

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

**Committee:** Asset Management and Economic Development Cabinet Committee     **Date:** Thursday, 26 January 2017

**Place:** Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping     **Time:** 7.00 - 8.10 pm

**Members Present:** Councillors A Grigg (Chairman), W Breare-Hall (Vice-Chairman), H Kane, G Mohindra and G Waller

**Other Councillors:** Councillors A Lion, S Kane and J M Whitehouse

**Apologies:**

**Officers Present:** D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Neighbourhoods), J Houston (Local Strategic Partnership Manager), M Warr (Economic Development Officer), J Leither (Democratic Services Officer) and S Tautz (Democratic Services Manager)

**Also in attendance:** C Pasterfield (Asset Management Development Consultant) and L Edwards (Consultant, Colliers International)

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### **28. 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.

### **29. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

The Cabinet Committee noted that there were no substitute members.

### **30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor G Mohindra declared a personal interest in agenda item 8, Epping Forest Shopping Park by virtue of being known to one of the prospective tenants. The Councillor had determined that his interest was non-pecuniary and would remain in the meeting for the consideration of the item.

### **31. MINUTES**

#### **Resolved:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 October 2016 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

## 32. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TEAM 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.

### **Waltham Abbey Wayfinding Project**

Following a full tendered procurement process a contractor had been appointed to design, manufacture and install a new pedestrian wayfinding system in Waltham Abbey Town Centre. A total of eight tenders were received all of which were of a similar quality. Therefore the award of the tender was determined by the lowest priced tender and Mödel Signage Solutions were the successful contractor. The winning tender was less than 50% of the total potential budget that had been agreed for the project representing excellent value for money and ensuring that further funds would remain available to consider further enhancement projects for the town centre in the future.

Mödel have already undertaken a stakeholder presentation and consultation event in the town and have subsequently set up an online survey to enable those stakeholders, including businesses, unable to attend the meeting to have their say. It was intended that a proposed design for the scheme be presented to the key stakeholders in February 2017 in order that the finalised design could be agreed before the end of the current financial year.

Councillor Mohindra stated that it was important to ensure that in terms of the design and the points of interest that the Royal Gunpowder Mills and the Lea Valley White Water Raft Centre were included in the plan as they were critical tourist attractions in the area.

He also commented that the business confidence survey was a good idea and looked forward to receiving the results of that survey in the near future.

The EDO advised that both the Royal Gunpowder Mills and the Lea Valley White Water Rafting Centre would be referenced from the town centre in the Wayfinding scheme.

### **Ultrafast Network**

The Rural Challenge Project to deliver ultrafast broadband to rural parts of the district continued to make progress. Almost 195km of network had now been built within excess of 2,800 connection pots installed at the property edges. Ten cabinet areas would be completed by the end of June 2017 with two cabinet areas being delayed in the Hastingwood Area, which includes North Weald and Ongar which will start in Spring 2017 and would be completed by the end of October 2017.

### **Tourism Website**

Councillor Breare-Hall asked the EDO if the soft launch had taken place and what were the enhancements that have been made to the new district tourism website.

The EDO advised that the soft launch had not yet taken place as it was still in the process of building the content. There were two elements to the website, the database side and the content, which was used to perform the narrative for the district. Previously the visit Epping Forest website had been a list based website now

there was an opportunity to tell the story of Epping Forest. The new website will have more visual content and will give the opportunity to create themes.

### **Business Confidence Survey**

Councillor Breare-Hall asked if there was a sense of a plan or a strategy and what use will the Economic Development Team (EDT) make of the results.

The EDO advised that the EDT were at the pre-determining question stage. Once the business confidence survey was compiled and released the Team would use the information to indicate how the districts businesses would plan for the future.

The Assistant Director of Economic Development advised Members that the intention was to look at the standard survey questions that were used by other national organisations in terms of determining business confidence. The idea was to keep the questions as short as possible so that the survey would not become onerous.

The survey would give underlying information as to whether our local business were looking to expand, to hire or to put their investment plans on hold we would then be able to pick up on issues and areas local businesses were concerned about or any information they required.

The aim of the survey was to have a mechanism in place to make sure this authority were in touch with our local businesses and that we could anticipate and understand their needs at the earliest opportunity and identify areas that we may need to research to fully understand what was driving expansion or contraction in the local economy.

