



Essex County Council

Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee

10:30	Thursday, 22 July 2021	Council Chamber County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH
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For information about the meeting please ask for:

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Essex County Council and Committees Information

All Council and Committee Meetings are held in public unless the business is exempt in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972.

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4 Questions from the Public

A period of up to 15 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions or make representations on any item on the agenda for this meeting. No statement or question shall be longer than three minutes and speakers will be timed.

Please note that members of the public wishing to ask a question must email democratic.services@essex.gov.uk by noon on the day before the meeting (21 July) and that questions must relate to an item on the agenda for the meeting.

5 Climate Change

Members to receive a verbal update and presentation from Sam Kennedy, Director, Environment and Climate Change Action.

6 Work Programme

Members to receive an update on the current committee work programme.

10 - 13

7 Date of Next Meeting

To note that the next meeting of the Committee will take place on Thursday 23 September 2021, in County Hall.

8 Urgent Business

To consider any matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered in public by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

Exempt Items

(During consideration of these items the meeting is not likely to be open to the press and public)

The following items of business have not been published on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. Members are asked to consider whether or not the press and public should be excluded during the consideration of these items. If so it will be necessary for the meeting to pass a formal resolution:

That the press and public are excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the remaining items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, the specific paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A engaged being set out in the report or appendix relating to that item of business.

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Urgent Exempt Business

To consider in private any other matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

Agenda item 1

Committee: Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Enquiries to: Justin Long, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

Recommendations:

To note

1. Membership as shown below
2. Apologies and substitutions
3. Declarations of interest to be made by Members in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct

Membership

(Quorum: 5)

Councillor A Goggin	Chairman
Councillor D Blackwell	
Councillor C Cannell	
Councillor S Crow	
Councillor P Honeywood	
Councillor D Land	
Councillor R Moore	
Councillor L Scordis	
Councillor L Shaw	
Councillor M Skeels	
Councillor M Steel	
Councillor M Stephenson	
Councillor M Vance	
Councillor H Whitbread	

Minutes of the meeting of the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee held on the 25 February 2021.

Present from the Committee:

Councillor I Grundy (Chairman)	Councillor S Lissimore
Councillor B Massey	Councillor C Pond
Councillor R Moore	Councillor R Pratt
Councillor A Erskine	Councillor C Weston
Councillor I Henderson	Councillor S Hillier
Councillor P Honeywood	

AGENDA

1. Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

There were no changes to the membership of the committee since the last meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr W Schmitt, Cllr D Kendall, and Cllr A Wood.

Cllr A Turrell substituted for Cllr Kendall.

Cllr C Pond declared an interest as an honorary fellow of the chartered institute of librarians.

2. Minutes

Members approved as a correct record Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2021.

3. Questions from the Public

There were no questions from the public

4. Essex Libraries Update

The panel for this item was:

- Councillor Susan Barker, Cabinet Member for Customer, Communities Culture and Corporate
- Juliet Pirez, Head of Libraries
- Elizabeth Sippings, Citizen Services Manager

- Carolyn Peters, Citizen Services Manager.

Members received a presentation outlining how the libraries service had adapted to the pandemic, the implementation of the current future libraries strategy, an update on progress with regards to the new library management system and ECC's national consortium membership. The full presentation can be found [here](#).

Following the presentation, members were invited to ask questions and provide comment. Key points raised included:

