Select Committee Agenda

SCRUTINY

Epping Forest District Council

Stronger Council Select Committee
Tuesday, 13th October, 2020

You are invited to attend the next meeting of **Stronger Council Select Committee**, which will be held at:

Virtual Meeting on Zoom
on **Tuesday, 13th October, 2020**
at **7.00 pm**

G Blakemore
Chief Executive

Democratic Services Officer	A Hendry Tel: 01992 564246 Email: democraticservices@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Members:

Councillors P Bolton (Chairman), D Stocker (Vice-Chairman), R Bassett, H Brady, R Brookes, D Dorrell, H Kane, S Neville, M Owen, S Rackham and J M Whitehouse

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SUBSTITUTE NOMINATION DEADLINE: 6:00 pm

WEBCASTING NOTICE

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

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

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.   SUBSITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

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

4.   NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Pages 3 - 28)

To agree the notes of the meeting of the Select Committee held on 14th July 2020.

5.   DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To declare interests in any item on the agenda.

6.   TERMS OF REFERENCE & WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 29 - 32)

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

7.   CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT 2020-21 - QUARTERS 1 & 2

Report to follow.

The Corporate Performance report will be delivered as a supplementary to ensure a up to date set of figures is included for Q2.

8.   ACCOMMODATION PROJECT (Pages 33 - 38)

To note the progress on the Council's Accommodation Programme.

9.   PEOPLE STRATEGY (Pages 39 - 42)

The report updates the Committee on the Council's People's Strategy.

10.   REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN 2019-20 (Pages 43 - 52)

To receive an overview of the Council's Revenue and Capital outturn.

11.   DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

To note the next meeting dates for this Committee:

19 January 2021; and
13 April 2021.

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**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
NOTES OF A MEETING OF STRONGER COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY, 14 JULY 2020
IN VIRTUAL MEETING ON ZOOM
AT 7.00 - 8.47 PM**

Members Present:	P Bolton (Chairman), , R Bassett (Member), H Brady, R Brookes, D Dorrell, H Kane (Chairman of the Council), S Neville (Leader of the Green Party Group), L Mead, S Rackham and J M Whitehouse
Other members present:	S Kane and S Murray
Apologies for Absence:	M Owen
Officers Present	A Small (Strategic Director), J Chandler (Service Director (Community & Partnership Services)), A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer), D Fenton (Service Manager (Housing Management & Home Ownership)), J Leither (Democratic Services Officer), S Lewis (Customer Services Manager), P Maginnis (Service Director (Business Support Services)), S Mitchell (PR Website Editor) and L Wade (Service Manager People & Performance)

1. **WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION**

The Chairman reminded everyone present that the meeting would be broadcast live to the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its virtual meetings.

2. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

In the absence of the Vice Chairman, the Committee agreed to appoint Councillor Helen Kane as Vice Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

3. **SUBSITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)**

The Committee noted that Councillor L Mead would substitute for Councillor M Owen for the duration of this meeting.

4. **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Resolved:

That the notes of the meeting held 14 January 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

5. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

(a)   Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor S Murray declared a personal interest in item 9, Accommodation Review Update, by virtue of being a trustee of Citizen's Advice. The Councillor had determined that his interest was non-pecuniary and he would remain in the meeting for the consideration of this item.

6.   TERMS OF REFERENCE & WORK PROGRAMME

The Select Committee noted their terms of reference and work programme.

7.   PEOPLE STRATEGY UPDATE

The Service Director for Business Services, Paula Maginnis, gave a short verbal update on the people's strategy. The Committee noted that a new people's strategy had been introduced and officers had run a workshop for members and senior managers to discuss this. This strategy aims to build a people team that could deliver the strategy and have the right people with the right skills who were highly motivated and high performing. The strategy was broken down into themes:
1. Attracting and maintaining the best talent;
2. Develop the Leadership;
3. Support the Council to evolve and embrace this change;
4. Create a culture of engagement and well being;
5. Develop skill and behaviour to make EFDC a great place to work;
6. Create a culture of collaboration and innovation; and
7. We want employees to fulfil their potential and be high performing.

They will deliver this by finishing the peoples strategy in the next couple of years, transform the peoples team service, review their policies and procedures and put together leadership and management development programmes and provide skills development for our staff. They were also reviewing the recruitment processes and would continue the work around self-service for the employees, further develop the rewards and benefits package and would introduce individual performance management framework.

During Covid a lot of work went into providing the employees with a range of resources to support their wellbeing and mental and emotional health (including their families). Work was continuing on the council's pay role system (i-Trent).

At the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee there would be a discussion on the peoples strategy, following a video that had been circulated to the members of committee showing a candidate employee journey to bring to life the peoples strategy and how it affected employees. Members of this committee were invited to join this meeting and partake in the discussion. This video would be shared with members.

Councillor Bassett commented that it was difficult to scrutinise something that came as a verbal update. In the future he would prefer to have a written report.

