

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Asset Management and Economic Development Cabinet Committee **Date:** Thursday, 6 July 2017

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.00 - 8.00 pm

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

Other Councillors: Councillors A Lion

Apologies:

Officers Present: D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Neighbourhoods), J Houston (Local Strategic Partnership Manager), J Leither (Democratic Services Officer), M Warr (Economic Development Officer), C Pasterfield (Consultant) and T Carne (Public Relations and Marketing Officer)

1. 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.

2. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Cabinet Committee noted that there were no substitute members.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor G Mohindra declared an interest in agenda item 6, Economic Development – Progress Report by virtue of his role as Chairman of the Smart Essex Board at Essex County Council. The Councillor had determined that his interest was non-pecuniary and would remain in the meeting for the consideration of the item.

4. MINUTES

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2017 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

5. 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.

Town Centres

Town & Village Centres / District Opportunities Fund

The EDO reported that it had been very rewarding to see a number of projects coming forward for funding and also for projects coming to fruition:

- The first stage of the Ongar in Bloom project has seen colourful planters installed in the town centre to raise the appeal of Ongar Town Centre to visitors;
- The Buckhurst Hill Residents Society has delivered its project to increase people's awareness of the business offer in Queens Road through engagement between school children and these businesses. A first tranche of children had visited Queens Road on several occasions, interviewed businesses, produced promotional material for them and held a market outside these businesses. The Residents Society has worked hard to involve a wide range of traders, including some which have not historically been engaged with the town centre and community activities. The children also seem to have found the project both exciting and rewarding; and
- The Epping Town Partnership are hosting a Youth Festival & Youth Traders Market on Saturday 8 July 2017 from 10am to 4pm. There will be a number of young people trading on Epping High Street and some entertainment provided by local schools and it was hoped that this would be a successful event.

Business Support

Business Confidence Survey

At a previous meeting of the Asset Management and Economic Development Cabinet Committee, Members were in agreement to the idea of conducting a local survey of business confidence. Members requested that a draft of the survey be brought to a future meeting so they could review the content. On page 17 of the Agenda was the first draft of the proposed survey and Members were asked for any comments they may have.

Digital Enterprise Programme

On 15 June 2017, the Cabinet considered a report to bring forward proposals to develop a Digital Enterprise Programme that would build on the successful infrastructure network improvements that the District has seen over the last two years and start to further develop the District's potential as a Digital Innovation Zone.

In addition to the Council, six funding partners have signed up to a co-funded and co-commissioned digital strategy for the wider Digital Innovation Zone.

The Cabinet also agreed as a part of that report to funding from the Town Centre Opportunities Fund, up to a maximum of £45,000, to explore the potential for the delivery of a free public wi-fi scheme in the District's town centres. The Economic Development team have been liaising with Broxbourne Borough Council and Pembrokeshire County Council who have been through this process, to learn from their experiences.

Councillor Breare-Hall asked if Members could receive details of the return on investment from these activities.

The EDO replied that all projects would return an end of project report but most of these projects were long term and therefore he would not be able to report back until they had completed.

The Local Strategic Partnership Manager (LSPM), Mr J Houston advised that there was a need for improvement between showing a direct impact between the statistics that the Economic Development Team (EDT) take and the impact they have on the various projects. There are some general indicators that could be used to assess the performance and the EDT will endeavour to include this information at the next meeting.

Councillor Lion asked the EDO why Coopersale had not yet been provided with Superfast Broadband and when was it likely to be installed.

The EDO stated that the case for Coopersale had been pushed with Superfast Essex and it was hoped that Phase 4 of this project would pick up all the areas that had not been included to date.

Councillor Mohindra commented on The West Essex Alliance and the need to do more in terms of economic development across the neighbouring districts.

The LSPM advised that this was clearly an area that was not as strong as 4/5 years ago but the EDT had been working with Councils in neighbouring boroughs and it had been suggested that the Council's pool their funding and get a better return for the districts' residents.

