

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Asset Management and Economic Development Cabinet Committee **Date:** Thursday, 10 October 2019

Place: Council Chamber - Civic Offices **Time:** 7.00 - 7.25 pm

Members Present: Councillors A Patel (Chairman), N Bedford, S Stavrou and S Kane

Other Councillors: Councillors C Whitbread and H Whitbread

Apologies: N Avey

Officers Present: J Nolan (Service Director (Commercial & Regulatory Services)), J Houston (Strategic Partnership Specialist and Economic Lead), G Woodhall (Senior Democratic Services Officer), D Haslam (Economic Development Assistant) and V Messenger (Democratic Services Officer)

Also in attendance: -

9. 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.

10. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Cabinet Committee noted that Councillor S Kane was substituting for Councillor N Avey.

11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

12. MINUTES

Resolved:

- (1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2019 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

13. ASSET MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS - PROGRESS REPORT

The Service Director for Commercial & Regulatory Services presented a progress report on a number of major projects that the Council was managing which involved its property assets.

The Service Director highlighted the following points:

- (i) The Epping Forest Shopping Park was now fully let and open for trading, however roof leaks were continuing; the additional Section 278 Highways works had been completed and were awaiting inspection by Essex County Council.
- (ii) Oakwood Hill Industrial Estate was now fully let again, but a structural issue had arisen which was being investigated.
- (iii) Pyrles Lane Nursery was under offer to be sold and an indemnity insurance policy to protect the position over the access road had been procured; the existing Nursery was due to complete its relocation to the Town Mead depot by the end of 2019.
- (iv) Work was progressing with the masterplanning for the St John's Road development in Epping; an Officer Project Group meeting had been held earlier in the day and the scheme was progressing well.
- (v) For North Weald Airfield: the lease with the Government for a potential freight customs area had been completed; the Essex & East Herts Air Ambulance Trust was currently searching for alternative locations due to the ongoing issue of Natural England not determining any planning applications in the District which might impact upon air quality; masterplanning for various parts of the Airfield had commenced in line with the submission version of the Local Plan dated December 2017; and Saunders were due to make a proposal for the Market at the Airfield.
- (vi) For the Landmark Building at The Broadway in Loughton, the leases for 4 of the units had been completed, terms for one of the leases had now been agreed, interest had been shown in another of the leases and little or no interest in the final lease.

In respect of the Epping Forest Shopping Park, the Service Director informed the Cabinet Committee that the full retention was being retained to investigate the roof leaks. The Council wanted an independent, certified Engineer to examine the roof, and it was intended to undertake the repair works on a phased basis in the next few weeks with the aim to cause the minimum disruption to the tenants. There would be a commission to examine the traffic flows for the site, and investigate whether an additional entrance for the site was required. It was a difficult site and some of the problems were caused by the junction at the top of Langston Road. There would be additional Traffic Marshalls on site to manage the traffic flow in the run-up to Christmas, as this had been successful last year. The Council would also lobby Essex County Council to provide public transport links to and from the Shopping Park by way of a new bus route.

The Cabinet Committee was disappointed to learn that the Essex & East Herts Ambulance Trust was looking to move from its current location at North Weald Airfield. The Service Director explained that this was due to the Habitat Regulations in the draft Local Plan and that Natural England were not determining planning applications within the District which might impact upon Air Quality. Officers were frustrated at this situation as well, because it was delaying a number of planning applications and some businesses within the District were starting to suffer. The Cabinet Committee felt that the Council needed to do whatever was necessary to keep the Air Ambulance stationed at North Weald Airfield.

The Leader of Council reassured the Cabinet Committee that the St John's Road development in Epping was making good progress. The recent workshop had been enlightening, and a report on this matter would be considered by the Cabinet at its meeting in November.

Resolved:

- (1) That the progress made to date with the Council's Asset Management & Development projects be 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 the report is for information only.

14. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - PROGRESS REPORT

The Strategic Partner Specialist & Economic Lead presented an update report to the Cabinet Committee on a number of projects and issues being explored by the Economic Development Team.

The Economic Development Officer updated the Cabinet Committee with the latest developments on the Economic Strategy. The discussion paper on developing an economic strategy – 'Nurturing Growth' – was being revised for a further consultation ending in mid-December. A special Stakeholder Conference had been organised for 13 November 2019 at Theydon Bois Village Hall, to give local partners further opportunity to influence the Strategy. The Conference would be workshop based and focused on the themes contained within the Strategy. One-to-one meetings had also been held with the Epping Forest Chamber of Commerce.

The Strategic Partner Specialist informed the Cabinet Committee that the Herts & Essex Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ) had recently approved a number of changes to better enable it to deliver its Work Programme and the development of a delivery plan for the Digital Innovation Strategy. The Programme Manager for the DIZ was continuing to progress the operational issues with the delivery of the Local Full Fibre Network programme, which would deliver enhanced fibre connectivity within the Zone. The DIZ website was due to be upgraded to enable the promotion of upcoming DIZ events, and this would be supported by the concurrent development of a social media presence for the DIZ.

The Strategic Partner Specialist stated that visits to the Tourism website continued to grow. Officers had continued to lead on cross-border collaboration for tourism development with Broxbourne Borough and Harlow, East Herts and Uttlesford District Councils. A major focus of this cross-border work would be the development of a bid for the new Tourism Zones initiative introduced by the Government. This year's Tourism Conference had been scheduled for 5 December 2019, and would once again be hosted and sponsored by the Marriot Hotel in Waltham Abbey. Ministerial departments had been contacted to provide a speaker to update the Conference delegates on the Tourism Sector Deal and the launch of Tourism Zones.

Councillor N Bedford, as Chairman of the Green Arc Project, reminded the Cabinet Committee that the Project aimed to promote and co-ordinate investment in green infrastructure running from the Thames to Barnet. The aim of the Project was to increase and protect tree canopy / coverage, develop corridors to allow residents and visitors to enjoy the green areas, and encourage community involvement in planting

programmes. The ultimate objective of the project was to plant sufficient trees to offset carbon emissions.

The Strategic Partner Specialist responded to questions from the Cabinet Committee by stating that different types of trees varied in the amount of carbon that they absorbed depending on their location, and certain types of trees assisted with flood alleviation as they could soak up more water than others. The project was looking to unlock the potential of residents to help plant the extra trees, and persuade major employers of their corporate and social responsibility to provide funding for the purchase of new trees. Although, it was emphasised that the problem was usually finding sufficient places to plant the additional trees rather the purchase of new trees. It would be necessary to work in collaboration with others to derive real value from this initiative. In terms of the developing Economic Strategy, it was expected that the final version of the Strategy would be submitted to the Cabinet Committee in January 2020.

Councillor N Bedford reiterated that the types of trees and their location was important, with some trees especially suited to being planted in flood zones and that the problem was usually trying to find the land to plant the extra trees. However, the Councillor was hopeful that farmers could be persuaded to diversify and allow more trees to be planted on their land, and that there was also the potential to plant more trees on land owned by the National Health Service and also around Stansted Airport. Councillor Stavrou commented that she was pleased to see a project that was first mooted 20 years ago was now making an impact and producing real results.

Resolved:

- (1) That the progress made by the Economic Development Team with their current initiatives be noted.

Reasons for Decision:

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

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

None, as the report is for information only.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

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

16. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Cabinet Committee noted there was no business which necessitated the exclusion of the public and press from the meeting.

CHAIRMAN