee would welcome advice on what difference any review could make and, therefore, data on air quality across Essex should be provided before the review commences. He also stated a map of electric charging points for vehicles would be advantageous. In response Mark Ash confirmed that air quality is a statutory responsibility of districts who report data to DEFRA. The County

Council does have a joined-up picture of air quality in the county as it is involved in the Air Quality Commission which includes all the districts of Essex with ECC involved due to many of the actions being highways related. With regard to electric charging points these have been upgraded at Park and Ride sites in the county and they are being promoted at work places. Work is also being undertaken with Highways Essex for on-street charging points with suppliers being sought for charging infrastructure as a trial.

Councillor T Cutmore informed the Committee that there are two AQMAs in Rochford district both of which are now within World Health Organisation criteria. He emphasised the public relations work that needs to be done but this needs to be balanced by vehicles being the largest pollutant despite public knowledge of air quality issues. Highways routes and infrastructure have an influence on pollution and it is the due responsibility of the County Council to find the best solutions for highways routes and traffic signal sequencing; as well as on planning issues to influence districts. He questioned whether any research is ongoing on using hydrogen as an energy source? In response the Cabinet Member confirmed that there are hydrogen energy research trials currently. With regard to influencing the public the Cabinet Member stated Park and Ride services are being looked at using a modern bus fleet which is much less polluting. He stated he would also wish to understand whether the Highways team new policies can be adapted throughout the organisation. Paul Hinsley stated he would confirm when bus fleet operators are upgrading to newer less polluting vehicles as this would be a good public relations exercise. Councillor Cutmore also referred to airport expansion as a recent study in Rochford showed increased pollution in an area in close proximity to the Southend Airport runway. In response Paul Hinsley stated that pollutants from aircraft are now relatively low due to recent improved technology.

Councillor B Aspinell questioned enforcement on air quality and whether ECC is able to impose penalties on any of its contractors, for example school buses and Ringway Jacobs's vehicles if they are found to be pollutants; and whether emissions levels are built into contracts? In response the Cabinet Member stated Highways Essex is looking at making changes to emissions; and stated the ongoing Air Quality review could look at whether social value be included in future contracts in relation to the environment. Councillor Aspinell also raised an issue with pollutants from Shenfield Station which is built above ground level.

Councillor C Pond in relation to Cabinet Member and officer decisions mentioned Equality Assessments (EQiA) and suggested environmental impacts be given similar weight. He also commented on the great benefits arising from the planting of trees and particularly street trees for which the county is responsible. Relative to this Councillor Pond requested to see the policy on the planting and replacement of street trees. He also raised idling vehicles and stated Epping Forest District Council has taken enforcement powers to curtail unnecessary vehicle idling; and that this may be something the North Essex and South Essex Parking Partnerships could enforce in future. With regard to bus idling he suggested the Bus Strategy Board could provide a clear message on this.

Councillor W Schmitt stated she introduced a byelaw ten years ago in the Braintree district with regard to idling vehicles. She agreed that a map of all charging points

would be beneficial to the review as well as data on how this compares with similar counties. She informed the Committee about an article in the *New Scientist* magazine on trees and the benefits related to air quality. It was agreed this be circulated to the Committee.

Councillor S Hillier asked what happened with ECC contracted buses provided by companies who cannot retro-fit systems to reduce pollution to the required standards; and whether there is anything ECC can do to encourage these operators to do so? In response Mark Ash stated cleaner buses and operators upgrading is something that needs to be considered and reflected in procurement processes. Councillor Hillier also referred to the understanding around the differences in horizontal and vertical dispersal. In response Mark Ash stated he would forward a diagram showing street canyon effects on dispersal.

Councillor R Pratt questioned why it takes a year to measure air pollution rates? In response Paul Hinsley stated highly technical measurements are being taken and are then ratified independently, and that this, unfortunately does take a year. However, there are indications on the level of pollutants from the data taken on the day. Councillor Pratt also queried the cost of rapid chargers. Paul Hinsley stated he would provide a breakdown on rapid chargers for the Committee.

The Cabinet Member brought to the attention of the Committee the Essex Air website [www.essexair.org.uk](http://www.essexair.org.uk) which gives the public access to air quality monitoring data gathered within the county.

The Chairman of the Committee thanked the Cabinet Member, Mark Ash and Paul Hinsley for the presentation and taking the Committee questions. He stated that a date for the scoping meeting for the review will be circulated to them shortly.