Councillor Mohindra commented that he thought the visit from Chinese Trade Delegation had been a success and there was the potential for some further opportunities that will need to be explored.

The LSPM advised that the Council had hosted a successful visit in the District from a delegation from a province in China. The Council have since had a request from that Chinese Province to enter into a friendship/trade agreement where the Council can build trade links between that province in China to local businesses in the district and look to build some cultural and educational links. The Tourism Officer was looking into this and a report will be brought back to a future meeting of this Cabinet Committee.

The Chairman asked the EDO about the Superfast Broadband cabinets which were still to be installed in Hastingwood and North Weald and stated that no dates had yet been provided and asked when these will be forthcoming.

The EDO replied that there had been a period of inactivity due to Giga Clear having issues with the contractor which had now been resolved. The EDO stated that he had no confirmed dates but would inform Members as soon as he did.

The Chairman asked Members to comment on the draft Business Survey which was attached to the agenda.

Members expressed concern that not enough information would be gathered through the survey as this was a tick box survey.

The LSPM advised that a tick box survey was quicker to fill in and in the past had proved to have had a better return rate.

Resolved:

That the progress and work programme of the Council's Economic Development Section was 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.

6. 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

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

(2) Oakwood Hill Depot

Work had commenced on the feasibility of relocating the Housing Repairs Services to the Depot at Oakwood Hill. This was agreed, in accordance with the Council's accommodation strategy, by the Cabinet on the 9 March 2017. There were cost increases associated with the installation of an alarm system and a final report will be submitted to Cabinet before the end of the year. There were a number of snagging issues to be fully resolved with the building contractor, however progress was being made.

Councillor Breare-Hall asked why there were still issues with snagging as he thought that staff had been in situ for some time now and that these would have been remedied by now. My questions to the Director of Neighbourhoods are:

- (a) When did staff occupy the building; and
- (b) Have Building Control signed off on the depot.

The Director of Neighbourhoods advised that staff moved into the building in September/October 2016 and Building Control had signed off the building apart from one issue which was a means of escape for people with disabilities from the first floor.

The outstanding snagging issues were associated with the configuration of the external landscaping and the offsite monitoring of the alarm system which have contributed to the extra cost involved.

(3) Pyrles Lane Nursery

In March 2016, outline planning permission was granted for the demolition of the District Council's tree/plant propagation nursery in Pyrles Lane, Loughton and the erection of up to 36 dwellings with a mix flats and houses) with associated car parking, landscaping and supporting infrastructure. The Council had commissioned specialist advice on the value and marketing of the site. A report will go to the next Cabinet meeting on the 11 July 2017, with an independent report on the value of the site and some proposals of how the marketing and disposal could be conducted. There were however a number of issues regarding affordable housing on the site and a steer would be sought from Members.

(4) St John's Road Development

Final agreement between the District Council, the Town Council and Frontier Estates had now been reached on the provision of the community elements of the scheme, in particular assurance around the provision of the cinema. This was now in the hands of the respective solicitors to complete the final legal agreement, which should be ready to be entered into by mid-July. Once achieved, further work would commence on a planning application which could be submitted by the end of the year.

(5) North Weald Airfield

After an unsuccessful attempt to galvanise external interest in terms of an operational partner there had been work done through the Local Plan process in terms of employment uses that would be appropriate at the Airfield. The findings were shared by a Member Workshop held on 22 June 2017. More detailed site assessment work will now commence on all the initial sites identified including the Airfield. This will set the planning context in which future commercial aviation related opportunities could be taken forward.

(6) Site of the former Winston Churchill Public House

The scaffolding had now been removed and joint agents have been appointed to let the retail space on the ground floor, for which the Council would retain the income. To date there had been more interested parties than there was space and it was hoped that the retail space would be occupied by September/October 2017.

Councillor Mohindra stated that he thought the ground floor units would be let out and open to the public by September 2017 and not later as Members had just been informed. The Director of Neighbourhoods replied that the target date had always been September 2017. The slight delay was due to the main building being behind schedule and the expressions of interest hadn't come through as quick as we would have expected.

