

Select Committee Agenda



Stronger Place Select Committee Tuesday, 29th September, 2020

You are invited to attend the next meeting of **Stronger Place Select Committee**, which will be held as a:

Virtual Meeting on Zoom
on **Tuesday, 29th September, 2020**
at **7.00 pm.**

Georgina Blakemore
Chief Executive

**Democratic Services
Officer**

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Members:

Councillors R Bassett (Chairman), S Heather (Vice-Chairman), L Burrows, I Hadley, S Heap, J Jennings, S Jones, H Kauffman, C McCredie, J McIvor and R Morgan

SUBSTITUTE NOMINATION DEADLINE: 6.00PM

WEBCASTING NOTICE (VIRTUAL MEETINGS)

Please note: this meeting may be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's internet site - at the start of the meeting the Chairman will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being filmed.

You should be aware that the Council is a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act. Data collected during this webcast will be retained in accordance with the Council's published policy.

Therefore by participating in this virtual meeting, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes. If members of the public do not wish to have their image captured they should ensure that their video setting throughout the virtual meeting is turned off and set to audio only.

In the event that technical difficulties interrupt the virtual meeting that cannot be overcome, the Chairman may need to adjourn the meeting.

If you have any queries regarding this, please contact the Corporate Communications Manager on 01992 564039.

1. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

1. This virtual meeting is to be webcast. Members are reminded of the need to unmute before speaking.

2. The Chairman will read the following announcement:

“I would like to remind everyone present that this meeting will be broadcast live to the internet (or filmed) and will be capable of repeated viewing (or another use by such third parties). Therefore by participating in this virtual meeting, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes. If members of the public do not wish to have their image captured they should ensure that their video setting throughout the virtual meeting is turned off and set to audio only.

Please also be aware that if technical difficulties interrupt the meeting that cannot be overcome, I may need to adjourn the meeting.”

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

To report the appointment of any substitute members for the meeting.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To declare interests in any item on the agenda.

5. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Pages 5 - 18)

To agree the notes of the meeting of the Select Committee held on 9 July 2020.

6. TERMS OF REFERENCE & WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 19 - 22)

(Chairman/Lead Officer) The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has agreed the Terms of Reference and work programme for this select committee. Members are invited at each meeting to review both documents (see attached).

7. STRONGER PLACE SELECT COMMITTEE - CORPORATE PROGRAMME GOVERNANCE (Pages 23 - 28)

To consider the attached report on the internal governance that has been established to manage and deliver the programmes of work aligned to the Stronger Place ambitions in 2020/21.

8. COVID-19 RECOVERY UPDATE

To consider the attached report (to follow).

9. LOCAL ECONOMIC BUSINESS RECOVERY

To consider the update on the local economic development plan (report to follow).

10. PLANNING DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME (Pages 29 - 38)

(a) To consider progress on the North Weald Airfield Masterplan (report to follow);

(b) To consider the attached report on the progress of the emerging Local Plan and Government White Paper - Planning for the Future.

11. DRAFT SUSTAINABILITY GUIDANCE FOR THE DISTRICT AND HARLOW AND GILSTON GARDEN TOWN

To consider the Cabinet report on the Draft EFDC Sustainability Guidance (report to follow).

12. UPDATE ON REVIEW OF SERVICE CHARGES (Pages 39 - 42)

To consider the attached report that provides an update on the ongoing review of services charges across the District.

13. COUNCIL HOUSEBUILDING PROGRESS REPORT AND THE FUTURE APPROACH TO SITE SELECTION (Pages 43 - 46)

To consider the attached progress report on phases 3 and 4 and the approach to site selection of phase 5 of the Council Housebuilding Programme.

14. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

To note that the next meeting of the Select Committee will be held at 7.00pm on 12 January 2021.

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**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF STRONGER PLACE SELECT COMMITTEE
HELD ON THURSDAY, 9 JULY 2020
IN VIRTUAL MEETING ON ZOOM
AT 7.00 - 9.15 PM**

Members Present:	R Bassett (Member) (Chairman), S Heather (Vice-Chairman), R Brookes, L Burrows, I Hadley, S Heap, J Jennings, S Jones, C McCredie, J Mclvor and R Morgan
Other members present:	S Kane, H Kauffman, S Murray, A Patel, J Philip, H Whitbread, J H Whitehouse and J M Whitehouse
Apologies for Absence:	None.
Officers Present	A Blom-Cooper (Interim Assistant Director (Planning Policy)), N Cole (Corporate Communications Officer), N Dawe (Chief Operating Officer), D Fenton (Service Manager (Housing Management & Home Ownership)), Q Durrani (Service Director (Contracts & Technical Services)), J Gould (Housing Needs and Older Persons Services), A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer), J Houston (Strategic Partnership Specialist and Economic Lead), V Messenger (Democratic Services Officer), R Pavey (Service Director (Customer Services)) and N Richardson (Service Director (Planning Services))

1. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman made a short address to remind all present that the virtual meeting would be broadcast on the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

2. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The following substitution was reported:

That Councillor R Brookes was substituting for Councillor H Kauffman.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- (a) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Conduct, Councillor J Mclvor declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 7, Covid-19 - Places, by virtue of owning several businesses that had received Business Support Grants from the Council.
- (b) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Conduct, Councillor J M Whitehouse declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 13, Group company structure – Epping Town Centre sites, by virtue of living in St John's Road and was a member of Epping Town Council.

4. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor J Jennings was pleased to see the new type of litter bin in the High Road, which had different compartments for different types of waste. However, with regard

to the Waste Management Contract – Current Performance (Min no 29), she remarked on a recent survey that apparently showed most residents preferred recycling sacks to another bin and that the Council should take this into consideration.

RESOLVED:

That the notes of the last meeting of the Stronger Place Select Committee held on 9 December 2019 be agreed as a correct record.

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE & WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman apologised that there were quite a few verbal reports being given at this meeting as it had been rescheduled at short notice because of the ongoing coronavirus situation. In future, he would look forward to receiving written reports from officers, as this would allow members to scrutinise items more effectively.

Councillor C McCredie asked about work programme item 1, Covid-19 – Places, regarding local economic business recovery and whether traders at the Epping town market would receive business support grants. The Service Director (Customer Services), R Pavey, replied that in terms of the current scheme, the business support grant had been discretionary and market traders had not been included.

The Select Committee noted its Terms of Reference.

6. COUNCIL HOUSEBUILDING PROGRESS REPORT - PHASES 2 - 4

The Committee agreed to bring forward agenda item 12 at the request of the Service Manager (Housing Management & Home Ownership).

The Service Manager (Housing Management & Home Ownership), D Fenton, reported on the progress of phases 2 to 4 of the Council's housebuilding programme, for developments completed on-site and currently being procured. On phase 2 (Burton Road, Loughton - HR107), of the 51 properties, six units been delayed due to a gas supply problem but were completed and handed over on 19 March 2020. On phase 3 (Queens Road, North Weald - HR116) the original start had been delayed with the discovery of asbestos. The contractor was some four weeks behind schedule because of service utility delays, and there was also the potential for further delays caused by Covid-19 restrictions.

Phase 4.1 comprised 14 properties at five sites in Loughton and Ongar. The contractor had commenced works on 29 June 2020 at two Loughton sites, but would stagger starts at the other sites in August and September to comply with new working arrangements. The handover was forecast for June 2021. Phase 4.2 for 22 properties at seven sites in Buckhurst Hill, Loughton and Waltham Abbey had gone out to tender and a report was due to go to the next Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee (CHBCC). Phase 4.3 for 21 properties at seven sites, one in Buckhurst Hill and six in Waltham Abbey, had gone out to tender. It was anticipated works would commence in November 2020 and complete between November 2021 and March 2022. In phase 4.4, properties at four sites in Loughton had undergone a detailed design review, which would potentially increase the affordable units by 12 to a total of 27.

In phase 5, a detailed review to identify several potential sites for future development was almost finished. However, a different approach would be taken by officers to

include engagement and to work with local councillors to discuss and address any local issues that these development sites might have. It was anticipated that a Members Briefing would be organised to highlight this approach and present officers' aspirations before the submission of planning applications. Once sufficiently progressed, a Feasibility Report would be presented to CHBCC for consent to proceed and progress to the planning application and delivery stage.

Councillor R Bassett asked about the large variation of over £1 million on phase 2. The Service Manager (Housing Management & Home Ownership) replied this was in connection to the fire issue and gas works. Previously, Housing's approach on finance had been more to do with due diligent work that had been undertaken. Housing Development Manager, J Cosgrave, was the project manager, and they were confident that going forward financial steps had been put in place to ensure the financial forecast was accurate. The Council's Housebuilding programme was a 30-year business plan and therefore, it was vital to understand the viability of schemes.

