

Minutes of a meeting of Essex County Council held at County Hall, Chelmsford on 9 February 2016

Present

Chairman: Councillor N Hume

Vice-Chairman: Councillor J F Aldridge

Councillors:

J Abbott	K Gibbs	M Mackrory
B Aspinell	A Goggin	R A Madden
S Barker	R J Gooding	M Maddocks
R L Bass	I Grundy	M McEwen
A Bayley	C Guglielmi	V Metcalfe
K Bentley	D Harris	A Naylor
K Bobbin	A M Hedley	Lady Newton
R G Boyce	I Henderson	M J Page
A Brown	T M A Higgins	C Pond
M Buckley	R Hirst	J M Reeves
S Canning	P Honeywood	S Robinson
J Chandler	R C Howard	C Seagers
P Channer	J Huntman	K Smith
K Clempner	A Jackson	J Spence
T Cutmore	E C Johnson	A Turrell
M Danvers	J G Jowers	K Twitchen
J Deakin	D J Kendall	S Walsh
M Ellis	J Knapman	R G Walters
A Erskine	N Le Gresley	J Whitehouse
D Finch	S Lissimore	A Wood
M D Fisher	J Lodge	J A Young
R Gadsby	D Louis	

Prior to the meeting:**Prayers**

The meeting was preceded by prayers led by The Reverend Canon Carol Smith, Vicar of Moulsham St John's & Moulsham St Luke's, Chelmsford; Chaplain to Chairman of the Council & Workplace Chaplain, Essex County Hall.

Public Questions

The Chairman welcomed two members of the public who had registered to speak.

- a) Mr Mick Stubbings, a resident of Loughton

‘We, the residents local to Alderton School, have signed this petition because, as you can see from the letters supplied, the problems we are having to endure are not decreasing - they are instead escalating.

Alderton Hall Lane, Poundfields, Greenfields and the Lindens all get gridlocked when the parents are dropping off/collecting their children. The residents are unable to make appointments that require them to use their cars. The bus service that we are fortunate enough to have is unable to keep to its timetable, as buses' progress is restricted and even comes to a standstill. The parents have no consideration for the residents and when approached can get extremely abusive.

North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) representatives have already admitted that they are unable to police the parking restrictions because of lack of staff. Therefore the yellow/zig zag lines that exist are useless so what good would come of more of them?

If the parents adhered to the rules of the road and did not park in the restricted areas, they would only move along until there are no restrictions, causing the same problems to different residents, who'd be even more aggrieved than us. The more likely result would be that they'd totally ignore the parking restrictions, knowing that the likelihood of any come back is very slim.

The only way forward is to provide parking/drop off/pick up within the school grounds, for the teachers/workers and parents using their cars. You have been provided with the solution to this problem. There is ample room for this as you will see in the photos sent with the petition, and there is already a hard standing within the grounds with access to it by way of a dropped kerb and drive crossing the grass verge at the bottom of Alderton Hall Lane, which would allow traffic to enter and exit the school grounds.

My question to the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning therefore is:

Will you please spend the council tax payer's money in a more effective way, by extending the existing hard standing within the school grounds, and then insist the parents use that area to drop their children off and pick them up?’

With approval of the Chairman Mr Stubbings presented a petition that was then passed by the Chairman to Councillor Gooding, the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning. The Chairman then called upon the Cabinet Member to respond.

Councillor Gooding thanked Mr Stubbings for his question. He stated that:

This seemed to be a growing problem right across Essex and was not unique to Alderton School. The school has been extended within recent years and there have been changes to the access and considerable time has been spent developing travel plans. However, each school is unique and it would be useful if the governors of the school were to meet with local residents to seek a resolution.

In response to the specific questions raised by Mr Stubbings the Cabinet Member replied that he did not have the power to insist where parents parked their cars on the highway. He added that the use of taxpayers money, in this instance, was for the provision of education and not for the building of car-parks. However, should the school seek a solution and be prepared to fund it from their resources, and if that required planning permission, then the Council would assist them in such an application if at all possible.

b) Ms Alex Robinson, a resident of Finchingfield

'We have submitted a petition to the Council regarding the proposed works to Finchingfield Bridge due to start in July this year. The petition asks for the Council to reassess their plans with particular regard to providing a temporary crossing for the four (or more) months of the proposed work, and to ensure that the bridge retains its current historic form as the heart of, arguably, the most picturesque village in the County.