### **Partner Liaison**

Councillor Lion reported that he, together with other Members and EFDC Officers met with the Chairman of SELEP for a tour of North Weald Airfield (NWA). He advised that he was impressed with his visit to the Airfield and in particular Weald Aviation, which in his opinion, was doing a very useful job. The Councillor asked the Committee about the possibility of developing opportunities at North Weald Airfield.

The Director of Neighbourhoods advised that in the terms of reference of this Committee there was a remit to explore opportunities at North Weald Airfield. There had been previous policy decisions around the retention and intensification of aviation on this site.

Members will recall that with the assistance of Savills, the Council did some soft market testing at North Weald Airfield to see if there was an opportunity to bring on board a development partner, this proved to be disappointing in terms of the response received. Members have now set further parameters around investment at the Airfield. The Council would invest if the correct opportunities arose.

The Council had intended to offer a service contract to an external partner but due to changes in the European Union procurement rules a full OJEU process would need to be followed to seek an operational partner.

Within the Local Plan further work had been commissioned on employment. A lot of the focus on the Local Plan to date had been on housing needs and the housing numbers but there was a requirement in consultation with other partners to determine employment allocation across the wider area and the Airfield will specifically form

part of that consideration. This piece of work will be instrumental in determining the types and levels of use of the airfield that would be appropriate.

The Council has always recognised the potential of North Weald Airfield and a lot of time has been spent employing consultants trying to develop the best way to go forward.

### **Broadband – Smart Places**

The Assistant Director of Economic Development advised Members that the Smart Places Initiative was an attempt to bring together a coalition of different organisations who have an interest in infrastructure or an interest in using infrastructure once it was installed in the ground in order to provide services more effectively in order to provide a greater reach and to encourage major providers to invest in this area.

The Smart Places Initiative involved EFDC and ECC having discussion with major national and international infrastructure providers to see if it was possible to make this area a pathfinder area. The plan is to hold a Smart Places Summit along the lines of Smart Cities to find out what applications and technology that worked in the City and could be expanded to work in an area such as this District. A further report would come to the next meeting updating the Committee further on the progress.

### **Resolved:**

To note the progress and work programme of the Council's Economic Development Section.

### **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 monitoring report is for information, not action.

## **33. ASSET MANAGEMENT CO-ORDINATION GROUP 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**

There was a separate detailed report on the progress of the Epping Forest Shopping Park at Agenda Item 8.

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

The Depot was now completed and fully operational. The mezzanine floor had been extended at a notional cost to provide additional office accommodation.

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

Planning permission had been granted for a residential development on the site of Pyrles Lane Nursery. External advisors had produced a report, the outcome of this

report and a proposed disposal strategy would be reported to Cabinet on 9 March 2017.

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

After a protracted period of negotiation the Council have completed on the purchase of the former junior school from Essex County Council. There had been some anti-social behaviour on the site but the Council have now secured security presence on and the site was now secure. The next stage was to work with Frontier Estates and Epping Town Council moving towards the submission of their full planning application and if this was successful a tri-party agreement would take place between Epping Forest District Council, Epping Town Council and Frontier Estates and would develop the site.

Councillor J M Whitehouse stated that it had previously been reported that the consultation would take place as part of the planning process. He advised that as landowner and the planning authority the Council should be ensuring and encouraging pre-application engagement and not just the statutory 21 day letters going out when a planning application was submitted. It was easier to deal with queries in the pre-application stage rather than when the planning application was submitted.

The Chairman advised that Officers would raise that issue with Frontier Estates when they had their next meeting.

**(5) Lindsay House**

Essex County Council advised that they no longer wished to obtain Lindsay House for use as accommodation to support vulnerable adults. A report would go to Cabinet on the 2 February 2017 with regard to marketing the property for disposal as either a single dwelling, subject to the restrictive covenants, or conversion to flats.

**(6) North Weald Airfield**

A discussion had taken place earlier in the meeting regarding North Weald Airfield.

**(7) Site of former Winston Churchill Public House**

Members and Officers were invited by Higgins for a site visit. The views from the top of the building were spectacular with views across East London. The flats would be completed ready for occupation in September 2017. The Council's main interest were the retail units on the ground floor which we had the opportunity to view. The Council have now appointed agents and were receiving offers for those units.