- Refurbishment of libraries – currently there is only one active refurbishment, in Shenfield, though active plans are in the pipeline for Harlow and other possible sites for redevelopment include Loughton. Members were assured that the committee will be notified as soon as new sites are identified. Refurbishment decisions are taken on a case by case basis, but business cases need to be proposed for each site with an idea of how it will improve prospects for the location.
- Staffing – members received assurances that all staff will be returning to the same positions as before. In many cases they will enable them to carry out new and enhanced roles when they do return. Registration skills for example. It's been great for the service and feedback from staff has been good.
- Impact on current registration staff – new training for library staff in the area of registration will not affect any current staff. It will however, open up new opportunities for current libraries staff should they choose to explore them.
- Existing Adult Community Learning spaces in Harlow – it's unsure what will happen to the existing space at this stage. It is not in a good location for ACL. If it is surplus to requirements, then it will likely be disposed of.
- Budget for new book stock - It is unclear at this stage how much of the budget will be spent on new book stock. Further information will be provided to committee once more is known.
- Harlow library redevelopment – members enquired around the public backlash toward proposals. The Cabinet Member maintained that most local residents were happy. The current space was inappropriate for current needs, so redevelopment will hopefully bring it back into greater use.
- Joining the national libraries consortium – members were promised a briefing paper outlining the key features and benefits of joining the consortium.

ACTION: Members to receive a paper outlining the key benefits and features of ECC joining the national libraries consortium.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their attendance and work in preparation for the meeting.

5. Essex Skills Strategy

The panel for this item will be:

- Tony Ball, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth
- Mark Doran, Director Sustainable Growth
- Andy Burgess, Head of Economic Development
- Sarah Read, Localities Lead
- Caroline Betts, Skills Development Manager

Members received a presentation outlining ECC efforts to promote skills and jobs growth as a response to the pandemic. The full presentation can be found [here](#).

Following the presentation, members were invited to ask questions and provide scrutiny. Key points raised included:

- Spring budget – members raised questions around what to expect from the spring budget and how this might impact ECC service delivery and implementation of the skills strategy. Members were advised that it would be difficult to speculate, but that officers expected extension of the current furlough scheme and further guidance around the timely reopening of local small/medium sized business to be likely areas of guidance and support.
- 2017 PSEG skills and jobs growth task and finish group – members revisited recommendations from a task and finish group carried out in 2017 by the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee as an example of how little headway had been made in areas of concern for a significant amount of time. Members were advised that more efforts were needed to lobby central govt. to localise more authority around the issues of joblessness and skills growth, handing accountability and autonomy to county authorities. ECC will continue to lobby for more local control and are well dialled in with DWP partners to enable kickstart programme.
- Unemployment amongst 16-24-year olds – members raised concerns around unemployment in young people and barriers to employment. Specific concerns raised included the cost of travelling to and from opportunities and the impact of cuts to careers advice at secondary school level.
- Promotion of STEM subjects in schools – members offered thoughts around how best to promote the uptake of core stem subjects in schools. Members were advised that this is an active area of work for the education and skills portfolio.
- Engagement with further education providers – members stressed the importance of engaging better with FE providers to secure greater and more responsive opportunities in the future. Members were advised that the challenge is articulating both the opportunity and challenge to providers. There is lots of demand for courses at these FE colleges, but often they are not promoting the courses that more directly are likely to lead to gainful employment.
- Jobs in the public sector - Each district and borough have goals and programmes with regards to greening their local areas. Members raised questions around how ECC can audit these opportunities and ensure that they reach the widest number of people. Members were advised that work was being undertaken through the

Essex Housing Officer Group and Essex Planning Officer group, as well as various other groups.

- Brexit – members raised questions around opportunities for more port health authority officers – members were advised that the cabinet member was in close communication with both Harwich and Felixstowe ports and would keep the committee updated as this area of work moved forward.

The Chairman thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their attendance and their work in preparation for the committee.

6. Work Programme

Members noted the current work programme.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next committee activity day was scheduled for the 25 March 2021. Members were advised that due to the start of the pre-election period it is unlikely that it will go ahead.

8. Urgent Business

None received

9. Urgent exempt Business

None received

The meeting was formally closed at 12.38.