We were led to believe from a press release in August 2015 that this was a bridge strengthening activity. Scraps of information since then have led us to believe that this is a bridge demolishing and widening activity. We can only assume that this is to ease and speed up the passage of Heavy Goods Vehicles through the village. We have made repeated requests to the Highways Department to open a dialogue with us. This has not happened.

Local feelings are now very strong. We fear a four-month closure, during harvest time, will decimate our fragile rural businesses and bring chaos to the surrounding lanes. We also fear that when the work is complete, the historic vista, that Finchingfield is so famous for, will be destroyed forever.

Therefore I speak with the voice of over 2,800 people who have signed the petition when I ask if the Council will now please consider:

Firstly, accepting that closing the bridge for four months and implementing a fifteen-mile diversion from one side of the village to the other, is an unfeasible option.

Secondly, we ask you to bring clarity to the situation and fully answer the Freedom of Information request we made back in August 2015 to publish all relevant plans with

costings which we hope will explain why this work is being done and how the local community will benefit.

And finally, we ask you to work with us, and to convene a special panel or Scrutiny Committee to review the current proposals and to fully take into account the voice and needs of the local community.'

Councillor Johnson thanked Ms Robinson for her question and for the petition that had been previously submitted. Before answering the question he explained the reason why the bridge needed to be repaired. He stated:

'The bridge has been assessed as a weak structure that is steadily deteriorating. Recent investigations have also shown that the bridge has limited foundations and unless we act, the bridge will remain vulnerable.

The Council has a responsibility to plan ahead to protect the bridge from emergency work in the future. All our early plans and investigations have been shared widely with the community and are available online.

We have listened to the concerns and feedback raised at the public meeting in November and the opinions and views that have continued to be shared with us since that time.

I am glad to say we have been meeting with specialist engineers to review the original outline plans, always stressing that any plan must respect the scenic quality of the area which we recognise is valued widely by those that live in Finchingfield and those that come to visit. We are pleased to say that we are preparing to share these plans at a public exhibition later this month.

Lastly, I would like to clear up a few myths that have grown up around the skeleton plans that were shared earlier last year. Rumours of a total bridge demolition are not true. The myth of extensive bridge widening to facilitate two-way traffic is not true. An assertion that there is an agenda to increase vehicle speeds and aid the passage of HGV traffic is also not true.

We simply have a bridge we must responsibly and respectfully make fit for the future.

I trust this goes some way to answering your questions today and I hope that you are able to attend the public exhibition later this month.'

The Chairman formally opened the meeting.

The Chairman reminded Members that the meeting would be recorded and broadcast live over the internet.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors W Archibald, D Blackwell, G Butland, T Durcan, M Hoy, M McGeorge and J W Pike.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Chairman reminded Members of the advice they had been given by the Monitoring Officer concerning arrears of Council Tax outstanding for two months or more. He also drew attention to the note prepared and circulated by the Monitoring Officer concerning declarations of interest appropriate to the budget debate.

Councillor Walsh declared a personal interest in relation to Finchingfield bridge as he was a local resident.

Councillor Barker declared an interest in relation to agenda item 7, the Draft Replacement Waste Local Plan, as she was the Cabinet Member responsible at Uttlesford District Council and responded to the consultation.

Councillor Abbott declared an interest in relation to agenda item 7, the Draft Replacement Waste Local Plan, as he had taken part in the consultation exercise as a member of Braintree District Council and Rivenhall Parish Council.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2015**Resolved:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Chairman's Announcements**The Chief Executive**

The Chairman welcomed Mr Gavin Jones to his first meeting as Chief Executive of the County Council.

Journalism Students

The Chairman welcomed Multimedia Journalism students and their Tutor from Essex University to the meeting who were present in the public gallery to observe the budget debate.

New Year's Honours

The Chairman informed Members that there had been twenty-eight residents of Essex who had received Honours from Her Majesty at the New Year. The Chairman particularly wished to congratulate Lorraine King, Civic Services Officer, on having been made a Member of the Royal Victorian Order, an award given by the Queen to people who have provided personal service to the Sovereign and the Royal Family.

ADEPT President's Special Recognition Awards 2016

The Chairman invited Councillor Hirst, Cabinet Member for Planning and the Environment, to address Council.

Councillor Hirst informed Members that the Council had been awarded, by the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT), the President's Special Recognition Award for flood resilience, in recognition of the work of the Essex Flood Partnership Board arising from the Canvey Island flooding in July 2014.