Councillor S Heap was enthused by the Housing officers' new approach and future interaction with councillors, and that Housing was doing an excellent job on the Council housebuilding programme. The Service Manager (Housing Management & Home Ownership) replied that officers were looking at further sites that would be viable for more properties and were working with the Local Plan.

Councillor S Murray agreed with Councillor Heap about the new, exciting approach to be taken on phase 5, but would this engagement be with ward councillors and other councillors within a community? The Service Manager (Housing Management & Home Ownership) replied that engagement would initially be with ward councillors. Officers would be looking at communities to create places where people would want to live and be seeking Cabinet agreement on these sites. There would be collaboration going forward.

Councillor J Jennings remarked that Epping Forest was an expensive District to live in. There was a huge need for affordable housing and for more availability of Council housing, as private developers did not build affordable housing.

The Chairman was pleased to see the progress being made and that this Council was one of the few councils to have an active housebuilding programme.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of this Progress Report on Phases 2 to 4 of the Council Housebuilding Programme be noted.

7. COVID-19 - PLACES

(a) Business support – grant

R Pavey, Service Director (Customer Services) reported that the Government had been keen for the quick distribution of the small business support grant and retail, leisure and hospitality grant, which amounted to £29 million - £30 million for the Epping Forest District. The Council had distributed 90 per cent of the grant within two weeks to businesses in the District. A mandatory requirement was that it was to help businesses cover high property costs that could demonstrate a loss of income because of the Covid-19 lockdown. An additional grant of £1.5 million had been received for another 5 per cent of businesses that had not received a grant originally and had been aimed at small businesses in shared offices spaces where they were

not the ratepayer, bed and breakfast establishments and some charities. The focus had been on regular market traders with fixed property costs at covered markets where there was daily trading, rather than the District's open markets one day / a week. There were some discretionary elements within the criteria for the grants that Cabinet had chosen to support. The Council had received 250 applications of which some had been paid a grant, some were still being processed, but some had been turned down. The Council was anticipating an underspend. After the current application phase, the Council might have other options to use the grant money.

Councillor R Bassett asked that as he was the trustee of a community transport charity that provided a service, could the charity apply for a grant as it had fixed property costs in St John's Road, Epping, and paid its electric utility bills to Essex County Council. The Service Director (Customer Services) advised the charity to submit an online application via the Council's website.

Councillor J McIvor was appreciative of the exceptional job officers had done in supporting businesses with the initial business grants. He asked where businesses had since ceased trading before Covid-19 but had received grants, would the Council cancel these cheque payments and how would the Council be auditing these payments in relation to fraud? The Service Director replied that the Business Rates Register had been used and a number of cheques had been returned, but work was ongoing on actions against fraud. If the Council became aware of such cases, fraud officers would investigate. This had also instigated a data cleansing exercise as well.

Councillor S Heap asked about small businesses with huge premises, for example at North Weald or Stapleford Abbots, and did the Council have the discretion to assess applications? The Service Director (Customer Services) replied that the scheme had a cap on the rateable value of premises, which was £51,000. The Government would need to be asked if there was flexibility in phase 2, as it would be auditing the Council on those grants. This might also bring other properties into the scope of the grant, but the Council would have to manage the scope to remain within budget.

Councillor C McCredie asked if grants to traders at Epping market had been considered an option as they had complained to her and if this could be looked into further. The Service Director (Customer Services) replied that local market traders were not in the scope of this phase. In the next phase, the Council would see how much funding was left and then look at other applications.

Councillor J McIvor asked if the Council was keeping a list of businesses that had consistently failed to receive these grants and would this be reported back to the Government. The Service Director (Customer Services) replied that officers were gathering information with the end of the first phase and had reached out to businesses in shared office spaces but he was not aware of any businesses missing out. The Government had stepped in to help with other industries, such as nurseries with free business rates for 2021. The Council was keeping records on this and would liaise and provide feedback to the Government.

(b) Safer spaces

The Interim Assistant Director (Planning Policy and Implementation), A Blom-Cooper, reported that safer spaces had been set up in response to Covid-19 to support the reopening of the high streets and to support active travel. Essex County Council (ECC) had been awarded up to £1.9 million to support this scheme. The Council submitted bids to ECC for Epping and Waltham Abbey but only one bid was forwarded to Central Government. However, ECC had received less than half of the

total value of the bids, as many of the ECC schemes put forward had not met the criteria. The monies were with ECC so it was not known what the Council would be able to spend. The extension of pavements (so they were less of a trip hazard) to facilitate market traders and social distancing, planters, cycle racks and lockable bollards were being looked into and would continue to be reviewed by the Council. Looking forward to additional Central Government funding, the Business and Planning Bill was going through Parliament, which would licence tables and chairs on pavements. Therefore, the Council was concentrating on hospitality business areas in Buckhurst Hill, Loughton and Ongar and was evaluating bid costings to submit to Central Government.

Councillor S Murray was pleased to hear this progress but asked on what basis were bids for Epping and Waltham Abbey put forward first, as Loughton was busier? Therefore, what criteria was used for the order of towns in the District and at which meeting was this decided? The Interim Assistant Director replied the Council had to submit the bids very quickly and had looked at schemes that had already been identified in our infrastructure delivery plan, as officers had the evidence to use in the bids.

Cllr J McIvor asked what evidence and information were required to make such an application? Ongar was a failing high street before Covid-19, was there a way that funding could be used for high streets like Ongar which were in need of support? The Interim Assistant Director replied that it depended on what Government criteria was required for the next tranche. Epping had been put forward by ECC as it had best met these criteria but ECC had not received all the funding. The criteria were detailed in a 30-page Government document, the details of which could be supplied to the councillor but she did not know how ECC had chosen the schemes.

Cllr A Patel advised that the Safer Spaces Team held regular meetings and was looking at various schemes that the Government was bringing forward. Officers were working to make high streets safer in relation to social distancing measures with Town Centre Partnerships. The Economic Development Team was carrying out individual surveys of high streets to see which business premises could use pavements and if this would result in any loss of parking spaces.

Councillor S Heap thanked officers for all their work on this, but as 40 per cent of the District population lived in Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell and Loughton, the Council should concentrate on those areas.

Councillor J M Whitehouse asked how much of the £60,000 grant had been spent / remained; what was the initial feedback on the scheme; and what was the measure used about interventions? The Interim Assistant Director replied that no information on the budget had been received from ECC. Not one of the schemes received full funding because of a Government cut in spending. The Council had a live Commonplace website to help identify pinch points in the District and had so far received over 2,000 responses, but only one complaint had referred to loss of parking. If you clicked on the map on the Commonplace website, you could look at the comments reported on a pinch point. A report would be going to Cabinet on 20 July 2020. Councillor J M Whitehouse asked about a qualitative assessment on the change in traffic levels. The Interim Assistant Director replied that traffic levels were back up to pre-Covid-19 levels, which officers would be assessing.

Councillor J McIvor asked which high streets were most at risk on social distancing and therefore, least safe in terms of adequate social distancing? The Interim Assistant Director replied that Epping had posed some challenges, especially as the

market had created some pinch points. Ongar had very narrow pavements and the scope for more pavement space was very limited. Pinch points in Loughton were also being investigated.

Cllr A Patel said that for Buckhurst Hill, work was ongoing on assimilating scheme costings on what was feasible and what was already there. The Interim Assistant Director welcomed member interaction on this project and had identified some councillors with whom officers were liaising with already.

Councillor R Bassett remarked that the coronavirus had posed a new situation and officers were working it out, but it all took time and resources were limited.

(c) General economic measures and support, and local economic business recovery

The Partnerships and Economic Development Specialist, J Houston, reported that these were unprecedented economic times. The Council's economic strategy, agreed before the coronavirus, had showed the District was well placed to cope with an economic contraction, but the impact of Covid-19 on every economic sector could not have been predicted. Officers had distributed the grants quickly. This was a busy period with lots of business meetings especially with business leaders to identify areas where improvements could be made, and attended by the Cabinet Portfolio Holders, Councillors N Bedford and J Philip. Officers had dealt with over 100 callers and signposted many businesses to the immediate grants and other grants.

The Council had met with the Federation of Small Businesses, Town Centre Partnerships and tourism attractions to ensure the Council was reaching out as efficiently as possible, and covered plans on reopening to see where support would be needed. Officers had been conducting research into the Council's handling of the crisis in relation to what was happening on a national basis and was looking at furloughed jobs and levels of unemployment. Officers were monitoring car park usage and footfall levels as well as checking to see if any Council shop leases were being handed back. The Economic Development Team had been preparing and updating its responsibilities in connection to the Council's recovery plan. This included initiatives it wanted to bring to Cabinet to help in the District's recovery, which included hospitality and visitor support, and to kickstart apprenticeships and help unemployment levels. The Government Chancellor made a range of announcements yesterday which officers were evaluating.

