
Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Countywide Traveller Unit Joint Committee, held as an online video conference on Friday, 12 June 2020

Present:

Cllr Susan Barker	Essex County Council
Cllr Colin Day	Uttlesford District Council
Cllr Mark Durham	Maldon District Council
Cllr Rob Gledhill	Thurrock Council
Cllr Paul Honeywood	Tendring District Council
Cllr Godfrey Isaacs	Castle Point District Council
Cllr Mike Lilley	Colchester Borough Council
Cllr Jannetta Sosin	Chelmsford City Council
Cllr Mike Webb	Rochford District Council
Moira Bruin	Essex Fire & Rescue Service
Cl Terry Balding	Essex Police

Also present:

Cllr Mike Steptoe	Essex County Council
Steve Andrews	Essex County Council
Adrian Coggins	Essex County Council
Tim Clarke	Tendring District Council
Andrea MacAlister	Essex Fire & Rescue Service
Jane Gardner	Office of the Police Fire & Crime Commissioner
Gemma Bint	Essex County Council
Matthew Waldie	Essex County Council

- 1 Welcome and election of the Chairman**

The Committee Clerk welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited nominations for Chairman. Cllr Barker was proposed and seconded, and, there being no other nominations, was voted unanimously as Chairman.
- 2 Election of Vice Chairman**

The Chairman proposed Cllr Godfrey Isaacs and this was seconded. There were no other nominations and members voted unanimously in favour of Cllr Isaacs as Vice Chairman.
- 3 Apologies**

Apologies had been received from Cllr Wendy Schmitt (Braintree DC).
- 4 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.
- 5 Minutes**

The Committee minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2019 were approved as a correct record.

6 Finance Update

The Members noted the finance report circulated with the agenda.

1. **2019/20 outturn position.** Members noted a £64,748 surplus on net expenditure to 31 March 2020. This represented a positive net variance of £50,822, mostly due again to an underspend on legal costs under supplies and services, as the low number of unauthorised encampments had led to fewer cases going to court
2. **Budget for 2020/2021 and future years.** The actual surplus was almost £40,000 over the budgeted figure, but the budgeted surplus for 2020/21 was £22, showing deficit figures in subsequent years, based on a 1% annual membership increase.
3. **Membership fees.** These had been agreed for 2020/2021. It was suggested that the 2021/2022 rate should be considered by the Committee at a later date.
4. **Balance Sheet – Reserves.** It was noted that the present level of reserves, at around £140,000, had reached a satisfactory level for the ongoing operation of the Unit.

It was proposed, seconded and resolved that the Committee receive and note these figures, but that they should determine the level of membership fees at the next committee meeting, when they had a clearer picture of the overall situation.

7 Membership status

Mr Andrews reported no change in the membership of the Joint Committee, with all but three authorities (Epping Forest, Harlow and Southend) signed up.

An update was requested on the situation regarding the Injunction that had been sought by Thurrock (which could affect the perceived need for the work of ECTU). A temporary injunction had been obtained, which had been used effectively on several occasions, and a full injunction should be forthcoming, although the current Covid-19 situation was delaying matters.

It was noted that Harlow's injunction was about to expire, so the Leader and Mr Coggins would shortly be meeting with them, to encourage them to join ECTU.

8 High level risk assessment

Mr Andrews confirmed that there had been no changes to the risk assessment.

9 Operations performance update - key issues

The Committee received a verbal update from Mr Andrews.

There has been minimal works carried out in terms of supporting health issues and supporting Children into education and Fire Safety. This is primarily because these activities would normally require a face to face visits in the enclosed environment of the caravans, hence with the current lock down, we have been unable to provide these support services. We are still supporting some known families/issues over the phone where possible, and taking some new cases on the same basis, and are sending out some general messages via WhatsApp, but this has limited reach/is not comprehensive.

Unauthorised Encampments. After the normally quiet winter period, the year started very slowly, with only a couple of encampments throughout March and April. Numbers began to pick up in May and there have now been about 15 reported.

The response of the Unit and the Police under the present conditions has been modified by advice issued by central government; Essex will monitor this and act appropriately, should this advice change. Mr Coggins has liaised with Essex Police and they have issued a joint statement regarding the approach being taken. This had already been circulated to the districts, but Mr Coggins agreed to send it out again, and invited Members to send him the details of any particular recipients they thought would benefit from it.

CI Balding confirmed that COVID-19 did feature in the Police's decision-making process, but they would issue Section 61 orders where appropriate. He added that they had already held a training day and intended to hold another.

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Date of next meeting

To be confirmed after the meeting.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 2:35 pm

Chairman