The Chairman received the award on behalf of the Council.

5. Presentation of Petitions

The Chairman received petitions:

- concerning a zebra crossing in South Benfleet, and
- for road repairs on Concord Road, Canvey Island, both presented by Councillor Howard.

The Chairman passed the petitions to the Cabinet Member for Highways Delivery.

6. The Budget Report 2016/17

The Council received the Report on the Budget 2016/17:
Appendix A - Revenue Budget 2016/17 and Capital Programme 2016/17;
Appendix B - 2016/17 Prudential Indicators, TMS and MRP Policy;
Appendix C – Pay Policy Statement;
Appendix D – Equality Impact Assessments and
Budget Book amended pages 8, 15, 57, 58 and 63.

The recommendations as set out in the Report and amended by the 'Addendum Revenue Budget 2016/17 and Capital Programme 2016/17' were moved by the Leader, Councillor Finch, and seconded by the Cabinet Member for Finance, Councillor Spence.

It was moved by Councillor Young and seconded by Councillor Henderson that the motion be amended as follows:

- '1) An additional £250,000 to pay for 'Careers Direct'; an early intervention scheme designed to offer mobile, adaptive, and targeted careers advice for pupils studying at year nine level or above (staff costs), subject to increasing the budget for Skills in the Deputy Leader, Economic Growth, Waste and Recycling portfolio by £250,000 and reducing the budget for Essex initiatives in the Leader portfolio by an equivalent amount.
- 2) An additional £1,000,000 (one off) to create the Fuel Poverty Alleviation Fund, providing targeted, needs based measures to reduce fuel poverty. The programme will aim to insulate up to 2,500 homes subject to increasing the budget for Other operating costs by £1,000,000 funded by a necessary adjustment to the earmarked revenue Innovation Fund reserve being recommended to the Council.
- 3) A one off £700,000 Capital fund to pilot a cycling innovation project, focused on a single town. This will comprise of infrastructural improvements (bike hangers, pump stations etc.) subject to increasing the capital programme in the Infrastructure and Highways Delivery Portfolio and funded by a necessary adjustment to the earmarked revenue Innovation Fund reserve being recommended to the Council.
- 4) A £50,000 targeted, three-year advertising campaign linked to proposal 3, subject to increasing the budget for Transport, Planning and the Environment by £50,000 for 2016/17 only and funded by a necessary adjustment to the earmarked revenue Innovation Fund reserve being recommended to the Council. This amendment will have an on-going impact to be added to the Medium Term Resource Strategy for action to be identified to determine a permanent funding solution.
- 5) An additional £115,000 for two dedicated cycling officers within the planning department, tasked with ensuring that applications for new developments meet certain cycling friendly requirements, subject to increasing the budget for Transport, Planning and the Environment by £115,000 and funded by a necessary adjustment to the earmarked revenue Innovation Fund reserve being recommended to the Council. This amendment will have an on-going impact to be added to the Medium Term Resource Strategy for action to be identified to determine a permanent funding solution.
- 6) An additional £3,230,000 to reverse reductions in funding for local highway panels, Capital spend, subject to increasing the capital

programme in the Infrastructure and Highways Delivery Portfolio by £3,230,000 and funded by a necessary adjustment to the Non carriageway assets capital block in the Infrastructure and Highways Delivery Portfolio capital programme of the same amount.

- 7) An Additional £100,000 to pay for a Stop Smoking Support Services (SSSS) engagement scheme targeted at pupils studying at further education level on an ongoing basis, subject to increasing the Communities and Healthy Living portfolio by £100,000 and reducing the budget for Communications in the Leader portfolio by an equivalent amount.
- 8) An Additional £100,000 to pay for an Essex-wide communications campaign (advertising, social media, website etc.) designed to draw attention to Stop Smoking Support Services (SSSS) operating throughout the County on an ongoing basis. Subject to reappportioning £100,000 from general communications 3rd party spend to this proposal within the Communications budget in the Leader portfolio.
- 9) An additional £50,000 to pay for a one-off consultation report, working with various partners to make recommendations on how to improve pay equity at ECC. Subject to increasing the HR budget in the Corporate Services portfolio by £50,000 and funded by a necessary adjustment to the earmarked revenue Innovation Fund reserve being recommended to the Council.
- 10) An additional £50,000 to pay for a one-off report evaluating current highway maintenance/repair procedures, focusing on technical innovation with a forward thinking vision. The report will particularly look at flexibility, evaluation, early intervention strategies and the potential for devolved responsibility. Subject to increasing the Asset Management Planning budget in the Infrastructure and Highways Delivery portfolio by £50,000 and funded by a necessary adjustment to the earmarked revenue Innovation Fund reserve being recommended to the Council.
- 11) An additional £25,000 to pay for a one-off report investigating the potential to devolve responsibility for street lighting and kerbside grass maintenance to district/borough councils. Subject to increasing the Asset Management Planning budget in the Infrastructure and Highways Delivery portfolio by £25,000 and funded by a necessary adjustment to the earmarked revenue Innovation Fund reserve being recommended to the Council.'

