

Minutes

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

11th March 2015



Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
P R Barlow	Yes	F Ricci	Yes
C A Cadman	Apologies	W J Rose	Apologies
Dr R L Evans (Chairman)	Yes	A F Shelton	Yes
P Horner	Yes	J S Sutton	Yes
S A Howell	Apologies	J R Swift	Apologies
R P Ramage	Yes		

87. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: There were no interests declared.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, all councillors remained in the meeting for all items and took part in the debate and decision thereon.

88. **MINUTES**

DECISION: That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 28th January 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

89. **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

INFORMATION: There were no questions asked or statements made.

90. **SCRUTINY OF NORTH ESSEX PARKING PARTNERSHIP**

INFORMATION: Councillor Bowers-Flint, Chairman of the Task and Finish Group presented the final report on the work of the Task and Finish Group.

DECISION: To consider the following recommendations and refer the report to Full Council;

1. That the NEPP reviews the SLA for off-street parking, undertaking a zero based budget as part of that exercise; and brings forward its annual budget setting process for off-street parking so that it informs its partners' own budgetary processes.
2. That the NEPP considers other income-generating opportunities to reduce reliance on PCN income by expanding its customer base; and avoids unnecessary

expenditure by ensuring that utility companies reinstate lines/signs following any road-works they carry out or pay for works in default.

3. That the NEPP fills vacant CEO posts promptly to ensure that there is a full complement of staff (using agency staff if necessary).
4. That the NEPP encourages County Council Members to attend partnership meetings to reinforce the concept of partnership working.
5. That the NEPP has further discussions with ECC about the disparity in funding received by the NEPP and SEPP for TROs.
6. That the NEPP reviews the CEO patrol schedules to ensure that it is delivering the required level of off-street enforcement in the Braintree District. Page 5 of 43
7. That the mobile CCTV car becomes a permanent fixture (subject to changes in legislation) and the NEPP is asked to provide a schedule of planned visits within the Braintree District, as well as clarifying service standards for parking enforcement in rural parishes.
8. That the NEPP ensures that the virtual permit system (MiPermit) is sufficiently robust to deliver expected improvements in customer service in terms of access and timeliness.
9. That the NEPP improves the customer experience by:-
 - a) Issuing a comprehensive TRO user guide in consultation with partner authorities to clarify the TRO process including eligibility criteria, expected timescales, the scoring matrix and the date of committee meetings;
 - b) Publishing a quarterly or six-monthly newsletter on its website to update customers on new initiatives and issues that may be of interest;
 - c) Simplifying the TRO application form to ease completion;
 - d) Explaining enforcement relating to dropped kerbs;
 - e) Ensuring good liaison with applicants, particularly with regard to extensive or complex TROs;
 - f) Publishing its service standards; and (g) Seeking customer feedback and using this to deliver service improvements.
10. That the TRO process be amended to require applicants to clearly demonstrate majority support for their proposal from other local residents, as well as support from their local County/ District/Parish/Town Council before they submit an application. (This is the approach adopted by the Local Highways Panels for highway schemes.)
11. That the NEPP considers reinstating white advisory H-bars
11. That the NEPP considers reinstating white advisory H-bars across drives in rural areas only on request and at residents' expense, to discourage inconsiderate parking.
12. That consideration be given to creating a common/shared database for use by ECC and NEPP to avoid duplication of TROs. Customers could be given (restricted) access to enable them to track progress with their requests.

13. That the NEPP reviews staffing levels to reduce Call Centre waiting times, lets the caller know where they are in the queue and includes information that is helpful and more generic to the whole partnership (rather than just Colchester) e.g. availability of MiPermit.
14. That the NEPP challenges ECC's 5-yr policy relating to the introduction of TROs following the adoption of new roads and that consideration of TROs is included as part of the planning application process where appropriate.
15. That the NEPP undertakes benchmarking with the SEPP and other local authorities who have formed a similar partnership for parking services (e.g. Bromley and Bexley) to demonstrate that it provides value for money.

REASON FOR DECISION: That the report and recommendations to Council and Cabinet be agreed.

91. **SCRUTINY REVIEW INTO POVERTY IN THE BRAINTREE DISTRICT**

INFORMATION: Members were asked to consider the final report into poverty in the Braintree District and the recommendations to Cabinet and Council.

The Chairman asked for any amendments to be proposed, seconded, debated and voted on in turn.

Councillor Barlow moved the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor Shelton:

“That the Council writes to the Secretary of State for Department of Work and Pensions to request that consideration is given to the sanctions regime to ensure that it provides the appropriate incentives to claimants to seek work without forcing them into hunger, poverty and potentially homelessness.”

When put to the vote, the motion was **LOST**.

During a general debate thanks was given to all officers who had supported the review and prepared the report. Thanks was also noted for all the organisations who had supported the review.

DECISION: To consider and refer the Scrutiny Review report into poverty in the Braintree District to the meeting of Full Council on 13th April 2015 and Cabinet on 15th June 2015.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Recommend to Cabinet:

1. Prior to the implementation of Universal Credit the Council works with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and Job Centre Plus to identify those claimants who will be affected to offer appropriate support replicating the good practice established with the Welfare Reforms.
2. To improve access to appropriate advice and support, including sign posting to individuals to external organisations.

3. To provide internet access for customers in the Council reception to access advice and supporting organisations.
4. To promote schemes which help individuals to manage their finances, receive debt management advice.
5. Improve communications between Job Centre Plus, the Council, Food Banks, Citizens Advice Bureau, service providers and residential groups to ensure that those accessing food banks are aware of the support available to enable them to develop income management skills.
6. That Council works with the Credit Union to promote the availability of low interest loans as a better alternative to pay day lenders, including providing links on the Council's website.
7. To consider the opportunity for the Council to work with Greenfields Academy to provide budgeting support to residents of the district.
8. To encourage Greenfields Community Housing Association to open up its Greenfield Academy to non-tenants of the district.
9. To consider developing a programme with community groups, organisations and the Greenfield Academy to engage with schools and children to develop understanding of money management and budgeting from an early age.

REASON FOR DECISION: That the Committee's report to be referred to Full Council and Cabinet in accordance with the procedure rules for Scrutiny.

92. **DECISION PLANNER**

DECISION: That the Decision Planner for the period 1st April 2015 to 31st July 2015 be noted.

The Committee wanted to express their gratitude to Councillor Dr Evans for his outstanding chairmanship over the past year and previous years.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8.30pm.

Dr R L Evans
Chairman