

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Asset Management and Economic Development Cabinet Committee **Date:** Thursday, 16 January 2020

Place: Council Chamber - Civic Offices **Time:** 7.00 - 7.12 pm

Members Present: Councillors N Bedford (Chairman), N Avey, S Kane and J Philip

Other Councillors: -

Apologies: A Patel and S Stavrou

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

Also in attendance: -

17. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

In the absence of the Chairman, who had tendered his apologies, the Senior Democratic Services Officer requested nominations for the role of Chairman for the meeting.

Resolved:

- (1) That Councillor N Bedford be elected Chairman for the duration of the Cabinet Committee meeting.

18. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Senior Democratic Services Officer 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.

19. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Cabinet Committee noted the following substitutions:

- (a) Councillor J Philip for Councillor S-A Stavrou; and
- (b) Councillor S Kane for Councillor A Patel.

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

21. MINUTES

Resolved:

- (1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2019 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

22. 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:

- (a) Roof leaks had been continuing at the Epping Forest Shopping Park, and an independent roof survey had stated that this was due to incorrect installation. The Section 278 highways works had been signed off by the County Council, and funding had been approved to undertake a study into the car park arrangements at the site.
- (b) A structural issue had arisen in one area of the Oakwood Hill Industrial Estate, which was being reviewed by the Facilities team.
- (c) Pyrles Lane Nursery was currently under offer to be sold to Durkan Developments, and the existing Nursery was due to relocate to the depot at Town Mead by the end of June 2020.
- (d) Initial design work had now been completed for the St John's Road site in Epping, and Cabinet had agreed to transfer the site to Qualis Commercial, subject to a full business case being agreed by the Cabinet.
- (e) Work had commenced on the Master Plan for land at North Weald Airfield, and negotiations had resumed with the Essex & Herts Air Ambulance Trust. A meeting had been held with Saunders Market, who would be providing the Market in future, to discuss their additional requirements; Saunders was now reviewing the position.
- (f) For the Landmark Building in Loughton, leases had been agreed for six of the units, however there had been little interest up to now in the seventh unit. For the unit occupied by the Mediterranean Restaurant, Environmental Health Officers were liaising with the tenant to resolve noise and odour issues.
- (g) The site at Roundhills had been fenced off and access points blocked. The Cabinet had also decided to transfer this site to Qualis Commercial, subject to a full business case being agreed by the Cabinet.

Councillor S Kane highlighted that the car parking at the Epping Forest Shopping Park had been discussed at the recent meeting of the Local Highways Panel. The Service Director stated that the review was due to start in a few weeks, and would be examining how to prevent the use of the car park by non-shoppers, but the primary focus would be on the traffic flows within the car park as there was only one entrance and one exit. The reconfiguration of the car park would be examined and a report would be compiled in due course. Councillor S Kane suggested that the entrance should be as far away from the junction as possible to alleviate traffic congestion; the Service Director reassured the Cabinet Committee that a possible new entrance at

the Seedbank Centre would be examined, which would be further away from Langston Road.

In response to other questions from the Cabinet Committee, the Service Director stated that it was intended to submit the Master Plan report for North Weald Airfield to the Cabinet in June. The development at Roundhills in Waltham Abbey could be progressed relatively quickly, and it was intended to start work after the governance arrangements for the Qualis group of companies had been finalised.

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.

23. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - PROGRESS REPORT

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

The Strategic Partner Specialist informed the Cabinet Committee of the latest developments on the Economic Strategy. The draft Strategy had been a key theme of the Chairman of Council's annual Business Networking event on 28 November 2019, as well as the Tourism Conference on 5 December 2019; it also had formed an element of the presentation to the Youth Council on 10 December 2019. The consultation period for the Economic Strategy had closed on 16 December 2019, and the responses were being collated for use in shaping the final Strategy, which would be presented to the Cabinet for approval in March 2020. A number of events had also been organised to support the discussion paper '*Nurturing Growth*', including the Economic Stakeholder Conference on 13 November 2019.

The Strategic Partnership Specialist reported that work was continuing on the Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ) Local Full Fibre Network Project to progress it through the DCMS Assurance process; the project had reached the '*Ready to Procure*' stage. A presentation had been delivered to the LGA Annual Digital Showcase on 4 November 2019, and further opportunities for the DIZ to work more closely with the Local Government Association and assist other Councils with their own digital innovation had been discussed. The DIZ was involved with the delivery of the '*Be Part of the Next Generation of Digital Adoption*' conference at the BT Tower on 25 February 2020, which would cover technology, infrastructure, investment and skills. The Council had also had an application to the Digital Declaration Programme approved by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, which had centred on two projects – the DIZ Common Asset Register project and the EFDC Citizens Online project. Finally, the 'Digital First' internal working group had been established to promote the use of technology within the Council and maximise the opportunity for shared developments.

The Strategic Partnership Specialist stated that the Annual Tourism Conference on 5 December 2019 had been successful, and a cross border team was being established to prepare a bid for the Government's new Tourism Zone programme. The '*Visit Epping Forest*' website continued to develop, and had recorded its busiest autumn day on 5 November 2019 promoting organised fireworks display events across the District.

In respect of the Green Arc initiative, the Cabinet Committee was reminded that Climate Emergency Champions had been appointed by the Council, and discussions with external organisations to resource a major new planting programme had been positive. In addition, a Green Arc stakeholder conference was planned for March 2020, to develop actionable priorities for the initiative in the future.

In response to questions from the Cabinet Committee, the Strategic Partnership Specialist announced that the DIZ Local Full Fibre Network Project, having passed the '*Ready to Procure*' stage, was now ready to activate the work to physically insert the broadband fibre cables in the ground. In respect of the DIZ Common Asset Register project, the data submission exercise was now complete and the DIZ team was looking to leverage additional resources to progress the project and have something in place by the middle of the summer.

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 was for information only.

24. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

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

25. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

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

CHAIRMAN