It was moved by Councillor Mackrory and seconded by Councillor Whitehouse that the motion be amended as follows:

'Supporting Essex's young people

- Increase of £500,000 in the budget provision for Youth Services (Education and Lifelong Learning portfolio) for the provision of youth

service projects, to be financed by a withdrawal from the Innovation Reserve in 2016/17 and thereafter added to the Medium Term Resources Strategy for action to be identified to determine a permanent funding solution.

- Increase of £500,000 in the budget provision for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (Children and Families portfolio), to be financed by a withdrawal from the Transformation Reserve in 2016/17 and thereafter added to the Medium Term Resources Strategy for action to be identified to determine a permanent funding solution.
- Increase of £30,000 in the budget provision for Access to Education (Education and Lifelong Learning portfolio) for a consultation regarding Post 16 transport costs to enable young people from low income families to continue in education. The increase in this policy budget is to be financed by a withdrawal from the Transformation Reserve in 2016/17.

Investing in our infrastructure and keeping Essex safe

- Increase the 2016/17 capital programme provision for Local Highways Panels (Infrastructure and Highways Delivery portfolio) by £4m. This will be allocated to individual panels, to bring their total funding up to the 2015/16 level (i.e. up to a total of £8m).
- In addition, increase the 2016/17 capital programme provision for Local Highways Panels (Infrastructure and Highways Delivery) by a further £2m to support more significant schemes proposed by the Panels.
- The additional £6m referred to above will be funded by a corresponding reduction to the capital programme provision for Highways Infrastructure (reducing the total provision from £66.258m to £60.258m in 2016/17).'

Upon being put to the meeting the amendment moved by Councillor Young and seconded by Councillor Henderson was declared to be lost.

Upon being put to the meeting the amendment moved by Councillor Mackrory and seconded by Councillor Whitehouse was declared to be lost.

In accordance with Standing Order 16.18 (Voting on budget decisions) the Motion as amended by the 'Addendum Revenue Budget 2016/17 and Capital Programme 2016/17' was put to a division by name and carried by 44 votes for, 16 against and 7 abstentions.

Those voting for the Motion were Councillors:

J F Aldridge
S Barker
R L Bass
K Bentley
R G Boyce

I Grundy
C Guglielmi
A M Hedley
R Hirst
P Honeywood

M Maddocks
M McEwen
V Metcalfe
A Naylor
Lady Newton

A Brown
M Buckley
S Canning
J Chandler
P Channer
T Cutmore
D Finch
R Gadsby
A Goggin
R J Gooding

R C Howard
N Hume
A J Jackson
E C Johnson
J G Jowers
J Knapman
S Lissimore
J Lodge
D Louis
R A Madden

M J Page
C Pond
J M Reeves
C Seagers
J Spence
K Twitchen
S Walsh
R G Walters
A Wood

Those voting against the Motion were Councillors:

B Aspinell
K Bobbin
K Clempner
M Danvers
J Deakin
M D Fisher

D Harris
I Henderson
T M A Higgins
D J Kendall
M Mackrory

S Robinson
K Smith
A Turrell
J Whitehouse
J A Young

Those abstaining were Councillors:

J Abbott
A Bayley
M Ellis

A Erskine
K Gibbs

J Huntman
N Le Gresley

Resolved:

Revenue and Capital Budget:

1. The net revenue budget requirement to be set at **£861.4m** for 2016/17 – Appendix A (page 15)
2. The net cost of services to be set at **£934.8m** for 2016/17 – Appendix A (page 15) and that in consequence the budget book appended to the report be adopted and amended as set out in paragraphs 3.4- 3.7 inclusive.
3. The total council tax requirement be set at **£570.2m** for 2016/17 – Appendix A (page 15).
4. That council tax be increased by 1.99% together with the levy of a 2% 'social care precept'. Therefore the Essex County Council element of the council tax for charge for a Band D property in 2016/17 will be **£1,130.13**. A full list of bands is as follows:

Council Tax Band	2015/16 £	2016/17 £
Band A	724.50	753.42
Band B	845.25	878.99
Band C	966.00	1,004.56
Band D	1,086.75	1,130.13
Band E	1,328.25	1,381.27
Band F	1,569.75	1,632.41
Band G	1,811.25	1,883.55
Band H	2,173.50	2,260.26

5. That Council approve the council tax for each category of dwelling and the precepts on each of the council tax billing authorities for 2016/17, together with the final tax base, as set out in the table below.

Billing Authority	2016-17 Final Tax Base Band D Equivalent	2016-17 Gross precept £000
Basildon	58,577	66,200
Braintree	50,667	57,260
Brentwood	31,790	35,927
Castle Point	29,722	33,590
Chelmsford	63,234	71,463
Colchester	60,496	68,368
Epping Forest	52,258	59,058
Harlow	24,420	27,598
Maldon	23,456	26,508
Rochford	30,566	34,544
Tendring	44,908	50,752
Uttlesford	34,451	38,934
Total for ECC	504,545	570,201

6. That Council agree to the proposed total schools budget of **£539.2m** for 2016/17 as set out on Appendix A (page 12), which will be funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant.
7. That the underlying balance on the General Balance be set at **£60.4m** as at 1 April 2016 after the proposed drawdown of **£19.4m** as prescribed in Appendix A (page 63).
8. That the capital payments guideline be set at **£251.9m** for 2016/17.

9. That for the purposes of section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 the Council formally determines that the increase in council tax is not such as to trigger a referendum.

Prudential Indicators, Treasury Management Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision for Debt Repayment Policy:

10. That 2016/17 - 2018/19 Prudential Indicators and limits, together with updated limits for 2016/17 be as set out in Appendix B.
11. That Treasury Management Strategy for 2016/17 be as set out in Appendix B.
12. That the policy for making a prudent level of revenue provision for the repayment of debt (the Minimum Revenue Provision policy be as set out in Appendix B.

Pay Policy Statement:

13. That The Pay Policy Statement for 2016/17 be as set out in Appendix C.

7. The Draft Replacement Waste Local Plan

Councillor Hirst, the Cabinet Member for Planning and the Environment, presented a report on the Essex and Southend-on-Sea Waste Local Plan – Proposed Submission and the Amendment that had been circulated to Members.

Councillor Abbott raised two matters that he believed required correction and it was agreed by Councillor Hirst that officers should seek clarification for possible amendment after the meeting.

Subject to any such subsequent amendments of fact the recommendations were moved by Councillor Hirst and seconded by Councillor Twitchen and it was

Resolved:

1. That Council agree to the publication, for pre-submission consultation, of the Replacement Waste Local Plan under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 in the form submitted to it (Appendix 1); and
2. That Council agree the Replacement Waste Local Plan be approved for submission to the Secretary of State for independent examination under section 20 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

8. Council Issues

Councillor Finch, the Leader of the Council, presented the report of matters reserved to Council.

Councillor Finch announced the following changes to the Cabinet:

- Councillor Hirst was to stand down from his role on Cabinet,
- Councillor Brown was to be the Cabinet Member for Corporate, Communities and Customers,
- Councillor Butland was to be the Cabinet Member for Health,
- Councillor Johnson was to be the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport Delivery.

The Leader also advised Council that Councillor Barker was appointed to the Essex Fire Authority to replace Councillor Butland.

Resolved:

Appointment of Director of Adult Social Services

That the Constitution be amended with effect from 1 April 2016 so that the relevant part of paragraph 4.4 which reads:

Executive Director for People Commissioning	Director of Children's Services appointed under Section 18 of the Children Act 2004 and Director of Adult Social Services appointed under section 6 of the Local Authorities Social Services Act 1970.
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Is replaced with the following text:

Executive Director for People Commissioning	Director of Children's Services appointed under Section 18 of the Children Act 2004.
Director for Adult Operations	Director of Adult Social Services appointed under section 6 of the Local Authorities Social Services Act 1970.

Appointment of Returning Officer

That Gavin Jones, Chief Executive, be appointed as Essex County Council's Returning Officer with effect from 1 April 2016.

