

## **EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**Committee:** Asset Management and Economic Development Cabinet Committee      **Date:** Thursday, 11 January 2018

**Place:** Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping      **Time:** 7.00 - 7.30 pm

**Members Present:** Councillors A Grigg (Chairman), W Breare-Hall (Vice-Chairman), H Kane, S Kane and J Philip

**Other Councillors:** None

**Apologies:** G Mohindra

**Officers Present:** D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Neighbourhoods), M Warr (Economic Development Officer), J Leither (Democratic Services Officer) and A Hendry (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

**Also in attendance:**

---

### **11. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION**

The Chairman reminded everyone present that the meeting would be broadcast live to the Internet and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

### **12. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

The Cabinet Committee noted that Councillor J Philip substituted for Councillor G Mohindra.

### **13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct.

### **14. MINUTES**

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2017 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### **15. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - PROGRESS REPORT**

The Economic Development Officer (EDO) presented a report to the Cabinet Committee and updated them on a number of projects and issues being explored by the Economic Development Team.

### **3. Town Centres**

#### **Waltham Abbey Wayfinding Project**

The Waltham Abbey Wayfinding Project was managed by the Council on behalf of the Town Partnership. 14 of the 15 signs have been installed and the last one was due to be installed on Friday 12 January 2018.

### **4. Business Support**

#### **One Business Briefing**

To date the One Business Briefing magazine for businesses which was published in August 2017 had now been downloaded from the Council's website in excess of 660 times. The Spring edition was now being planned with a theme of tourism in the district.

#### **Meet the Buyer**

On the 23 November 2017, in conjunction with Epping Forest Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development team organised a Meet the Buyer Conference to enable local businesses to meet face-to-face with some of the biggest buyers in and around the District. Small and medium sized enterprises were able to understand how big organisations in the public and private sector buy, what they procure, how much they procure, and opportunities available. The event attracted over 70 delegates, representing a wide variety of sectors from aviation, health, research, tourism, and education. The Team secured sponsorship from the Marriott Hotel Waltham Abbey and the event included speakers from London Stansted Airport, Public Health England, Essex County Council, Epping Forest College, and Vibrant Partnerships.

### **5. Digital Innovation Programme**

Economic Development officers in conjunction with One Epping Forest, Princess Alexandra Hospital and West Essex CCG submitted an application in November 2017 to the LGA / Design Council 'Design in the Public Sector' programme. The application was put together as a Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ) project to address the level of A&E incidents amongst the over-75 population of the Digital Innovation Zone.

A third Smart Places Seminar focusing on Digital Skills for future jobs was planned to take place on 9 February 2018 at Haileybury College in Broxbourne Borough. It was planned that external speakers from business and academic perspectives will bring forward their thoughts on what was coming down the line in terms of digital opportunities and threats, but crucially also to focus back on what businesses, colleges etc. need to do now to prepare themselves and their workforces for an increasingly digital future.

The DIZ Board continued to meet on a monthly basis. This cross-border grouping, originally formed of Epping Forest District Council, Uttlesford, Harlow, East Herts and Broxbourne Councils, Essex County Council, the London Stansted Cambridge Consortium, Princess Alexandra Hospital, West Essex CCG and KAOData, chaired by Councillor Lion (with Councillor Mohindra as Vice Chairman). The Board had now welcomed representatives of Further and Higher Education and the voluntary sector. Membership will continually be reviewed and supplemented where appropriate to ensure it represented the key stakeholders in our digital future.

An expression of interest had been submitted, on behalf of the DIZ Board, to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) to be involved in the DCMS Local Full Fibre Networks (LFFN) Programme. This programme will explore opportunities to expand full fibre networks through a range of mechanisms. Representatives of the DIZ Board from EFDC and Essex County Council attended a workshop on the programme on 15 December 2017 and DCMS will now be inviting the submission of full bids.

## **6. Superfast Broadband**

At the end of November 2017 the network build had reached just over 3700 premises. Building work to install the final two cabinet areas of the network in Hastingwood and Ongar had now commenced. Wayleave negotiations to facilitate Gigaclear to build part of its network across North Weald Airfield are ongoing. Unfortunately, due to a number of issues that the contractor had faced, the full completion of the network was scheduled for 31 March 2018.

