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**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, 23 March 2022**

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

**Present:**

**Members:**

Councillor A Goggin	Chairman
Councillor D Blackwell	Vice-Chairman
Councillor S Crow	
Councillor P Honeywood	
Councillor D Land	
Councillor R Moore	
Councillor L Shaw	Vice-Chairman
Councillor M Vance	

**ECC Officers:**

Stephanie Mitchener	Director Finance
Tina French	Head of Finance Commercial Insight
Ricky Thakrar	Principal Economic Growth Officer
Helen Morris	Head of Integrated Public Transport Unit
Justin Long	Senior Democratic Services Officer (clerk to the meeting)
Lisa Siggins	Democratic Services Officer
Gemma Bint	Democratic Services Officer

**Members of the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee:**

Councillor C Pond  
Councillor M Mackrory  
Councillor C Siddall

**Also in attendance were:**

Councillor C Whitbread, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs  
Councillor L Wagland, Cabinet Member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning  
Councillor T Cunningham, Deputy Cabinet Member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning  
Councillor L Scott, Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport

**Joining Remotely:**

Councillor M Steel

## **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.
2. Apologies had been received from Councillors Skeels and Whitbread, and it was noted that Councillor Steel was joining the meeting remotely.
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 20 January 2022 were approved as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

### **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. Economic Infrastructure Renewal Fund (ERIF)**

Councillor C Whitbread, Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs and Councillor L Wagland, Cabinet Member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning introduced the presentation on the ERIF. They were joined by Councillor T Cunningham, Deputy Cabinet Member for Economic Renewal, Infrastructure and Planning

The presentation can be found [here](#).

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

Key points raised during this discussion included:

- The aims of the Fund were to resolve market failures, diversify the Council's capital programme and deliver tangible benefits for residents and local businesses.
- Evidence suggests that the ERIP could help to create at least 1500 jobs over the next 20 years.
- Members were pleased that previous scrutiny work had helped to develop the strategy for the ERIF.
- A scheme of work would be developed by the Committee and the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise the ERIF going forward.
- Delivering and then monitoring net-zero targets and environmental benefits would be a key focus.
- Cabinet Members were confident that the targets and the timeline of the ERIF were correct and would be kept under review to ensure this remained the case.
- The aim of the strategy was not to replicate the private sector but to address market failures, focus on areas with the Council can act as an exemplar, and deliver wider (non-commercial) benefits.
- The recent presentation to the Development and Regulation Committee '*Climate Action Committee: Planning and Climate Change, an update on the Built Environment Work Stream*' would be circulated to Members.

## **6. Bus Service Improvement Plan**

The Head of the Integrated Passenger Transport Unit gave a six-month update on the Bus Service Improvement Plan.

Councillor Scott, Cabinet for Highways, Maintenance and Sustainable Transport, outlined that the Council was supporting bus companies who were facing a perfect storm of decreasing footfall and rising costs.

Key points raised during this discussion included:

- The current market conditions meant it was very challenging for bus companies to upgrade their fleet with Government funding only covering 75% of the gap in costs between a Euro VI diesel bus and replacement bus.
- The project to improve bus shelters was currently at the procurement stage and this was due to be completed in the autumn.

- It was confirmed that buses should not be 'idling' (running the engine when the bus is not moving) and any examples should be reported to the Council or operators whilst preventing taxi 'idling' was the responsibility of district/borough/city councils.
- A new on-demand electric mini-bus scheme was being launched which it was hoped lead to a greater diversification of bus operating models.

In response to queries raised at the 20 January meeting, it was noted that bus companies were not currently making major investments in new fleet; however, the biggest 'carbon-gain' in transport terms remained the modal shift from cars to buses (whatever their fuel source). It was further noted that commercial bus operators did not have a legal duty to consult on route changes.

## **7. Local Highway Panels Task and Finish Group**

Councillor Steel, Chairman of the LHP Task and Finish Group gave a presentation on the work and recommendations of the Group. The presentation can be found [here](#).

Members debated the merits of having non-Essex County Council councillors at the LHP meetings, how a Super LHP would work, and the proposal to introduce a £50,000 cap on schemes at LHPs.

### **Resolved**

To endorse the report and recommendations from the Task and Finish Group.

It was further agreed that the Cabinet Member for Highways Maintenance and Sustainable Transport would formally respond to the recommendations at the Committee's 19 May meeting.

## **8. Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would take place on Thursday 21 April 2022 at County Hall.

## **9. Urgent Business**

No items were raised.

**Chairman**