Minor Update to Constitution: Local Government (Contracts) Act 1997

That a new paragraph 15.3.2(ix) be inserted into the Constitution (delegations to the Executive Director for Corporate and Customer Services):

- (ix) To authorise the making and issue of any formal documents and to authenticate documents on behalf of the Council.'

9. Cabinet Issues

Councillor Finch, the Leader of the Council, presented a report concerning six matters considered by Cabinet since the last Council meeting.

The report of Cabinet Issues was received and adopted.

10. Adjournment

With the agreement of Council the Chairman adjourned the meeting for luncheon at 13:00pm.

The meeting reconvened at 13:45pm.

11. Written questions to the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Members

The published answers to the 16 written questions submitted in accordance with Standing Order 16.12.1 were noted.

The following supplementary questions were asked as a result of having received a written reply:

- (1) Councillor Pond asked Councillor Bentley, the Cabinet Member for Economic Growth, Waste and Recycling, if the search for a market for the Refuse Derived Fuel would continue and, if so, would the Lee Valley Greenhouse Industry be considered as a suitable outlet?

The Cabinet Member replied that the Council was going through a commissioning phase of the Tovi Eco Park. The RDF that was being produced was being disposed of under the terms of a short-term contract but the Council was seeking to enter into a long-term contract and would encourage any company to apply to be considered for the contract. If that would suit the Lee Valley Greenhouse Industry he was sure they would come forward.

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- (2) Councillor Kendall asked Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways Delivery, if he could have an answer to the questions he had asked, if not now as a response to his supplementary question, then later in writing.

The Cabinet Member replied that there was no one authority responsible for the maintaining and repairing of grass verges. The amount spent by the County for the current year was £2.7million and the budget for the forthcoming year has remained the same. However, local arrangements may be made and so the situation may vary from place to place as may the total spend.

- (3) Councillor Kendall asked Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways Delivery, when Members would be given the timetable for the introduction of LED lighting.

The Cabinet Member replied that all Members would be given the schedule for the introduction of LED lighting as soon as it became available but as soon as he knew when Brentwood would be having its LEDs he would inform Councillor Kendall.

- (4) Councillor Danvers asked Councillor Finch, the Leader of the Council, if he would keep a watching brief on the process of the public consultation on junction 7A.

The Leader stated that he would be happy to do so.

- (5) Councillor Le Gresley asked Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways Delivery, if he could provide the 'fault level' as a percentage specifically for Wickford Division and how many lights had been out of action for more than seven days.

The Cabinet Member replied that problems with the repair of lights, particularly those of over seven days were usually due to problems with the electricity supply. The Council's fault levels were 2% in Essex overall but he would keep an eye on the percentages as they varied throughout the year. He added that the figures were published quarterly.

- (6) Councillor Smith asked Councillor Finch, the Leader of the Council, if he could provide an approximate figure of how much the funding from the Government had saved the people of Essex.

The Leader replied that he did not have that figure to hand but he would provide it to Councillor Smith after the meeting.

- (8) Councillor Harris asked Councillor Gooding, the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, what measures had been taken to recruit a school crossing patrol officer.

The Cabinet Member replied that there did appear to be a recruitment problem and the Council needed to solicit some local support in order for the problem to be resolved.

- (9) Councillor Whitehouse asked Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways Delivery, if he could quantify what proportion of all broken street lights can be 'repaired within the budget available'?

The Cabinet Member replied that he did not have that figure to hand but he did understand that there may be local variations. He would be pleased to discuss specific figures with Councillor Whitehouse after the meeting.

Councillor Whitehouse, with regard to question (10), declared an interest as a Member of Epping Town Council and Epping Forest District Council and a resident of St John's Road, Epping.

- (10) Councillor Whitehouse asked Councillor Finch, the Leader of the Council if he agreed the importance of following up the meeting of the 29 January which was called to conclude the matter.

The Leader replied that this particular site was progressing well and he believed that a deal, satisfactory to both parties, was close.

- (11) Councillor Bayley asked Councillor Finch, the Leader of the Council, if he would ensure that Members were informed when the Corporate Scrutiny Task and Finish Group to consider the Members Enquiries Service was established so he could take his comments there.

The Leader replied that he would do so.

- (12) Councillor Le Gresley asked Councillor Gooding, the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning if it would be helpful if there could be a meeting to see if anything could be done to protect our children.

The Cabinet Member replied that he would be happy for there to be established a cross-party working party to examine the issue.