On the digital platform front, the Council had managed to bring in some 20 million of investment on the digital infrastructure, which would enable 99 per cent connectivity across the District by the end of next year so that GP surgeries could benefit from ultrafast broadband. The Council received information on the availability of Government grants and would be submitting a bid for a new platform for social exclusion especially digital exclusion. It would also ensure that the Council was best placed to receive its fair share of any future grants from Government, the Department of Works and Pensions and Essex County Council to use for the benefit of the District.

Councillor R Bassett remarked that gyms would be opening up towards the end of July which would restart the leisure industry sector.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Business support grant update be noted;

- (2) That the Covid-19 Safer Spaces initiative be noted; and
- (3) That the General economic measures and support, and local economic business recovery be noted.

8. NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD MASTERPLAN

The Planning Services Director, N Richardson, reported that in the emerging Local Plan there was a requirement for a masterplan for North Weald Airfield (NWA) with new employment opportunities. The appointed consultants, Turner and Townsend and RPS Group, had been instructed to undertake survey work, and a viability report was being prepared. The masterplan was for non-residential use. As a designated employment area, this would create new jobs as part of the Council's Covid-19 recovery plan in the long term. There was to be an initial contingency workshop for Cabinet members by the end of July for the masterplan site options. The Planning Team needed to get involved with the project proposals and planners had advised on a planning performance agreement template. At various stages as the masterplan progressed, the proposals would go through the Quality Review Panel. Thus, the masterplan would be in place for the site before the submission of planning applications, and all the NWA development proposals must be in accordance with the masterplan.

Councillor R Bassett asked if there was the possibility of tidying up and moving some of the business premises on the site as there locations were spread out across NWA. The Planning Services Director replied that Turner and Townsend and RPS would be bringing options forward, especially to the east of the runway where most of the development opportunities were to be sited. Councillor Bassett continued that some of the people looking after the aircraft there wanted to create a mini aircraft heritage site. The Service Director replied if this created employment opportunities then this could give it potential. Councillor Bassett asked about the possible Government use of the site by the HMRC in connection with Brexit. The Service Director replied that this could be the case as the special development order would finish at the end of December 2020, but there was no further information available at present. Councillor S Heap asked if the Council was paid, to which the Chief Operating Officer replied that the Council had received a reasonable rental of some £200,000 and a one-off payment of £500,000, £50,000 of which had been paid to North Weald Parish Council. Councillor Heap asked if there would be a park and ride scheme at NWA. The Service Director replied this concerned a separate planning application but was not part of the emerging Local Plan. Members were advised not to converse with the developers directly but to go through Planning.

RESOLVED:

That progress of the North Weald Airfield Masterplan be noted.

9. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LOCAL PLAN: UPDATE ON PROGRESS

The Interim Assistant Director (Planning Policy & Implementation) introduced the regular quarterly report that would be going to Cabinet on 20 July 2020. Following the recent Executive Briefing, the final report included a few updates, particularly to the spreadsheets. Members received regular updates on the strategic masterplans, concept frameworks, other sites within the emerging Local Plan and the schemes that would be going before the Quality Review Panels. A workshop on the draft Green Infrastructure Plan had been held last week and the consultation would end on 16 July 2020. The final Green Infrastructure Plan would go to Cabinet in October

2020 for approval. Officers continued to progress work on the Main Modifications (MMs). The third tranche of Main Modifications (MMs) had been submitted to the Inspector in early June 2020. As completion of the MMs was scheduled for the end of September, the Implementation Team expected to go out to consultation on the MMs in October 2020.

Cllr R Bassett referred to site LOU.R9 (Epping Forest College, Borders Lane, Loughton) and remarked that this land had previously been owned by the College, but since sold to a developer who was submitting this application for 139 residential units.

Councillor S Heap said he was keeping an open mind so as not to fetter his discretion, but from the way some of the applications were presented, such as the Dowding Way, it looked as if the Council wanted this rather than for it to be decided. The Interim Assistant Director replied that all current applications were on this list. The spreadsheets in the report just provided an update and information for members on what was coming forward for sites of more than six dwellings or for a certain quantum of floor space. The Implementation Team dealt with the strategic sites and the strategic implementation sites.

Councillor C McCredie thanked the Interim Assistant Director but had concerns on how current the report was and how relevant the figures in the report were. For the South Epping site, the Inspector wanted numbers reduced. For the Old Laundry site, Epping, currently undergoing a virtual public hearing, so the Council might lose most of those dwellings as it was up to the Inspector. On 1 Buttercross Lane, this had come before the Council twice for six apartments, but the latest application was for a house and three apartments so less than was planned for. On Broadbanks, the application for nine dwellings was not acceptable to Epping Town Council and there were other applications that recommended refusal. The Duke of Wellington PH had been recommended for refusal. Therefore, there was concern that all these potential developments as part of the Local Plan might not happen. The Interim Assistant Director replied that the full list included allocated and unallocated sites. Some of the sites you mentioned were not allocated with the Local Plan, but anyone could submit a planning application. The Council and the South Epping site promoter were in discussions on the number of units, but this was subject to the Inspector's decision. Epping Laundry site was currently awaiting the Inspector's decision.

RESOLVED:

That progress of Masterplans and Concept Frameworks, including the use of Planning Performance Agreements and the progress of other proposals at preapplication and application stage be noted.

10. CLIMATE CHANGE

(a) Climate Change and Sustainable Travel

The Interim Assistant Director (Planning Policy and Implementation) reported that recruitment to both posts had been achieved. The Travel Officer had started on 1 June while the Climate Change Officer would take up this position in September 2020. There was a lot of work to be undertaken around the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC), air quality issues including the draft Mitigation Strategy, as well as building on the post-Covid-19 recovery and safer spaces project.

The Chief Operating Officer, N Dawe, continued that next month the proposal would be developed in more detail and its status would switch from strategy to task.

Councillor A Heap asked about sustainable travel and buses to Epping for the Latton Priory Local Plan site as this would be required. The Interim Assistant Director replied that work had been commissioned on bus provision from Harlow and Epping. Cycling and walking would promote sustainable travel but was not an option for aged people.

(b) Update on Environmental Enhancements and Tree Planting Initiatives

The Service Director (Commercial and Regulatory) / (Contracts and Technical Services), Q Durrani, explained that this report had been delayed when the last Select Committee meeting on 24 March 2020 had been cancelled because of the Covid-19 lockdown. The report listed the types of work that the Council's Countrycare Team was involved with. This covered over 3,600 Veteran Trees (trees over 300 years old), plus over 1,200 'notable' trees that weren't old enough to be classed as veteran yet. The Council also managed around 15,000 public realm trees on open spaces and the public highway, but this did not include woodland. A further 119 semi-mature trees had been planted in safe locations in Chigwell Row and Epping. Tree planting was being organised for the Loughton Recreation area and the Thornwood Nature Reserve this financial year.

The Green Infrastructure Strategy would help to plan and facilitate the integration and expansion of tree planting in the District. Volunteers did a lot of work as did Tree Wardens, who monitored the health of trees. The Essex Forest Project to plant 375,000 trees by 2025 including flood alleviation tree planting schemes was likely to form part of this strategy, as well as the 'Green Arc'. This was an initiative where London met the countryside (from Thames Chase through to the Lee Valley area) with the aim to plant a million trees. There would also be more tree planting opportunities in the Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANG) being delivered alongside the proposed growth in the District.

Cllr R Bassett was impressed by the number of veteran trees that had survived the hurricane of 1987. He asked if the Council was working with Lee Valley Regional Park and Roding Valley Nature Reserve to bid for some of these trees? The Service Director replied that the Countrycare Team had a close working relationship with officers at the Lee Valley Regional Park and had bid for a £50,000 grant to plant trees. Tree-planting needed to be carefully planned. Integrated green sites would be developed for the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town sites.

Councillor C McCredie praised these initiatives and endorsed the work of the District's tree wardens.

Councillor S Murray said he lived locally to the nature reserve and Roding Valley Recreation Ground. The latter was managed by Loughton Town Council and this Council's Grounds Maintenance Team did a very good job. It was used by hundreds of people during the coronavirus crisis. The nature reserve and the Council had a very good partnership. Tree planting had been carried out on the River Roding to reduce erosion. Also, the City of London Corporation (CLC), which looked after Epping Forest, was an important SSSI site because of the huge number of veteran trees.

Councillor J Jennings supported the excellent schemes. The Councillor had planted trees in her own garden, but it also had two ancient trees and natural hawthorn

hedges. The Campaign to Protect Rural England supported the use of hedges to catch carbon dioxide emissions, but many hedges had been lost over time. Could hedges be included in some of the environmental enhancement schemes? The Service Director would take this feedback to the Countrycare Team.

Councillor S Heap remarked that this was a good report and that he lived near Lords Bushes where there were some 500 trees in a 50-hectare area. The CLC had been doing a lot of planting. He supported the planting of copses to enhance insect colonies and hoped the Council would fund such schemes.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the progress in recruitment and ongoing work on climate change and sustainable travel be noted;
- (2) That the baseline data on Council managed green infrastructure and the potential for future environmental enhancement and tree planting be noted; and
- (3) That opportunities for future tree planting initiatives be explored through the Green Infrastructure Strategy that is in preparation.

11. SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW

The Service Manager (Housing Needs and Older People's Services), J Gould, reported that this review provided a progress report on the Council's sheltered housing. Ark had been commissioned to undertake a review of the Council's 12 sheltered housing schemes. As life expectancy increased, the demographic of an ageing population changed in relation to the needs for health, social care and housing. By building a comprehensive picture of performance and sustainability, as well as taking into consideration the likely future demand for accommodation, the review achieved a clear direction for accommodation to make best use of the stock to meet residents' needs.

Ratings of the 12 schemes had resulted in:

- green: 6 – for recommendations to continue use but explore minor remodelling to make better use of guest rooms, second lounges and disused warden accommodation;
- amber: 4 – for recommendations to continue use as sheltered accommodation but try to improve quality, desirability and overall performance; and
- amber/red: 2 – for recommendations to continue use as sheltered accommodation in the short term but with more targeted improvements to better meet the needs of the District's ageing population.

Councillor R Bassett commented that the Council had 463 sheltered housing accommodation units but with the requirement to keep older people in their own homes, how many did the Council need to keep up with demand? The Service Manager replied that the District's population of over 65s was expected to increase by 3% in the next decade to around 30,000 (22.5% of the District's total population) and worked with Essex County Council (ECC) to help people to live independently. Much of the stock was pre-1970 so improvements were required as the residents'

needs changed, but great strides were being achieved for older people within the Housing and Property Directorate.

Councillor R Brookes commented that there was a demand for 2-bed accommodation for older people, if couples did not sleep together or as in one case for two sisters, or sometimes for a carer to stay the night, and was surprised this had not come up in the survey. There was also a tremendous demand for housing for the under 35s. The Service Manager replied that there was a need for 2-beds. Housing officers were getting to know current tenants better. Officers were incentivising tenants under occupying properties to move to more appropriate accommodation. The remodelling of some stock with retractable partitions in larger bedrooms would help focus on the needs of the residents. There were increasing amounts of young homeless people who were placed in bedsits. However, by having creative housing solutions for younger people, this would keep the flow going and help maximise stock.

Councillor J Jennings commented that mixed aged groups could be mutually beneficial. How many sheltered housing units were empty, and how many did not have good broadband? The Service Manager replied that she did not have the figure to hand and there were voids in the housing stock, but the coronavirus had resulted in more of this age group shielding. Housing was focussing on more connectivity as a result of the Covid-19 crisis where people were having to work remotely, and Housing was trying to get communal broadband into the housing schemes as they did not have Wi-fi but was not aware of any specific issues.

Councillor J McIvor commented on the good report and that in the affordability section the Council should be proud of being significantly below the benchmark of 35% affordability. The Councillor commented that under resident profile, 9% of older residents were in full or part-time employment. Was there any scope to encourage residents to move to perhaps be nearer their work, or be less isolated, or be with people of a similar age and the benefits of this? Were the two connected and could this help free up stock that could perhaps be put to better use? The Service Manager replied that once Housing officers knew the number of people under occupying this would help. It was not specific to older people but anyone under occupying. A range of opportunities could be offered to residents and work was underway this year on better use of Housing stock and greater creativity would help.

Councillor S Murray asked if the Council still had financial incentives on people downsizing, and the funding of an officer to help elderly people through the moving experience? The Service Manager replied yes, the Council did have an incentive programme around downsizing and there was a dedicated officer in the Older People's Housing Team to help support residents moving.

Councillor H Whitbread (Portfolio Holder Housing and Communities) said this was a really important piece of work and both Service Managers, J Gould and D Fenton, had a 21st century approach to housing.

Councillor J H Whitehouse asked if access to the Housing Allocation Officer was just for housing tenants? The Service Manager replied the officer based in the Older People's Housing Team would support and advise anyone applying for or moving into older people's accommodation. Councillor J H Whitehouse remarked that sheltered housing helped to prevent and/or delay older people moving into residential care and many might have carers coming in several times a day. When she had been a County Councillor there was a place in Brentwood that had combined all the residents care services and provided 2 or 3 full time carers on-site all the time. It had

also been flexible if residents returned from hospital. Now there were a lot of independent care agencies, but this had provided a much better standard of care. The Service Manager replied that local based care could be tailored to residents' needs. Social care came under the provision of ECC, but she would contact ECC and see what scope there was on this.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the key findings from the Sheltered Housing Review summarised in this report be noted;
- (2) That the five recommendations below arising from the review be approved:
 - (i) To take forward proposals for remodelling and redevelopment;
 - (ii) To work with residents (including prospective residents) to develop forward looking and sustainable standards that improve the quality, suitability and desirability of schemes;
 - (iii) To improve the approach to asset management;
 - (iv) To improve demand for sheltered housing;
 - (v) To improve the financial performance of schemes;
- (3) That detailed feasibility studies on any schemes receiving a red rating through the process of review be agreed to be undertaken; and
- (4) That the proposal of any resulting projects plan with timescales and resident consultation programmes be brought back to committee for agreement prior to commencement be approved.

12. GROUP COMPANY STRUCTURE - EPPING TOWN CENTRE SITES

On behalf of the Strategic Director, the Service Manager (Housing Needs and Older People's Services) reported that the interim Qualis Board and the group of companies had been established. Qualis Commercial was involved with the development of Council owned land. In April 2020, Cabinet approved the transfer of the land ownership into Qualis Commercial for the five Epping Town sites and the Roundhills site. Qualis Management expected the delivery of the Council's repairs service, and work on the Epping Town Council sites to go live in September 2020. Qualis Commercial and the Design Team were working to develop the strategic options for the five Epping Town sites – St John's Road, Bakers Lane and Cottis Lane car parks, land by the Civic Offices and Epping Sports Centre. The Planning performance agreement that set out the approach through the pre-planning stages up to the submission of a full planning application had been agreed. To ensure stakeholder engagement throughout the planning process, a detailed communications plan would be established, to include consultation through the Commonplace online community platform. A detailed appraisal process would be followed to assess the suitability of each site to achieve a policy compliant scheme. The team was currently in the first stage of design and consultation. On the Roundhills site, stage 1 was due for completion in July, the architects had been appointed and planning submission should be achieved by the end of the summer.

Cllr R Bassett said that Councillor H Kauffman was on the interim Board and did he want to comment? Councillor Kauffman advised that there would be a large amount of work undertaken along with feasibility studies, dialogue with planners and was looking forward to the consultations.

Councillor R Brookes asked what was planned for the St John's Road site on the proposed leisure centre as she had received many enquiries about this? When would she be able to advise them further and how would they respond to the company handling the requests? The Service Manager replied that she would ask the Strategic Director to reply to this question after the meeting.

Councillor A Heap commented that in respect of the planning performance agreements, it seemed that the Council was approving the Council's progress. On artistic qualities of place making and conservation, he was not convinced that anything was particularly artistically viable, and who would be in control of this? Qualis should not just concentrate on the commercial aspects but could have an energy company and by putting solar panels on buildings, the Council should be able to benefit from this renewable energy revenue stream that could help lower Council Tax, for instance. He would submit a proposal on this in due course.

Councillor J M Whitehouse remarked that regarding the Commonplace consultation, there was not much information on the proposals being shared with the public, yet there had been many reports to Cabinet, and this should be explicit in consultations. Also, who was on the interim Board and when would the transfer to the full, permanent Board happen? Also, how much capital loan had Qualis used thus far?

The Strategic Director responded after the meeting that at present the Commonplace site was unable to post any specific proposals until they had been through Qualis Board and Committee. This initial consultation with Commonplace was to find out what was important to those living and working in the District by using sentiment questions about the different sites. This information would then be considered and used to progress draft proposals, which would be added to the site as soon as possible. The site was a way to gain as much engagement and feedback as early on as possible.

Cllr Kauffman replied that he was a non-executive director, as were Councillors N Avey and J Philip. The transfer to the permanent Board should take place between September and October this year. Mr P ffolkes Davis was the Chairman, and members on the interim board were very knowledgeable and experienced. Mr C Ives was the Development Director and was also very experienced. The planning performance agreement was a very useful tool. He supported its use because Council officers were the best people to know and advise on sustainability, design and use, while Qualis, as a developer, was there to progress the projects forward. This combination was right to ensure good design and uses, and the planning performance agreement allowed for checks and balances to be in place. In terms of green initiatives, Qualis was going for highly sustainable developments and there would be more information coming out, but Qualis had to make sure that these schemes were financially viable and were appropriate for the development sites. We were going through a very difficult commercial time at the moment, the world was changing and we needed to be able to react to that, not produce a scheme that might already be out of date because of the circumstances that we would be delivering it.