Funding for Phase 4 was recently added to the Capital Review programme and a report was submitted to the Cabinet on 7 December 2017. The tender process was underway through Superfast Essex / Essex County Council (ECC) and the bidders' proposals were likely to be evaluated in January / February 2018. Economic Development and Finance officers from EFDC will take part in the tender evaluation process. At the point of awarding the contract EFDC will be required to enter into a written agreement with ECC to confirm the £350,000 funding and prior to signing this agreement a further report will be taken to Cabinet outlining the outcome of the tender process and seeking its confirmation to proceed. The completion of the tender process was still ongoing and it was hoped that the contract would be awarded by the end of February 2018.

## **8. Partner Liaison**

The inaugural meeting of the Epping Forest Skills Board took place at Epping Forest College on 4 December 2017, under the chairmanship of Councillor Gagan Mohindra. Members included representatives of local large and small businesses, the County and District Councils, Epping Forest College and the DWP.

Following a presentation giving an overview on the economy, employment, education and training in the District, there was a round table discussion on the major challenges and opportunities facing the local skills agenda. Areas of focus included increasing apprenticeships, the construction industry, future developments in the digital economy and employability skills for young people.

Consideration was given to how the Skills Board could best influence the skills agenda and whether the initial Board needed additional representation. The EDT will be adding a skills section to future reports of the Cabinet Committee. A second meeting was being arranged for early in 2018.

Councillor W Breare-Hall stated that most of the Economic Development reports could be quantified by data such as how many new businesses have opened, how many businesses have closed, how many new jobs have there been and how many visitors to the district. He suggested that this report could be an annual report to the meeting.

The EDO officer advised that he would take this back to the EDT and a meeting should be arranged with members to discuss how best to bring this report showing a statistical analysis.

Councillor A Grigg asked if any of this work had been covered in the Local Plan work that had been undertaken by the EDT.

Mr Macnab advised that a number of studies in support of the Local Plan on a local level, which have included the allocation of sites of employment and commissioned visitor accommodation statistics have been prepared as part of the Local Plan process. He stated that it would be possible to bring these together to collate into the statistical analysis report that members required.

**Resolved:**

That the current progress and work programme of the Council's Economic Development Section were noted.

**Reasons for Decision:**

To appraise the Committee on the progress made with regard to Economic Development issues.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

None, as this was a monitoring report for information, not action.

**16. ASSET MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS - PROGRESS REPORT**

The Director of Neighbourhoods presented a report to the Cabinet Committee and updated Members on further developments to the report since it had been published.

**(1) Epping Forest Shopping Park**

The shopping park opened on time and within budget. Eight of the eleven units were now operational with one of the anchor stores, Next PLC, opening their doors on the 19 December 2017. Early reports indicated that trading levels were very good. Interest for the three remaining units was progressing, all from well known high street retailers and it was hoped that more units would be let by the end of March 2018. Although there had been a soft opening of the Shopping Park it was expected that the official opening would be in March/April 2018.

There was an initial period where parking was unrestricted due to contractors being on site fitting out the units. The ANPR Cameras and enforcement activity in the car park commenced with the opening of Aldi at the end of November 2017. Shoppers were allowed to park for a maximum of 3 hours and the electric car charge points were proving to be very popular.

The Section 278 Highways works were 99% completed and had gone through the formal safety audit process. This was a three stage process - the first being a safety audit process on the design which was passed. The second stage was the construction of the highways works and the third stage was the road safety audit, which would take place at practical completion. It had been noted that pedestrians were taking risks crossing the very busy road at the Chigwell Lane/Borders Lane junction. The need for more kerbside safety barriers at the end of Borders lane had been identified in order to prevent pedestrians crossing the roads unsafely. These works should be completed by the end of January 2018.

Councillor S Kane asked exactly how popular were the electric car charging points and were they being used by people without electric cars. Mr Macnab advised that there were 10 electrical charging spaces and they were being occupied by the owners of non electric cars. The enforcement company were now having to implement a new set of controls over these spaces.

Councillor J Philip asked if there been any changes since the Council had brought in the ANPR and was there enough parking for people wishing to use the stores. Mr Macnab advised that commuters and staff from other businesses in Langston Road had been using the free parking facilities. Since the ANPR became live it had been observed that vehicles were entering the car park with false number plates taped over their own. The length of free parking at the shopping park was 3 hours, which was what the tenants asked for in their leases. Shoppers have complained that 3 hours was not long enough and would be reviewed in the future.