## **5 Country Parks Car Park Charging**

Councillor Walsh remained in attendance for this item.

Councillor Walsh informed the Committee that the consultation exercise had elicited 225 responses. As a result of the consultation a two-hour car park charge banding will be put in place At Thorndon Park, South Weald and Cudmore Grove Country Parks as responses indicated this is a regular time-frame for a single visit. The Cabinet Member Action will be signed-off by 11 June 2018 and a summary note will be provided to Members of the Committee.

Following a question from Councillor D Kendall, Cllr Walsh stated he would make provision for an update to the Committee on County Park investment in the autumn as well an item on the season-ticket regime.

In relation to the question raised at a previous meeting by Councillor C Pond regarding Hainault Forest Country Park, Councillor Walsh stated the County Council has an agreement with the Woodland Trust to provide £84,000 per year of funding and is in discussions to see if the County Council is getting value for money for this funding.

**6 The Localism and Subsidiarity Task and Finish Group**

Councillor C Pond, as Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, presented the interim report to the Committee. Councillor Pond explained the reason the report was being presented as partial was due to a delay on receiving information from Essex Highways indicating the nature of what might be devolved and how much funding would be transferred with that. Notwithstanding that Councillor Pond commended the report with recommendations and actions to the Committee. Councillor Pond referred the Committee to the recommendation regarding a countywide Workshop and that this, and any subsequent Task and Finish Group meeting following may give rise to further recommendations and actions.

Councillor T Cutmore stated with regard to the recommendation related to Maldon District Council that Rochford District Council has established a Local Authority Traded Company to undertake grounds maintenance and this has made a profit of £15,000 which all goes back into the public purse.

Councillor D Kendall, in respect to funding, stated there is a balance between theory and reality with funding key to the opportunities identified by the Task and Finish Group. He stated that public liability insurance may also be restrictive for parish councils.

Councillor S Hillier commented on the engagement with other Local Authorities and queried why some did not engage in responses. He stated further work should be done to elicit responses from those who have not now that the local elections have taken place. Councillor Kendall confirmed he was aware that Brentwood Borough Council is preparing a response. Councillor Hillier also stated the Task and Finish Group need to be cognisant of those districts which are either not parished or only partly so, and the issues in terms of devolution which might affect these localities.

Councillor T Ball referred the Committee to the commitment given by the Leader of the Council at the Full Council meeting held on 15 May that £1million is being set aside for devolved works building upon the work of the Task and Finish Group.

The Chairman of the Committee stated it would be beneficial to forward the report and recommendations, in particular to Councillor Kevin Bentley, as early in his tenure as portfolio holder responsible for Highways as possible. He also confirmed to the Committee that a District Council leaders meeting is being held on 5 June where devolution is likely to be high on the agenda.

Councillor B Massey congratulated the Task and Finish Group on the comprehensive and erudite report. Further he proposed that the Committee approve the interim report and recommendations and file these with the relevant Cabinet Members, notwithstanding that there might be further recommendations which follow the agreed Workshop. This proposal was seconded by Councillor C Pond; and subsequently agreed unanimously by the Committee.

**7 Call-In: FP/136/04/18 Proposed 18-Month Experimental Order: Prohibition Of Right-Turn – Noak Hill/Wash Road (West), Basildon**

The Committee noted report PSEG/12/18 regarding the call-in of decision FP/136/04/18 Proposed 18-Month Experimental Order: Prohibition of Right-Turn:

Noak Hill/Wash Road (West), Basildon and noted the call-in had been withdrawn and no further action by the Committee was required.

Councillor C Pond raised the Call-in of Decision FP/120/04/18: Casualty Reduction Schemes 2018/2019 and stated this was withdrawn prior to any informal meeting with the caveat that discussions would take place between the Cabinet Member and the three local Members who have divisions effected by the safety measures on the A1168 in due course.

**8 Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2017-18**

The Committee work programme, as presented, was noted. The scrutiny officer confirmed that the review of grass verges should be on the work programme but had been erroneously not included.

The Chairman of the Committee stated there would be some work looking at the Ringway Jacobs contract in the coming months, including possible site visits.

The next committee activity day would be to consider and timetable the work programme for the next twelve months.

**9 Date of Next Meeting**

The Committee noted that the next activity day will be on Thursday, 21 June 2018 commencing at 10.30 a.m. with a Task and Finish Group meeting in the afternoon following the work programming exercise.

There being no urgent business the meeting closed at 11.50 am.

**Chairman**