The Chief Operating Officer, N Dawe, said that £1.5 million had been drawn from the capital to date and effectively after that, a full report on the first two quarters of operation would be produced for the interim Qualis Board in late July and be reported to Cabinet soon after.

Councillor A Heap commented that going forward he thought the Qualis Board should be enlarged and open to the Greens, especially on the future of the Green

Policy, and the Liberal Democrats would also have something to offer. Therefore, there would be wider participation.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the current progress with the Group Company set up be noted;
- (2) That progress of the five Epping Town Centre sites be noted; and
- (3) That progress of the Roundhills sites be noted.

13. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that future meetings of the Select Committee would be held at 7.00pm on the following dates:

- 29 September 2020;
- 12 January 2021; and
- 29 March 2021

STRONGER PLACE SELECT COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE 2020/21

Core Areas of Responsibility

- (1) To provide scrutiny for the following corporate projects:
 - Local Plan Delivery;
 - St. Johns Road;
 - North Weald (including masterplanning);
 - Council Housebuilding; and
 - Economic growth, skills and employment;
- (2) To have overview of the performance of the Waste Management Contract and Leisure Management Contract and provide scrutiny of services that are not performing to standard and develop proposals for their improvement; and
- (3) To have overview of the green agenda helping to inform policy and future proofing the place.

Scrutiny Role of the Select Committee

- (1) To engage in policy review and development, with a focus on improvement and how this can be best achieved;
- (2) To develop a work programme each year that effectively scrutinises the areas of responsibility outlined above;
- (3) To consider any matter referred by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet or a Portfolio Holder and to make recommendations as appropriate;
- (4) To consider the effect of Government actions or initiatives that affect the Select Committees areas of responsibility and the impact on customers, residents, businesses and visitors to our district, and to respond to consultation activities as appropriate;
- (5) To establish working groups and task and finish panels to undertake any activity within these terms of reference;
- (6) To undertake pre-scrutiny through the review of specific proposals of the Council and its partner organisations or other local service providers to help develop policy;
- (7) To monitor and review relevant projects and associated closure and benefits reports; and
- (8) To engage with the community and encourage community engagement.

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**Stronger Place Select Committee
Work Programme 2020/21
Chairman: Cllr R Bassett**

Stronger Place Corporate Programme Alignment focuses on corporate objectives and our response to Covid-19 recovery.

No.	Item	Deadline	Progress and Comments	Programme of Meetings
1.	Covid-19 – Place	July 2020	COMPLETED - To include reference to: (a) Business support – grant (b) Safer spaces (c) General economic measures and support (d) Local economic business recovery	9 July 2020 29 Sept 2020 12 Jan 2021 29 March 2021
		September 2020	(a) Covid-19 recovery update (b) Safer place (c) Current statistics	
2.	Economic Development: Growth/skills/employment programme	September 2020	(a) Local economic business recovery and resources (b) Economic improvements (c) Town centre regeneration (d) Digital enablement and gateway	
3.	North Weald Airfield Masterplan Local Plan – update (previously)	July 2020	COMPLETED - To include: (a) Progress / update	
		July 2020	(a) Local Plan progress report including Garden Town and Latton Priory (b) Green Infrastructure consultation update	
	Planning Development and Improvement programme	September 2020	(a) North Weald Airfield Masterplan progress report (b) Local Plan progress report	
		January	(a) Local Plan progress report (b) Green Infrastructure Strategy	
4.	Climate Change (previously)	July 2020	COMPLETED - (a) Climate Change and Sustainable Travel update including recruitment (b) Update on tree planting initiatives	
	District Sustainability programme	September 2020	(a) Draft Sustainability Guidance for the District and Harlow Garden Gilston Town	
		January 2021	tbc	

5.	Epping Town sites (previously)	July 2020	COMPLETED - Progress / update
	Town Centre Development	September 2020	(a) Progress Report (re. Council as the landowner)
		January 2021 (tbc)	(a) Leisure Management Contract - performance and progress update (b) Waste Management Contract - performance and progress update
6.	Sheltered Housing Review (previously)	July 2020	COMPLETED - Report and update
	Community Health and Wellbeing Programme	September 2020	(a) Service charges review
		January 2021	(b) Sheltered Housing
7.	Council Housebuilding programme	July 2020	COMPLETED - Provide plan for 2020/21
		September 2020	(a) Council housebuilding progress report (and link to creating Great Places programme)
		January 2021	Draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme 2021/22 to 2025/26

Report to Stronger Place Select Committee



Date of meeting: 29 September 2020

SCRUTINY

Portfolio: Leader - Councillor C Whitbread



Subject: Stronger Place Select Committee – Corporate Programme Governance

Officer contact for further information: Louise Wade (lwade@eppingforestdc.gov.uk / 01992 642311)

Democratic Services Officer: V Messenger (01992 564265)

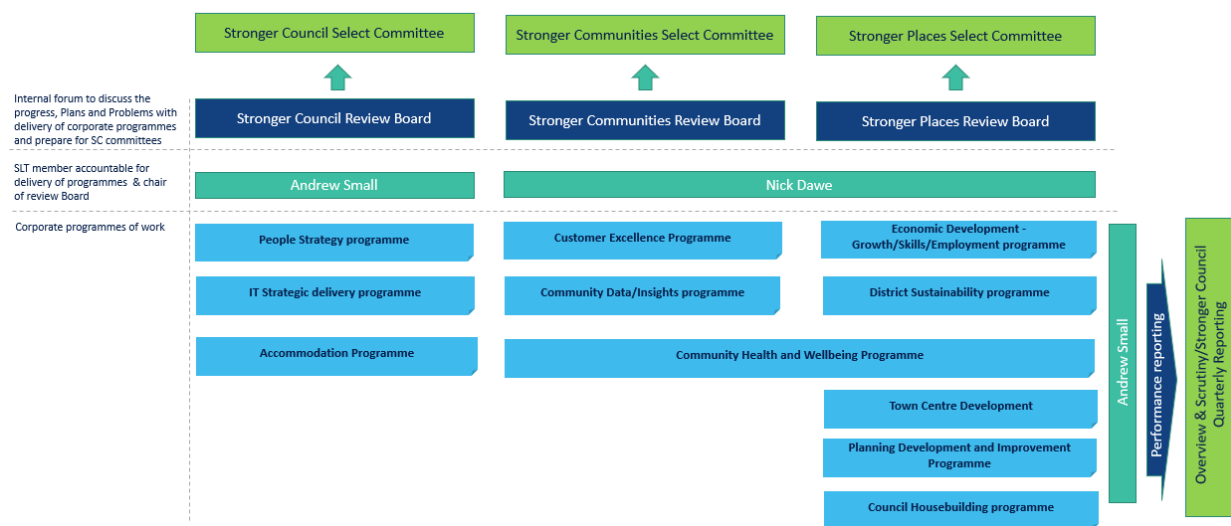
Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the Committee understand the internal governance that has been established to manage and deliver the programmes of work aligned to the Stronger Place ambitions in 2020/21; and
- (2) That the committee identify any additional areas for scrutiny within the work programme delivery.

Report:

- (1) Internal Governance structure

An internal officer governance structure has been established to focus on the delivery of the Corporate programmes aligned to the Stronger ambition objectives. Each programme will have a clear brief, with defined benefits and a milestone plan which will be reviewed and discussed on a monthly basis and key information and decisions taken to the relevant select committees. Programmes will be led by a director enabling Corporate Performance management to be aligned with individual performance management.



(2) Stronger Place Corporate Programme Alignment

Our focus is on the delivery of our corporate objectives and additionally our response to Covid-19 recovery. All projects have been aligned under the corporate programmes with scope as detailed below. It is noted that as our recovery planning and response evolves projects will evolve and there are clear interdependencies across the programmes.

<p>Community Health and Wellbeing Programme</p> <p>Lead Officer: Jen Gould</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Private Sector letting initiative▪ Sheltered Housing review▪ Telecare offering review
<p>Council Housebuilding Programme</p> <p>Lead Officer: Deborah Fenton</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Council Housebuilding project▪ Housing and Asset Management system▪ Service Charge Review/Great Place to live
<p>District Sustainability Programme</p> <p>Lead Officer: Kim Durrani/Alison Blom-Cooper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Climate Emergency actions▪ Strategic Alternative areas of natural growth▪ Sustainable Transport
<p>Planning Development and Improvement Programme</p> <p>Lead Officer: Nigel Richardson/Alison Blom-Cooper</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Digital Planning Process Improvement and digital solution▪ Local Plan
<p>Economic Development</p> <p>Lead Officer: Julie Chandler</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Digital Enablement and Gateway▪ Enterprise zone▪ Feasibility on Epping Forest cultural and community hub▪ Local Business and Suppliers▪ Local Skills and Opportunities▪ Office Local▪ Travel Local
<p>Town Centre Development</p> <p>Lead Officer: Julie Chandler</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ EFDC Investment Assets▪ Epping sustainable growth▪ North Weald sustainable growth▪ Ongar sustainable growth▪ Waltham Abbey sustainable growth

- Safer Spaces
- Leisure Management contract
- Waste Management contract

Reason for decision: To enable Select committee to make decisions around the work that members would like to be scrutinise.