- (13) Councillor Robinson asked Councillor Finch, the Leader of the Council, if he did not agree that keeping properties empty for six months cost the Council a lot of money and asked if all the District Authorities had responded positively to the idea of making the best use of public sector land so as to avoid loss of revenue from empty properties?

The Leader replied that all the District Authorities had replied. He also assured Councillor Robinson that he was determined that when there was a vacant property the Council needs to know as soon as possible why, what opportunities for its use may arise, what were the barriers to disposal and how income could be maximised. However, in some cases the Council may be retaining the property to provide a future opportunity such as, for example, housing development for people with learning difficulties.

- (14) Councillor Danvers asked Councillor Bass, the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, if he could specify a timetable for publishing and public consultation.

The Cabinet Member replied that he understood that the Leader of the Council had already stated that he would keep a close eye on the consultation and he believed that should be sufficient reassurance.

- (16) Councillor Young asked Councillor Spence, the Cabinet Member for Finance, if he could give more information if there would be a rounded approach to addressing the housing need and if consideration would be given to key-worker accommodation and would that include prioritisation for teachers, those with special needs and their carers?

The Cabinet Member replied that there would soon be made available the Council's strategy that would explain in full the approach to provide affordable living, maximise returns and free up public-sector land for appropriate use.

12. Questions of the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members and Committee Chairmen

1. Councillor Smith asked Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways Delivery, if he could ensure that potholes were repaired on a very busy road in his Division.

The Cabinet Member replied that if Councillor Smith needed to provide him with details he should do so after the meeting. But he should contact Members Enquiries in the first instance.

2. Councillor Kendall asked Councillor Gooding, the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, if he could explain how careers advice provided in Essex schools was being monitored and how often was the monitoring undertaken?

The Cabinet Member replied that careers advice given in schools was monitored but given the detail required to answer the question properly he would write to Councillor Kendall after the meeting.

3. Councillor Pond asked Councillor Finch, the Leader of the Council, if he would note that Epping Forest District wish to assume all powers within their area from the North Essex Parking Partnership at a guaranteed nil cost to the County. Would the Leader facilitate such an arrangement?

The Leader replied that discussions on this matter were already underway with the Leader of Epping Forest District Council and he assured Councillor Pond that he would keep him informed.

4. Councillor Robinson, noting that in the budget debate Councillor Finch, the Leader of the Council, asked why on Budget-setting all the Opposition parties did not contribute to the process, asked if Cabinet Members would in future be prepared to submit all of their proposals and decisions to pre-scrutiny.

The Leader replied that what he had meant was that amendments to the budget that had been submitted and voted on today had been minor. What he had been suggesting was that throughout the year and through the scrutiny process the Opposition could bring forward reports and ideas and if they had merit the Administration could build them in to the subsequent budget-setting process.

5. Councillor Abbott asked Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways Delivery, concerning the flood alleviation in his Division in Witham, if he could give a commitment to a firm timescale for the completion of the work.

The Cabinet Member replied that he was unable to give such a commitment or timetable as these works were not the only ones being planned or undertaken.

6. Councillor Abbott asked Councillor Hirst, the Cabinet Member for Planning and the Environment, if he was aware that many members of the public found it difficult to locate planning matters on the Council's website and equally difficult to make comments or objections. Could he also explain why the Council did not publish the comments or objections of the consultees?

The Cabinet Member replied that he would examine the issues raised.

7. Councillor Bobbin asked Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways Delivery, if he was able to provide him with a detailed list of what land was owned by either the County Council or the Local Council in Basildon. There appeared to be a considerable amount of confusion and he had been asking for the information for four-and-a-half months without success.

The Cabinet Member replied that if Councillor Bobbin was to put his request in an email, detailing the areas he was interested in, then he would ensure that officers responded.

8. Councillor Walters asked Councillor Bass, the Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, if he had become aware of the considerable numbers of delays recently on the crossings between Kent and Essex despite improvements in tolling arrangements. He asked what was the latest update on the proposal to build another crossing.

The Cabinet Member replied that the Government had published an Options Paper for consultation and replies by 24 March 2016. The focus was on 'Option C' but with three variants to the route on the Essex side of the

crossing. The recent disruption to the crossing has demonstrated again that we need the new crossing (including a tunnel) as soon as possible.

9. Councillor Aspinell asked Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways Delivery, what he would consider a decent time for lights to be still out of order following a traffic accident on a Route 1.

