
Minutes of the meeting of the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee, that was held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Chelmsford on Thursday, 21 April

[A YouTube recording of the meeting is to be found online.](#)

Present:

Members:

Councillor A Goggin	Chairman
Councillor D Blackwell	Vice-Chairman
Councillor P Honeywood	
Councillor D Land	
Councillor R Moore	
Councillor J Newport	
Councillor L Shaw	Vice-Chairman
Councillor M Skeels	
Councillor M Steel	
Councillor M Vance	

ECC Officers:

Louise Fitton	Head of Essex Culture and Green Spaces
Mark Rowley	Commercial Operations Manager
Sam Kennedy	Director Environment and Climate Action
Justin Long	Senior Democratic Services Officer (clerk to the meeting)
Lisa Siggins	Democratic Services Officer
Michael Hayes	Democratic Services Assistant

Councillor G Butland, Cabinet Member for Devolution, the Arts, Heritage and Culture
Councillor M Durham, Deputy Cabinet Member for Devolution, the Arts, Heritage and Culture

Welcome and Introduction

Councillor Goggin, the Chairman of the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee, welcomed those in attendance.

1. Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

The report on Membership, Apologies and Declarations was received, and it was noted that:

1. The membership of the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee was as shown in the report, and the Chairman welcomed Councillor Newport to his first meeting as a member of the Committee.
2. Apologies had been received from Councillors Crow, Scordis and Whitbread.

3. No Declarations of interests were made.

The Chairman, Councillor Goggin, reminded members that any interests must be declared during the meeting if the need to do so arose.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

The Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 24 March 2022 were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

Further to discussion at the members' pre-meeting, it agreed that a 'matters arising' report would be included as a part of the agenda going forward.

3. Questions from the Public

It was noted that no questions had been received from the public.

4. Work Programme

The updated Work Programme was noted.

5. County Parks

Councillor Butland introduced the presentation on Country Parks, which can be found [here](#).

Following the presentation, members were invited to ask questions and provide comment.

Key points raised during this discussion included:

Work was underway with partners to define how the vision and targets outlined in the presentation would be measured and reported, as well as the links to countywide climate, natural environment, and economic growth targets.

An update was provided on Hadleigh Country Park and work to reopen mountain bike trails.

Educational visits and events at the country parks had taken a 'step back' during the pandemic, but it was the aspiration to reintroduce them (including self-led nature trails) with an initial focus on Danbury Country Park and Thorndon Country Park.

Members suggested more events and initiatives such as concerts and plays could be organised to encourage visitors to country parks.

In response, it was noted that there was a delicate balance between supporting the commercial operations of country parks and protecting their character whilst some previous attempts to stage events had not been commercially successful. However,

it was reported that an extensive programme of activities was taking place including as a part of the [2022 Summer of Culture](#).

A Local Nature Partnership had been setup to develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy; details on this partnership and the emerging strategy would be shared with the Committee.

A key aspect of the strategy would be developing green infrastructure with ECC working in partnership with local landowners to achieve the target to create wildlife areas to cover 30% of Essex.

Officers outlined the tangible benefits of 'Green Flags' as a way to define good management and provide assurance to potential visitors, and their comparability to 'Blue Flags'.

A consistent maintenance and investment programme was needed to update visitor amenities such as pathways, car parks and toilets at the country parks.

Officers outlined that if they had significant extra investment then improving access to country parks (such as a bus service to every park) would be a priority.

6. Date of Next Meeting

The committee noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Committee would take place on Thursday 19 May, 10:30am at County Hall.

7. Urgent Business

No items were raised.

Chairman