Legal and Governance Implications:

There are no legal or governance implications arising from the recommendations of this report. However, any implications arising from actions to achieve specific objectives or benefits will be identified by the responsible Service Director.

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications:

There are no implications arising from the recommendations of this report in respect of the Council's commitment to the Climate Local Agreement, the Safer, Cleaner and Greener initiative, or any crime and disorder issues with the district. Relevant implications arising from actions to achieve specific objectives or benefits will be identified by the responsible Service Director.

Consultation Undertaken:

Leadership Team
Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Finance & Performance Management Cabinet Committee

Background Papers:

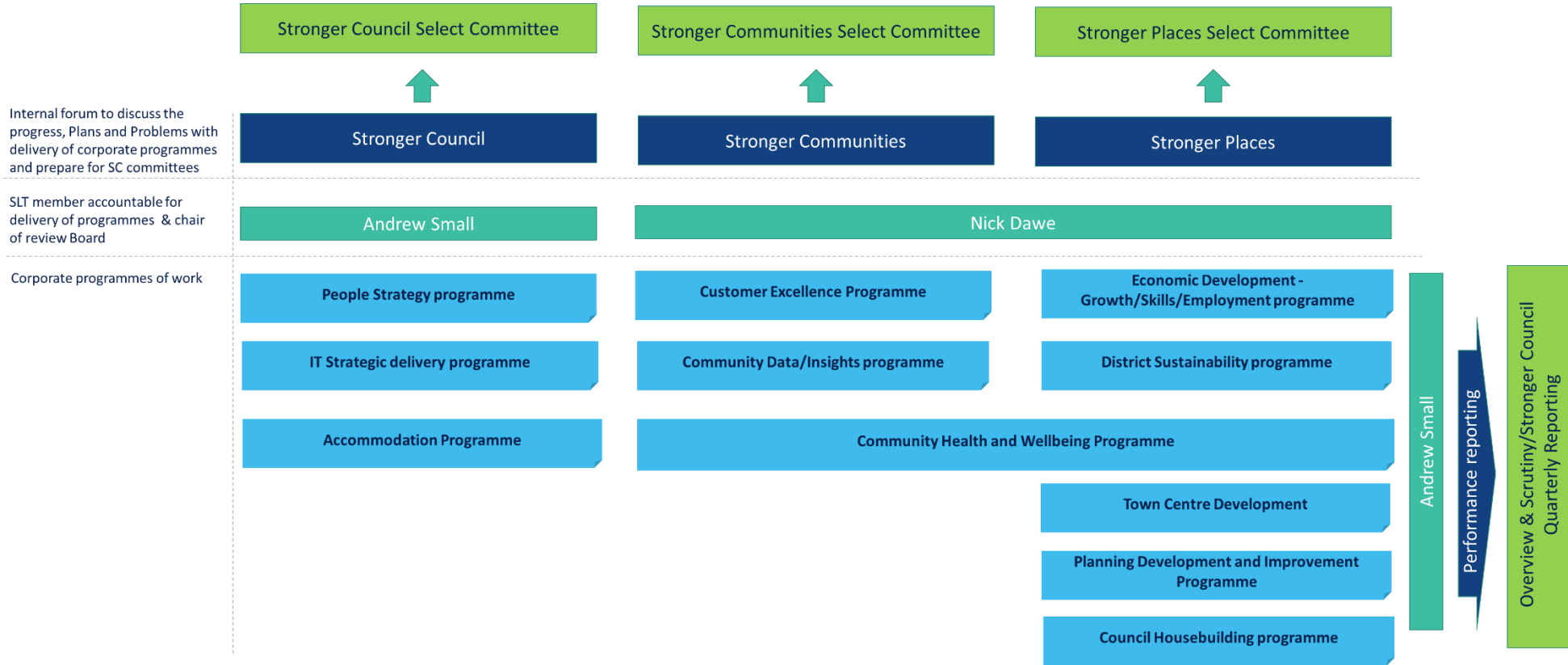
Strategy

Risk Management:

There are no risk management issues arising from the recommendations of this report. Relevant issues arising from re-planning or actions to achieve specific objectives or benefits will be identified by the responsible service director during business planning and communicated to the Corporate Risk Management Group.

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Corporate Programme governance - Appendix



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SCRUTINY



Report to Stronger Place Select Committee

Date of meeting: 29 September 2020

Portfolio: Planning and Sustainability (Cllr N Bedford)

Subject: Local Plan update

Officer contact for further information: Alison Blom-Cooper (01992 564066)

Democratic Services Officer: V Messenger (01992 564265)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- 1. To note progress on the emerging Local Plan**

Report:

Progress on the emerging Local Plan

1. Following the hearing sessions for the Independent Examination of the Local Plan, the Inspector released her Advice on 2 August 2019 (ED98). Within her advice the Inspector has set out a number of changes to the Plan which are required to remedy issues of soundness in the form of Main Modifications (MMs).
2. The Council's response to the Inspector, dated 24 April 2020 (ED106), sets out the high level programme for progressing to Main Modifications consultation and adoption of the Local Plan. This recaps the way in which the Council is approaching matters relating to the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) and updating and consolidating the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and viability documents supporting the Local Plan. In accordance with the high level programme agreed with the Inspector the Council submitted the third tranche of Main Modifications (MMs) during the week of 8 June 2020 and the final tranche of MMs were submitted during the week commencing 14 September 2020. Subject to consideration of the material by the Inspector and any further advice, consultation on the MMs is still anticipated from the end of October 2020.
3. In addition to reporting on the MMs the Council has submitted further information to the Inspector. This includes:
 - Responses to other actions identified by the Inspector
 - Additional Modifications schedule to ensure that the Plan which was first drafted in Autumn 2017 is up to date
 - Revised mapping to take account of the changes to the local plan
 - Draft Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (EB149) that was consulted on earlier in the year
4. Further information will be submitted to the Inspector in the next few weeks. This will include:
 - An updated Sustainability Appraisal – this is currently being undertaken by consultants AECOM but needed to wait for the MMs to be completed
 - Consolidated IDP update and associated Viability Report

- Updated Habitats Regulations Assessment and Air Pollution Mitigation Strategy – these are being finalised to take account of initial comments received from Natural England and the Conservators of Epping Forest

Government White Paper: Planning for the Future

5. The Government published a White Paper “Planning for the Future” on 6 August 2020 <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-future>. This sets out significant changes to the planning system for consultation that, if implemented, will change both the nature and content of Local Plans and the operation of the development management process. The White Paper is clear that the intention is to replace the raft of current planning legislation with new legislation and to introduce new ideas and concepts into the system. It is therefore not always easy to compare the ideas against current concepts and practice. The closing date for responses is 29 October 2020 and the Council’s proposed response will be the subject of a report to Cabinet on 19 October 2020.
6. The measures in the White Paper are set out under three ‘pillars’: Pillar 1: Planning for Development; Pillar 2: Planning for beautiful and sustainable places; and Pillar 3: Planning for Infrastructure and connected places, but the measures are to be viewed as a whole. The changes proposed are intended to ‘*create a new system suitable for the 21st century*’. The proposals cover five main areas. Of most relevance to plan making is the first of these which seeks to *Streamline the planning process with more democracy taking place more effectively at the plan making stage and replace the entire corpus of plan making law to achieve this*. The main proposals with respect to plan making are:
 - a) **Simplified role for Local Plans with three types of land to be identified**
Growth areas suitable for substantial development, where outline approval for development would be automatically secured for forms and types of development specified in the Plan; with identified sub-areas for self and custom-build homes
Renewal areas suitable for some development, such as gentle densification
Protected areas where development is restricted.
 - b) Local Plans should
 - **state clear rules** rather than general policies for development
 - **provide for far greater public engagement in plan-making**
 - **be subject to a single statutory “sustainable development” test** abolishing the requirements for subsequent tests. Requirements for assessments to be updated (including on the environment and viability) and abolishing the duty to cooperate.
 - **be visual and map-based**, standardised, based on the latest digital technology, and supported by a new standard template
 - c) **Timeline:** Statutory 30-month timetable for the production of local plans for local authorities and the planning inspectorate, with sanctions on planning authorities that fall behind. Claim is that this reformed system could halve the time it takes to secure planning permission on larger sites identified in plans.
7. The document states that the proposals will need further development pending the outcome of the consultation. The focus is on ideas rather than details of implementation, but it signals an intention to change the system in a holistic manner, including the introduction of new legislation. This includes a signal to speed up and simplify both the production and role of Local Plans and the management of planning applications. The emphasis on outcomes is focused on delivering housing development and detailed design of proposals. The proposed changes are in many

ways radical, and if they are implemented will require new ways of working, new skill sets and, it appears, a very significant amount of resources.

