

# ***Report to the Council***

**Committee: Cabinet**

**Date 25 April 2019**

**Subject: Planning Services Portfolio**

**Portfolio Holder: Councillor J Philip**

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**Recommending:**

**That the report of the Planning Portfolio Holder be noted.**

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## **1. Local Plan**

The Local Plan hearing sessions started on Tuesday 12 February and to date 10 days of hearing sessions have been completed with 8 more hearing sessions programmed for May and June 2019. Details of the sessions and the participants list are available on the Council's website. The hearing statements for the sessions in May and June will be available on the website from w/c Monday 29 April 2019. All those who made representations to the Regulation 19 publication of the Local Plan Submission Version have been advised of the sessions to which they are invited to participate.

## **2. Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation and proposed mitigation strategy**

The Mitigation Strategy for the Epping Forest SAC will comprise two elements:

- a) Addressing recreational impacts; and
- b) Addressing the air quality impacts

The approach to the mitigation of recreational pressures is set out in the Interim Approach to Managing Recreational Pressure adopted by the Council on 18 October 2018. The projects, proposals and costs set out in the Interim Approach were provided by the Conservators of Epping Forest (as the Forest's custodians) and have been supported by Natural England. This includes the proposition that opportunities for SANG provision will be investigated further, recognizing that such provision is already being sought as part of the masterplanning of some strategic site allocations. Further work is being undertaken to finalise the strategy and it is anticipated that this will be completed by December 2019. The final strategy will be determined by the completion and analysis of a further Visitor Survey to be undertaken during Summer 2019 followed by any necessary review of the projects set out in the current Interim Approach. This will then need to be agreed by key stakeholders, including Natural England and the Conservators of Epping Forest.

With regard to air quality impacts the strategy will build on existing national and international initiatives, which in their own right will contribute to an improvement in air quality over the course of the Plan period, as evidenced by the air quality outputs of the updated Habitats Regulation Assessment 2019. Considering the Epping Forest SAC within Epping Forest District as a whole, these national and international initiatives, combined with the other initiatives identified in the Local Plan Submission Version would result in a net reduction in nitrogen deposition and therefore result in no adverse effect. The Council is still awaiting the feedback from Natural England on the Habitats Regulations Assessment and the proposed strategy but given the letter of 18 June 2018 which has resulted in the Council unable to

determine planning applications progress is being made to agree a strategy as soon as possible once this is received.

A report on the proposed strategy was considered by Cabinet on 11 April 2019 giving delegated powers to the Portfolio Holder to agree the action plan as soon as the Council receives advice from Natural England. The objective of the strategy is to provide a framework for providing reasonable certainty that there will be no adverse effects on the integrity of the Epping Forest SAC air quality over the course of the Plan period as a result of development, taken alone and in-combination with other plans and projects.

These will be supported by a number of specific measures ranging from the application of planning conditions where appropriate, to secure, amongst other things, the provision of electric vehicle charging points, travel information packs for new occupiers of development, through to a commitment to develop a Sustainable Transport Strategy, to maximise opportunities for travelling by means other than the car. The 'approach' will also provide details relating to the need to secure on-going monitoring of air quality within the Epping Forest SAC through financial contributions from development.

### **3. Neighbourhood Planning**

The Moreton, Bobbingworth and the Lavers Neighbourhood Plan was published in accordance with Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 with a deadline of 5 March 2019. The representations received have been forwarded to the Examiner appointed Nigel McCurk who has allowed the Parish Council until 26 April 2019 to comment on the representations received.

### **4. Harlow and Gilston Garden Town**

The outcome of the capacity bid submitted to MHCLG in 2018/19 to seek further funding to support the work has resulted in a further grant of £715,000. As a result, a number of new posts have now been advertised including a District Lead officer for EFDC to increase the capacity of the team to help deliver the growth proposed for the Garden Town.

A draft Transport Strategy for the Garden Town has been prepared and the Council's Cabinet on 7 March 2019 agreed its publication for a six-week period of consultation following the May elections.

### **5. Delivering Infrastructure in the District**

In order to ensure that the infrastructure to support the proposed growth in the District the Council will be developing guidance. This will include the capture of development land value through the use of planning obligations. A workshop was held for District Council members on 28 March 2018 to introduce the proposed strategy and how this would be applied when considering planning proposals. The strategy will be the subject to a future report to the Local Plans Cabinet Committee. In the meantime, it is important for the Area Planning Committees and District Development Management Committee to ensure that when granting planning permission reference is made to the identified infrastructure requirements set out in the Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan and supporting documentation which have been developed to support the Local Plan in order to ensure that the appropriate provision is made.

### **6. Development Management**

Unfortunately, a number of experienced planning officers have recently left the Council for a variety of reasons, including chosen career path changes. In response and in order to keep resources maintaining the assessment and turnaround of planning applications and appeals, some planning consultants have been brought in to cover until replacements have been found. A microsite through Jobs Go Public is currently advertising a number of planning related posts.

Development Management had a very good year in terms of Fee Income achieving an overall income for both Planning Income and Pre-Application Income of £1,321,664 for the 2018 – 19 Financial Year (2017 – 18 it was £948,399). This is a reflection of the current workload over the last few years and the need to maintain planning officer resource to cope with this current demand, which is no doubt going to increase once the Local Plan is adopted hopefully towards the end of the year.

### **Development Management Planning Fee Income**

Development Managements Planning Fee Income for 2018 – 19 was £1,207,739 as compared to 2017 -18 which was £836,180.

The increase in income in 2018 – 19 represents a 44% increase over the previous financial year. Planning Fees were increased nationally in January 2018 by 20%, although it should be noted that this was the first increase in Planning Fees for over five years.

### **Pre – Application Fee Income**

Pre-Application Fee Income for 2018 – 19 was £113,925 compared with 2017 – 18 which was £112,219.

This therefore has little changed and the current income for 2018 – 19 of £113,925 is a positive indication of the consistency of Planning Pre-Application Income as the previous annual three-year average prior to April 2018 was £112,669.

### **Planning Performance Agreement Income**

This year for the first time, we have started entering into Planning Performance Agreements (PPA's) with applicants in respect of the resourcing and handling of so far six Strategic Masterplan and large-scale Major planning applications, that has resulted in a healthy income of approximately £93,000. We are using this income towards the funding of the Planning Implementation Team, which was set up in April 2018 and are in the main handling these. Further PPA income is expected to continue in 2019-20 and beyond.