The Cabinet Member replied that he would hope and expect it would be no longer than seven days but frequently we are in the hands of the electricity companies.

10. Councillor Canning asked Councillor Hirst, the Cabinet Member for Planning and the Environment, when would Members be getting a briefing on the proposed new nuclear power station at Bradwell?

The Cabinet Member replied that there was a Member Development Session due to take place on 16 February would look at the possible developments at this very early stage.

11. Councillor Knapman asked Councillor Johnson, the Cabinet Member for Highways Delivery, if he would wish to comment on the Epping Forest District's proposal to provide £100,000 match-funding for the Local Highways Panel.

The Cabinet Member replied that he was very happy about it.

13. Questions of the representative of the Essex Police and Crime Panel

1. Councillor Robinson asked Councillor Jowers, the representative of the Essex Police and Crime Panel, if he shared his concerns that, following financial cuts to their budgets, the police were 'off-loading' some of their responsibilities to District Councils who may not be able to cope.

Councillor Jowers replied that he believed that the outcome of the recent meeting of the Police and Crime Panel where this was discussed was satisfactory

2. Councillor Le Gresley asked Councillor Jowers, the representative of the Essex Police and Crime Panel, if the Police Constable could be held to account should he not keep his word and use available funding for community policing?

Councillor Jowers replied that the operational decisions of the Chief Constable were not subject to the scrutiny of the Essex Police and Crime Panel but the Panel had asked the Police and Crime Commissioner to pass on its concerns and this he had done.

3. Councillor Smith asked Councillor Jowers, the representative of the Essex Police and Crime Panel, if meetings at the local level could be reinstated?

Councillor Jowers suggested that Councillor Smith attend a meeting of the Essex Police and Crime Panel and ask that question of the Police Commissioner directly.

14. To note the reports of the Essex Fire Authority's meetings of 2 December 2015 and 13 January 2016 and to ask questions of the Authority's representative

The reports of the meetings of 2 December 2015 and 13 January 2016 were received.

1. Councillor Young asked Councillor Hedley, the representative of the Essex Fire Authority, concerning the consultation by the Fire Service with particular reference to Colchester and the general impact on the surrounding fire stations.

Councillor Hedley replied that that the consultation had just gone out and there were three options. No decisions had been taken and until they are taken he could not comment on the shape of the fire service and what impact there might be. However, the Retained Service that currently protects 54% of Essex has a very good record and other areas such as Braintree and Saffron Walden which have a retained service have not suffered any losses. The retained firefighters have the same training and equipment and they maintain their competencies at the same level as other firefighters.

2. Councillor Harris asked Councillor Hedley, the representative of the Essex Fire Authority, if he would convey to the Essex Fire Authority the concerns of people in Colchester about all of the options outlined in the consultation some of which appeared to lead to the potential loss of hundreds of firefighters.

Councillor Hedley replied that Colchester is represented on the Essex Fire Authority through which these concerns could be expressed and none of the options in the consultation suggest that hundreds of firefighters in Colchester would be losing their jobs.

3. Councillor Whitehouse asked Councillor Hedley, the representative of the Essex Fire Authority, if he agreed that residents in his Division were fortunate to be served by retained firefighters from Epping who are a very dedicated and hardworking team. However, he was aware than in some areas it was not always easy to recruit retained firefighters and he had seen figures from the Chief Fire Officer which meant that the availability of retained appliances is not always 100%. Councillor Whitehouse wished to check with Councillor Hedley that the Essex Fire Authority would be looking very closely at those issues when it considered the consultation responses.

Councillor Hedley replied that the complement of retained firefighters available throughout the County was constantly under review, and the lead

Member on the Essex Fire Authority dealing with this aspect was Councillor Guglielmi.

There had been a number of meetings to try and enhance the terms and conditions of the retained or on-call firefighters, some of whom were contracted to give 120 hours service per week.

He stated that he was unaware of any particular pump that was available less than 90% of the time. There were issues sometimes throughout the day, but usually there is a response within 10 minutes for the first pump, and whole-time staff moved around to keep retained pumps on the run during periods where there may be a shortage of retained staff.

The Fire Service was also considering the arrangements for 'mixed crewing' as, for example, recently, in Dovercourt, where there is one pump the whole time, one was on-call but because they were one short of a rider neither pump could go out. This is because the union would not allow retained firefighters to ride on a whole-time pump. This, in his opinion, was a practice that needed to be addressed.

The meeting closed at 14:31

Chairman
10 May 2016