Reason for decision: To provide members with an update on the work to support the delivery of the Local Plan

Options considered and rejected: Not to provide an update – Stronger Place Select Committee has asked for regular reports on the Local Plan

Consultation undertaken: No specific consultation on this report

Resource implications: None – all within agreed budget

Legal and Governance Implications: The Local Plan is being progressed in accordance with Government policy, planning practice guidance, planning law and the appropriate regulations

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications: The Local Plan contains a policy designed to promote the notion of making good places to live, work and visit. This will include safer by design principles, sustainable development, the provision of alternatives to the car, energy efficiency and environmental considerations as well as sustainable drainage systems and quality green infrastructure.

Background Papers:

Report to Cabinet on Implementation of the Local Plan on 20 July 2020
Planning for the Future 6 August 2020 White Paper MHCLG

Impact Assessments: see attached.

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Section 1: Identifying details
Your function, service area and team: Planning Service
If you are submitting this EqIA on behalf of another function, service area or team, specify the originating function, service area or team: <i>N/A</i>
Title of policy or decision: Update on the progress of strategic masterplans, concept frameworks, planning performance agreements, the Quality Review Panel and contributions from developers towards infrastructure
Officer completing the EqIA: Tel: Alison Blom-Cooper Email: ablomcooper@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Date of completing the assessment: 15 September 2020

Section 2: Policy to be analysed	
2.1	Is this a new policy (or decision) or a change to an existing policy, practice or project? No
2.2	Describe the main aims, objectives and purpose of the policy (or decision): <i>The report is to update members on the progress of the emerging Local Plan</i> What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve (ie decommissioning or commissioning a service)? <i>To ensure members are briefed on the progress made</i>
2.3	Does or will the policy or decision affect: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • service users • employees • the wider community or groups of people, particularly where there are areas of known inequalities? <i>No</i>
2.4	Will the policy or decision involve substantial changes in resources? <i>No – the report is for information only.</i>
2.5	Is this policy or decision associated with any of the Council’s other policies and how, if applicable, does the proposed policy support corporate outcomes? <i>It fulfils a commitment made to to keep members updated on the progress of the Local Plan.</i>

Section 3: Evidence/data about the user population and consultation¹

As a minimum you must consider what is known about the population likely to be affected which will support your understanding of the impact of the policy, eg service uptake/usage, customer satisfaction surveys, staffing data, performance data, research information (national, regional and local data sources).

3.1	<p>What does the information tell you about those groups identified?</p> <p><i>This is not applicable – the report is for noting only.</i></p>
3.2	<p>Have you consulted or involved those groups that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision you want to implement? If so, what were their views and how have their views influenced your decision?</p> <p><i>N/A – as above</i></p>
3.3	<p>If you have not consulted or engaged with communities that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision, give details about when you intend to carry out consultation or provide reasons for why you feel this is not necessary:</p> <p><i>N/A for reason noted in 3.1</i></p>

Section 4: Impact of policy or decision

Use this section to assess any potential impact on equality groups based on what you now know.

Description of impact	Nature of impact Positive, neutral, adverse (explain why)	Extent of impact Low, medium, high (use L, M or H)
Age	None	N/A
Disability	None	N/A
Gender	None	N/A
Gender reassignment	None	N/A
Marriage/civil partnership	None	N/A
Pregnancy/maternity	None	N/A
Race	None	N/A
Religion/belief	None	N/A
Sexual orientation	None	N/A

Section 5: Conclusion

		Tick Yes/No as appropriate	
5.1	Does the EqlA in Section 4 indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more equality groups?	✓ No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	If ' YES ', use the action plan at Section 6 to describe the adverse impacts and what mitigating actions you could put in place.

No actual or likely adverse impacts have come to light.

Section 6: Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts

What are the potential adverse impacts?	What are the mitigating actions?	Date they will be achieved.

Section 7: Sign off

**I confirm that this initial analysis has been completed appropriately.
(A typed signature is sufficient.)**

Signature of Head of Service: Nick Dawe

Date: 15 September 2020

Signature of person completing the EqIA: Alison Blom-Cooper

Date: 15 September 2020

Advice

Keep your director informed of all equality & diversity issues. We recommend that you forward a copy of every EqIA you undertake to the director responsible for the service area. Retain a copy of this EqIA for your records. If this EqIA relates to a continuing project, ensure this document is kept under review and updated, eg after a consultation has been undertaken.



Report to the Stronger Place Select Committee

Date of meeting: 29 September 2020

Portfolio: Housing Portfolio Holder – Councillor H Whitbread

Subject: Update on Review of Service Charges

Responsible Officer: Deborah Fenton (01992 564221)

Democratic Services: V Messenger (01992 564246)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the update on the ongoing review of services charges across the District is noted; and**
- (2) That the development of our new scheme ‘more than bricks and mortar’ EFDC Creating great places where people want to live’ is noted.**

Executive Summary:

The Council charge for additional services, to tenants living in blocks of flats based on a CPI increase yearly. An example of these services are the cleaning of blocks and communal utility costs such as electric for lighting. EFDC’s charging approach follows the government guidance to separate service charges from rents which took place in 2003. This approach has become challenging for most organisations over the years as some costs have risen above the rate of CPI. A recent updated analysis of cost against income has ascertained that the under recovery of service charges stands at approximately £600k for EFDC 2019/20. Most organisations have changed their approach and charge out the actual cost of services.

At its meeting of 20 July 2020 Cabinet recommended that a review of services charges be carried out. Councils are now subject to rent regulations via the Regulator for Social Housing. The Regulations clearly state that social housing providers need to charge for services in a fair and consistent way which can be accounted for. This translates to charging the actual cost for the services broken down to each individual property. From a legal standpoint this protects us from challenge regarding fair and accurate charging.

It was agreed that a paper recommending options would be presented later in the year. This is due to be presented to Cabinet in December 2020.

It is proposed that additional income raised in the first 4 years is ringfenced to pay for estate improvements under our proposed scheme ‘more than bricks and mortar’ our mission is; ‘EFDC creating great places where people want to live’. A presentation was prepared for Cabinet to highlight the benefits for communities, on 20 July where the scheme was approved to move into the development stage.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

The development of a fair and accurate charging regime for service charges supports the overall aspirations of the Councils Corporate Plan – Stronger Communities, Stronger Council.

Other Options for Action:

Not to develop a fair and accurate charging regime. This would leave us potentially in breach of the newly published Rent Regulations and at risk of legal challenge around fair charging.

Report:

1. Historical Context

Under the rent restructuring mechanism, (1999) local authorities were urged by government to separate the elements of the rent relating to the provision of communal services such as grounds maintenance, caretaking, door entry systems, concierge service etc, to make it more transparent to tenants which services they pay for (this is known as depooling). In effect this meant that tenants would be paying a separate charge for additional services. EFDC undertook this exercise, however, at the time it was decided not to review the charges, in terms of developing a charging regime which considered the size of each unit, the actual cost of the service and apportioning the cost per property accordingly. EFDC took the approach of continuing to increase service charges by applying a yearly CPI uplift. This has resulted in an increasing deficit year on year. The amount for 2019/20 was £600K (not accumulative).

2. Regulation

The recent change in regulatory governance for councils requires EFDC to meet the requirements of the Regulatory Framework (set out by the Regulator of Social Housing). The Regulatory Standard for rents states as follows:

Registered providers are expected to set reasonable and transparent service charges which reflect the service being provided to tenants. Tenants should be supplied with clear information on how service charges are set.

To meet the regulatory standards, a fair and transparent charging regime needs to be implemented. There are several ways this could be approached. Options will be provided in the follow up paper.

3. EFDC – current charging regime

Service charges are worked out by working from the ‘unpooled’ service charge (2003) and increasing the charge by CPI, which is then agreed by Cabinet. The current charging methodology does not provide a fair and consistent approach, particularly in our newly regulated position. The cost is not proportionate with the size of property. Furthermore, the service costs have not kept in line with actual costs, leaving a deficit of £600K in 2019/20. This deficit is funded from the HRA account.

4. EFDC – Future approach

To develop a fair and consistent approach to charging, it was proposed to carry out a review to understand our expenditure block by block, as well as an analysis to ascertain the actual cost of the services. This would then be further analysed to break down charges to a property level. This would mean that each property was receiving a charge which represented the cost to EFDC. Our tenancy agreement allows us to charge tenants for services. These charges are called ‘property’ charges. All property charges are subject to Housing Benefit relief.