Work Programme

Reference Number: PSEG/05/21

Report title: Work Programme		AGENDA ITEM 6
Report to: Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee		
Report author: Justin Long, Senior Democratic Services Officer		
Date: 22 July 2021	For: Discussion and identifying any follow-up scrutiny actions	
Enquiries to: Justin Long, Senior Democratic Services Officer at justin.long@essex.gov.uk.		
County Divisions affected: Not applicable		

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The work programme is a standard agenda item. The work programme for the Committee is being developed and the current position is outlined below.

2. Action required

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to consider this report and issues under consideration in the Appendix and any further development or amendments.

3. Background

3.1 Developing a work programme

The new membership of the Committee was confirmed at Full Council on 25 May 2021. Since then, the Committee has organised three induction sessions which have included discussions with relevant portfolio holders about their priorities in the coming months (issues discussed are listed in the **Appendix**).

It is anticipated that those priorities and other issues raised during the recent discussions will be further developed into an initial work programme by the Chairman and Vice Chairmen over the coming weeks. The outcomes of this will be reported to the Committee at its 23 September 2021 meeting.

4. Update and Next Steps

See Appendix.

5. **Appendix** – Progress on work programme and a list of issues discussed recently with Cabinet Members.

Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Background

The remit of the Committee is defined in the Constitution (Article 9.5.3). It is responsible for the scrutiny of:

- The economy of Essex
- Economic development and regeneration
- Employment related Skills and apprenticeships
- Strategic Highways and transportation
- Heritage, Culture and the Arts
- Tourism
- Country Parks and other green assets
- Library services
- Broadband and public communications infrastructure
- Planning
- Environmental services
- Community Safety (not Domestic Violence or Youth Offending Team)
- Emergency Planning
- Waste and recycling
- Energy and emissions reduction
- Trading standards
- Housing
- Gypsies and travellers

Work so far

Since Full Council on 25 May 2021, the Committee has organised three informal induction sessions. These have included discussions with the relevant Cabinet Members on their portfolio and key responsibilities, key challenges being faced, and suggestions for where scrutiny can help. At the time of publication, one of these sessions was still to take place.

Thursday 24 June 2021:

General induction including work planning principles

Tuesday 6 July 2021:

Cllr Lee Scott (Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport)
Cllr Lesley Wagland (Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning)
Cllr Graham Butland (Devolution, Art, Heritage and Culture)

Wednesday 21 July 2021:

Cllr Malcolm Buckley (Waste Reduction and Recycling)

These sessions will inform the work programme going forward. A summary of the issues and emerging priorities discussed so far is included below.

<u>Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport</u>	<u>Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning</u>	<u>Devolution, Art, Heritage and Culture</u>	<u>Waste Reduction and Recycling</u>
Local Highway Panels (funding, effectiveness, remit)	Request for further presentation given the scope of the portfolio to include 'Anchor Institutions' and plans for 'Investment Fund for Growth'	Attracting inward investment (and the role of arts and heritage in this)	TBC following 21 July session
Home-to-School Transport <i>suggest referral to the Scrutiny Board as this crosses the remit of PSCs</i>		Maintenance and expansion of heritage sites	
E-Scooters <i>this is a national trial so any work should be in that context</i>		Trading Standards (current performance and further improvements)	

Members-led pothole scheme (funding, continuation, extension of the scheme)		Sustainability of country parks	
Potholes (timings, reporting process, member reporting, role of parish councils)		Opportunities for further devolution <i>suggest referral to the Scrutiny Board as this crosses the remit of PSCs</i>	

There are also some additional legacy/loose-ends from before and immediately after the County Council elections which may also be considered for the work programme. These include Waste and Recycling (future service delivery), Bus Back Better proposals, Minerals Local Plan, Active Travel and Housing Strategies.

Next Steps

It is proposed that Members note the work undertaken to this point and the emerging priorities. These priorities and other issues raised during the recent discussions will be further developed into an initial work programme by the Chairman and Vice Chairmen over the coming weeks. The outcomes of this will be presented to the Committee for consideration at its 23 September 2021 meeting.