(7) Hillhouse Development

The contract with the Council's new Leisure Management partner Places for People, had been entered into and the management responsibilities were transferred to them on the 1 April 2017. The outline planning permission, on the discharge of all the conditions to include the completion of the Section 106 Agreement, was issued in late March 2017. Places for People were working on the full application for the new Leisure Centre, which would be due for consideration by the District Development Management Committee on 10 July 2017.

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.

7. EPPING FOREST SHOPPING PARK - PROGRESS REPORT

The Council's Asset Management Development Consultant, Mr C Pasterfield presented a report to the Cabinet Committee with regard to the current progress on the development of the Epping Forest Shopping Park. He advised that practical completion of the Shopping Park had been achieved on the 19 June 2017 and control had been handed over to the Council. There were some minor snagging issues and the building contractors were working to remedy these.

The day to day management of the Shopping Park was being handled by Savills which included security and cleaning and they would be reporting to the Council's Estates Management department.

The tenants which had completed and exchanged contracts were Next, TK Maxx, Smyths Toys, Hobbycraft, Pets at Home and Aldi. On the 26 June, three of the tenants had taken occupation of their units and had started their shop fitting works. There were three more lettings in the hands of solicitors and this left one small unit and two larger units to be let. Mr Pasterfield advised that there was a healthy interest in the last three units which the Council were currently considering. He added that it was important to get the right mix of tenants in the Shopping Park.

There was no date for the official opening of the Epping Forest Shopping Park but it was anticipated that it would be on the lead up to the Christmas Shopping period. However some of the units would be open before the official opening and advertising for staff was taking place. Hobbycraft would like to be ready to open for business on the 3 August, Smyths Toys and T K Maxx at the end of August. Pets at Home will take possession of their unit on 17 July and anticipate opening in September and Aldi estimate they would be ready to open at the end of October. Next are doing major alterations to their unit but will be ready to open before the run up to Christmas

Section 278 Road Works

Mr Pasterfield advised that the road works were progressing. The new traffic light system at the junction with Abridge Road was now active and the traffic now seemed to be flowing smoothly through this junction. The roundabout at the Broadway would be completed within two weeks and the traffic lights at Langston Road, Chigwell Road and Oakwood Hill would be completed by the end of August. The resurfacing work had been done at night and this was now complete. The road markings would be completed by the end of the week and the footpath would be finished after the street lights were connected.

Where roads were being planed off such as Langston Road and Chigwell Lane a joint inspection with Essex County Council Highways had taken place to agree any repairs. Structural repairs would be paid for by Essex County Council and they would decide what method they preferred to complete the repairs.

Barrington Green South, by Sainsbury's on the Broadway had not yet been planed off as this was a low level priority in respect of completing the major roadworks.

Councillor Mohindra asked if there was a mechanism in place, for the works the Council were responsible for, would the Council be required to go back and sort it out or would this be handed over to Essex County Council. Mr Pasterfield replied that there would be in place a defects liability period with the contract which would last for 12 months.

Councillor Waller asked when the vehicle electric charging points would go active. Mr Pasterfield advised that they were active now.

At the Chairman's discretion, the meeting then went into private session to discuss individual tenants and their requirements, which were commercially sensitive.

Resolved:

That the progress on the Council's Epping Forest Shopping Park was noted.

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 this was a monitoring report for information not action.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

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

9. 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:

<u>Agenda Item No.</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Exempt Information Paragraph Number</u>
8a	Epping Forest Shopping Park	3

10. EPPING FOREST SHOPPING PARK - PART II

The Director of Neighbourhoods advised Members that there were three units currently in the hands of solicitors and a further two units still to be decided upon.

Although there was much interest in the units the Council had to make the right decision to the mix of tenant that would fit in with the Shopping Park and the Broadway shops.

CHAIRMAN