5. Update on review

Officers have carried out a comprehensive review of services which are provided to tenants

which are subject to a charge. The list below sets out to provide an example as to what some of those elements are:

Communal Electric
Grounds Maintenance
Lift Maintenance Cleaning

The work has established that the difference in the cost to the Council and what is charged out to tenants is approximately £600K. Officers are now working up a scheme to increase the service charges to cover this cost. This is a particularly sensitive matter, and although these costs are covered by Housing Benefit/UC, it is recognised that for some tenants there will be an increase which will need to be applied and paid for. In order to reduce the impact on tenants the options presented to Cabinet will include staggering the increases over a 3 – 4 -year period

This project will be delivered on time and on budget.

Cabinet also agreed at its meeting on 20 July 2020 that the income from the review of service charges would kick start our new project ***more than bricks and mortar' EFDC Creating great places where people want to live.*** The development of this project followed the publication of *The Social Housing Green Paper : A "new deal" for social housing*, published on the 14 August 2018, aims to rebalance the relationship between landlords and residents, tackle stigma and ensure social housing can act as a stable base and support social mobility. The Green Paper states that *"the homes we live in are so much more than bricks and mortar. They're where we raise our families, put down roots and build communities. Everyone in this country deserves not just a roof over their head, but a safe, secure and affordable place to call their own – and social housing has a vital role to play in making sure they do"*, furthermore *"the design and quality of homes and their surrounding area is important to wellbeing, integration and tackling stigma.*

The project will be delivered on time and on budget.

Resource Implications:

The review will be resourced using inhouse resources.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The review will be carried out in line with legal and government guidelines.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

The review sets the opportunity to tweak our services to enhance our communities, making places where people want to live.

Consultation Undertaken:

Initially consultation has been undertaken with the Portfolio holder.

Background Papers:

NA

Risk Management:

There is no risk in carrying out the review

Equality Analysis:

The Equality Act 2010 requires that the Public Sector Equality Duty is actively applied in decision-making. This means that the equality information provided to accompany this report is essential reading for all members involved in the consideration of this report. The equality information is provided as an Appendix to this report.



Report to Stronger Place Select Committee

Date of meeting: 29 September 2020

Portfolio: Housing and Property Services (Cllr Holly Whitbread)

Subject: Council Housebuilding Progress Report and the future approach to site selection

Officer contact for further information: Deborah Fenton (01992 564221)

Democratic Services Officer: V Messenger (01992 564265)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the contents of this progress report on phases 3 and 4 and the approach to site selection of phase 5, of the Council Housebuilding Programme be noted for information purposes.**

Executive Summary:

The report sets out the progress that has been made across phases 3 and 4 of the Housebuilding programme that has either completed, are on-site and are currently being procured. Subject to the necessary planning consents the pipeline stands at 84 units up to the years 21/22.

In addition to the pipeline our retained consultant (Metaplan) is reviewing 2 additional sites, St Johns Baptist Church (9-10 residential units for key workers and a community building). Also, an opportunity to purchase some land at below market value in Waltham Abbey to provide up to 10 affordable units. These sites will be presented at the next Cabinet to recommend progressing to full planning and the allocation of capital funding.

Phase 5 has the potential to deliver approximately 160 properties, again subject to planning consents and the necessary consultation with members and residents.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

This report sets out progress made and provides an overview of our future aspirations

Other Options for Action:

This report is on the progress made and is for noting purposes only. There are no other options for action.

Report

Phase 3

Queens Road, North Weald:

10 x 3 Bed Houses & 2 x 2 Bed Houses

As at the last Valuation the contractor was granted an extension of time of 5 weeks due to utility delays which do not at yet attract an extra cost claim. However, they are also approximately a further 8 to 10 weeks behind due to Government Restrictions in place relating to Covid19 and the consequential effect on the supply chain. There are no cost claim details submitted at this time.

Phase 4

Phase 4.1 – Contracted.

Total **14 units**

The Programmed Start on Site activity has now occurred on Chequers Road (A) and Bushfields with the others to follow shortly. Pre-commencement variations (including the additional works to further address recent rear garden water logging issues on earlier phases) are in the process of being agreed and boundary treatments and drainage outfalls are being reviewed.

Phase 4.2 – Contracts due to be signed.

Total **22 units**

During a recent pre-commencement meeting the anticipated possession dates and initial start on site dates were presented subject to a further period of 2 – 3 weeks to allow for a staggered start on site.

The Tender Report for the 4.2 group of sites was submitted and approved at the previous Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee (CHBCC) meeting and the tender price of £2,160,015 and £4,234,504 totalling £6,394,519 was accepted with completion some 52 weeks following the actual Start on Site.

It must be remembered that notwithstanding the current Government restrictions there has been good progress made in these difficult circumstances, we continue to progress due diligence and work towards completing the designs so to minimise any further potential delays.

Phase 4.3 – Tender opened W/C 14/9/20

Total **21 units**

These sites have been recently tendered and are now being analysed and will be reported upon in the form of a further Tender Report which will be presented at the next forthcoming CHBCC. Initial indications are that tender price is likely to be just below the Cost Consultants latest forecast.

Due to significant design changes which were necessary to Pentlow Way and Woollard Street these will be resubmitted for Planning consent.

Following the Self build policy being approved at the last Cabinet and some updates to Planning Conditions, it has been decided to package the single dwellings for the purpose of self build projects.

Phase 4.4 – Comprising: -

Total **27 units**

Due to significant design changes and scheme improvements reported previously Chequers Road (B) will be resubmitted for Planning Consent as will Ladyfields. These will both be designed to 'Passivehaus' standard ' Fabric First' and Ladyfields will be designed and build to the full 'Passivehaus' Standard incorporating 'Air Source Heat Pump and Heat Recovery System' as a positive response to Councils Climate Emergency and will enable fields tests and experience to be gained to better inform the Councils future decision making.

Lower Alderton Hall Drive and Thatchers Close

Both these sites are awaiting consent and have been delayed by the Local Plan and SAC issues which it is hoped will be resolved soon.

In summary to date, there are a total 84 properties for Phase 4 and therefore now reflects a potential increase in affordable units of 12 extra properties. (16.6%) over what has previously been forecasted and approved.

Phase 5 +

The Council House Building Programme (CHBP) has mostly been developed on former garage sites to date. A number of potential sites have been refused planning permission or been withdrawn, partly due to added limited neighbourhood improvements and adding, to some degree, to local existing parking stress problems.

A consultation and community planning process is proposed, to engage with local community representatives. The aim is to openly discuss where potential development opportunities may exist, and to better understand and potentially address local issues that may be required to possibly achieve positive support for further Council Housing development in an area.

Some CHBP developments provide more additional parking than is required and have been left unallocated to date. However, being mainly small enclosed developments, it is believed that they would be better managed through EFDC licences to local residents allowing improved security and improved community cohesion. This is proposed in a separate report and draft new policy – Allocation of Surplus Car Parking Spaces Delivered through CHBP. This was agreed at the recent CHBCC.

As a positive response to the Council's Climate Emergency resolution it is proposed to design all future developments adopting the 'Passivhaus' standard – 'Fabric First' as a minimum. This would further improve the thermal standard of the properties reducing the future heating requirements for residents. Given the external wall thickness significantly increases from 300mm to 500mm, this would establish the base approach and thereby simplify the design process, avoiding the need for redesign and potentially resubmitting for planning consent and assist the subsequent contractor to deliver the Design & Build contracts. This is anticipated to add 3-5% to the current specification build cost.

The adoption of a heat generation and recovery system i.e. an Air Source Heat Pump and Heat Recovery System (ASHP-HRS) would add a further 6-8% to the current specification build cost. The technology to achieve this is available but there are varying views of its reliability and ease of user operation.

It is therefore beneficial to design all future properties going forward to accommodate 'Passivhaus' standard – 'Fabric First' and to also plan within the design for future retrospective installation of an ASHP-HRS as and when a suitable system is identified.

In summary, a new process is proposed for selecting and developing sites for Council Housebuilding based on a collaborative approach involving EFDC colleagues, Essex County Council and community representatives. The purpose is to assess and develop the potential sites using an incremental approach to ensure successful planning applications, developments that improve local neighbourhoods and limiting resource input into sites which are not feasible or supportable for development.

Financial Reporting

Officers continue to work with colleagues in the Finance department to develop a more robust reporting system, particularly around cash flow.

Further to this, officers are in the process of purchasing ProVal which is a financial modelling tool. This will enable the team to produce desk top appraisals and produce reports which will highlight the financial viability of schemes.

Resource Implications:

There is currently a Housing Development Officer role vacant, and this position is currently being recruited to.

Legal and Governance Implications:

It should be noted that a potentially significant change in Planning view has been raised. As such, a number of single unit sites will need to be submitted for planning consent. The development team are in the process of actioning this.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

The continued delivery of the CHBP will help address the antisocial behaviour issues associated with these garage sites and will reduce the opportunity for fly-tipping and thereby contribute to a Greener environment.

Consultation Undertaken:

Interdepartmental involvement has and will continue to be engaged.

Background Papers:

NA

Risk Management:

The Risks associated with the delivery of the current housing development programme is identified within the Executive Report attached.