## **(2) Oakwood Hill Depot**

As part of the Council's Corporate Accommodation Review, the feasibility of relocating the Housing Repairs Service from the Depot in Epping High Street had been undertaken. As part of the consideration of this move a parking study had been commissioned to assess any requirements for additional parking.

There had been a call-in of the Cabinet decision by Members regarding the off site car parking at the rear of Oakwood Hill Estate. The Portfolio Holder met with the Members who had supported the call-in and they agreed to withdraw it on the understanding that a parking survey was taken in the locality. A survey was completed before Christmas but due to the current changes with the implementation of the Debden Parking review and the Shopping Park, Management Board had decided to re-run the survey and this should be completed this month. A planning application would be submitted to a future meeting of Area Plans South Sub-Committee.

## **(3) Pyrles Lane Nursery**

The Cabinet have agreed to market the nursery site on the basis of seeking two alternative prices to include the provision of Council Housing as part of the Council's wider Council House-building programme. Marketing agents have been appointed and the site was due to be actively brought to the market in January 2018. Prospective purchasers of the site had been asked to submit within their tender, accommodation for the council to buy back the affordable element. Specialist advisers had been appointed and have established prices to buy back for a mix of properties.

## **(4) St John's Road Redevelopment**

Epping Forest District Council have been satisfied with the tri-partie agreement since October 2017 but the other two parties, Epping Town Council and Frontier Estates still have outstanding issues. The Chief Executive and the Director of Neighbourhoods were in regular contact with the other two parties and it was hoped that this matter will be concluded soon so that this project can move forward.

## **(5) North Weald Airfield**

It was intended to bring a separate report to come to this meeting but this had to be deferred until the next meeting due to their being no officer capacity because of commitments to the local plan.

The purpose of the report was within the submission version of the local plan where there was a requirement to undertake a masterplan for North Weald Airfield. The masterplan would need to be endorsed by the planning authority, Epping Forest District Council. The report was an initial scoping report to see how the Council could pull the masterplan together to be incorporated into the future of the airfield by:

- seeking intensification;
- allocation of the 10 hectares of employment land; and
- the potential relocation of the Epping and Ongar Sports centres onto the airfield.

The report would raise these issues and was for Members to get their views before the Council moved forward with the masterplan.

The National Police Air Service had been granted consent for their facility and had nearly reached heads of agreement on their lease. The Council has also tidied up other aviation leases.

There had been other enquiries regarding the aviation side, around flying instruction and these were being looked into.

#### **(6) Landmark Building (Former Winston Churchill PH)**

Progress had been slower than anticipated due to the delayed vacant possession of the space by the residential developer and the need to provide services to the units. Heads of terms were under negotiation with potential tenants of the Council's space and the units would provide a:

- public house;
- restaurant;
- coffee shop; and
- a convenience food store.

It was hoped that a conclusion regarding the occupation of the four units would be reached before the next meeting.

One of the key learning points of this exercise was that the Council should have been far more prescriptive at an earlier stage of the development as some of the premises do not have shop fronts. However on handover the Council were able to offer incentives to tenants to carry out the necessary works.

#### **(7) Hillhouse Development**

The work on the new Leisure Centre had commenced and was progressing well. The steel frame was up and the exterior cladding, to make the building watertight was near completion. The Leisure Centre was on track to open in November 2018.

The planning application for the independent living scheme was due to be considered by the Area Planning West Sub-Committee on 14 March 2018. Essex County Council were currently tendering for an Independent Living Scheme provider.

The new GP Practice was still planned but NHS England had advised that they are not able to fund the new practice. The GP's were still very keen to go ahead and were looking to fund it themselves.

**(8) Lindsay House**

Lindsay House had now been sold to a private purchaser and achieved a capital receipt of £835,000 which was £85,000 in excess of the valuation of the property. The property was sold with the restrictive covenant in place.

**Resolved:**

That the current progress on the Council's Asset Management and Development projects were noted.

**Reasons for Decision:**

To comply with the Cabinet Committee's previous request to monitor the development of the Council's Property Assets on a regular basis.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

None, as this was a monitoring report for information, not action.

**17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Cabinet Committee noted that there was no other urgent business for consideration.

**18. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

The Cabinet Committee noted that there were no items of business on the agenda that necessitated the exclusion of the public and press from the meeting.

**CHAIRMAN**