Councillor Mohindra stated that the site visit was a worthwhile exercise but that the top floor was for office space and not living accommodation and Planning Enforcement Officers should keep stringent checks that this was the case.

**(8) Ongar Academy**

The school was now under construction and was due to open in September 2017.

**(9) Townmead Depot**

A considerable amount of time and energy had been spent on investigating this site for alternative use. Unfortunately due to the high flood risk this site could not be

progressed for any kind of residential development. Discussions were underway with Waltham Abbey Town Council who were the co-occupiers, as to an alternative use for this site.

#### **(10) Hillhouse Leisure / Community Hub**

Outline planning permission was granted to all three elements of this site by the District Development Management Committee in November 2016. A S106 agreement was being entered into to compensate for the loss of the playing fields and that S106 agreement was due to be signed shortly. We have met with our newly appointed Leisure Management Contractor, Places for People and will submit a full planning application in the next 6-8 weeks.

#### **Resolved:**

To note progress on the Council's Asset Management and Development Projects.

#### **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 monitoring report was for information not action.

### **34. EPPING FOREST SHOPPING PARK PROGRESS REPORT**

#### **Epping Forest Shopping Park**

The Council's Asset Management Development Consultant, Mr C Pasterfield presented a report to the Cabinet Committee with regard to the current progress of the development of the Epping Forest Shopping Park. Mr Pasterfield was accompanied by Mr L Edwards of Colliers International, one of the Council's appointed consultants for the management of letting the units at the shopping park.

Mr Pasterfield advised that at a recent meeting with the main contractor, McLaughlin & Harvey it had been reported that completion of the site was proceeding according to schedule. The steel frame for the 95,000 sq ft building was complete with the end walls and part of the roof clad. Meetings with tenants would now become more intensified regarding their shop fitting requirements.

On 22 December 2016 Members of the Cabinet and Board Members were taken on a site visit of the Shopping Park. The site Manager for McLaughlin & Harvey gave an overview of the construction process to date and advised that they were on schedule with the scheme.

#### **Section 278 Road Works**

There had been a delay with the highways work due to a gas mains being discovered which was not revealed in the original searches and site investigations. This meant that the drainage had to be redesigned. The widening of the carriageway works would be completed by the end of March 2017.

Members expressed concerns and queried if the delays with the highways work would cause a delay on the opening of the Shopping Park.

Mr Pasterfield advised that the Shopping Park would be completed before the highways work was completed. The shopping park would not be ready to open as the tenants would need to fit out the shops and this would take approximately 6-8 weeks. It was anticipated that the Shopping Park would open around August/September 2017.

Councillor Lion asked if there was any progress on the installation of broadband and Wi-Fi services at the Shopping Park.

Mr Macnab advised that during a recent site meeting with the project manager he advised that there was extensive duct work which runs all through the site where the cables for the broadband would run.

**Resolved:**

This report updates the Cabinet Committee on a Epping Forest Shopping Park as discussed at previous meetings.

**Reasons for Decision:**

To comply with the Cabinet Committee's previous request to monitor the development of the Shopping Park on a regular basis.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

None, as monitoring report is for information not action.

**35. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

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

**36. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**RESOLVED:**

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the items of business set out below on the grounds that they would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972:

<b><u>Agenda Item No.</u></b>	<b><u>Subject</u></b>	<b><u>Exempt Information Paragraph Number</u></b>
8	Epping Forest Shopping Park Progress Report Part II	3

**37. EPPING FOREST SHOPPING PARK PROGRESS REPORT PART II**

Mr L Edwards from Colliers International, consultants responsible for letting the units at the Epping Forest Shopping Park reported that the market was steady and 75% of the retail units had been let to a mix of tenants.

Mr Edwards advised that they were considering offers on some of the smaller units but were looking to make sure that they did not conflict with any of the traders on Debden Broadway.

Mr Pasterfield advised that they would be looking into installing some electric car charging points at the Shopping Park. More information would need to be collected to estimate how many electric car charging points to install.

Members were very enthusiastic to see that a provision was being made to install electric car charging points.

**CHAIRMAN**