Councillor Brookes asked, compared to 5 years ago, what was being offered in the next few months that would make life easier for the staff. She was told that they now had a resources hub on the intranet that covered a wide range of resources including learning and guidance for both managers and employees around mental health and wellbeing. They have also just introduced a mental health online training resource for all the managers. They were focusing on the 'softer side' of people's wellbeing.

Councillor Brookes added that it was a different experience working from home and that only a limited number of people could work from the office. Some people did not like working from home. P Maginnis said that they had just finished a questionnaire based on Health and Safety and had tweaked it to ask how staff were coping with working from home. They were working through this data now. Staff could book desks in the Civic offices but could not block book desks.

Councillor Neville noted that a number of people lived alone, what support was provided for them? He was told that this was along the same lines as the other resources provided, resources for managers to help their staff. Officers could also book desks in the office and break up their working week that way. This would be managed by the team managers as our overall duty was to keep them safe.

Councillor Jon Whitehouse asked for an update on where we were on staff vacancies. P Maginnis did not have the figures there but said she would have them put in the minutes. She noted that currently internal recruitment was being carried out for the team manager roles in ICT.

(Staff turnover figures now attached)

8. **STRONGER COUNCIL Q1 UPDATE - ICT STRATEGY**

The Service Director for Business Services, P Maginnis, introduced the short update on the ICT Strategy. She noted that the main theme of the strategy at present was in improving the basics. This had a twelve theme structure, ranging from the restructure of the service to supporting the customer strategy, members and the accommodation programme. It was wide ranging in the areas it covered. Covid had an impact on the delivery of some of the work as they had focused on enabling the employees to work from home. The team were making progress on their own restructure.

Their reporting tool, HOTH, went live last week. They were also supporting the accommodation project particularly the procurement of the audio visual equipment, the disaster recovery system and the new housing system.

Councillor Bassett asked if the committee could see the new, revised project plan and budget. He was advised that officers could circulate that. *(Budget Breakdown attached).*

Councillor Bassett then asked who we had awarded the off site disaster recovery contract to, were we looking at an instantaneous switch over and what were our requirements for this or were we just looking to have our data held off site. He was told that the Council was going to have its data held off site and the aim was to bring back critical services first, which had been worked out as part of a business continuity exercise. The company we have given the disaster recovery contract to was Modern Networks.

Councillor Bassett continued that with Covid, the way we used IT had changed totally. Would our strategy have to be changed or be upgraded if something worse happens or there was a second wave. He was told that because of the accommodation programme officers had already identified that we needed to support people to work from home. This past few months has shown that our IT works as we now have up to 400 people working from home and the IT was holding up nicely. We were also making use of Zoom and making full use of Teams.

Councillor Bassett asked that as we now all use the internet so much more, security needed to be revamped to check all was running smoothly, also were we monitoring our internet usage and are we maxing out there. He was told that this had not been raised as an issue by IT.

Councillor Dorrell asked about the resumption plan for the disaster recovery plan. He was told that was part of the contract and specifications. This would be made available to members separately.

Following the meeting, the following answers to questions raised were obtained:

Have we maxed out at any time as we're using the internet significantly more?
During the seeding process for the DR solution the Infrastructure Team carried out regular checks on our bandwidth capacity, and with those virtual machines being copied over and 400+ users working remotely we did not max out at any point.

What's the resumption plan?
Should the failover plan need to kick in, users will be directed to connect to the DR environment within the cloud via our VPN, Watchguard; using the option 'EFDC test'. The Infrastructure Team have access to the DR portal and have been trained in how to restore the virtual machines. A recent test showed full restoration of all copied virtual machines took approximately 5 hours and 45 minutes. The Leadership Team are collating a list of critical services, for ICT to focus on bringing up first; which will also be dependent on the time of year eg. elections, council tax annual billing etc.

What is the overarching plan for ICT Strategy?
Attached is the whole ICT Strategy stakeholder document the overarching plan is on page 8.

What is the budget for the ICT Strategy?
A budget of £1.2m has been allocated through the budget process for 2020-2022 to support the delivery of the Strategy. There will be a resource cost associated with every theme.

RPO/RTO

Both are 15 minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Committee noted the ICT update.

9.   **ACCOMMODATION REVIEW UPDATE**

The Service Manager (Housing Management & Home Ownership), D Fenton introduced the report on the update of the accommodation project. She noted that the project work was going well, the council had awarded a contract to ISG Fit Out Ltd. to refurbish the office building and they were now on site starting their work. The project remained on time to be completed early next year. The contract for fixtures and fittings would be awarded soon.

The Accommodation Programme Board meets monthly to oversee the delivery of the programme and covered the following workstreams:

   I.   Construction works
   II.   ICT
   III.   Travel Plan
   IV.   Furniture, fixtures and fittings
   V.   Engagement
   VI.   Partners

The report on the agenda noted the progress made across the six project areas and

the corporate plan provided key milestones for the full year 2020/21.

Councillor Brady commented on the travel plan referred to in the report. She noted that nowadays it would be difficult to get people to use public transport and noted that the use of cars had gone up compared to pre Covid times. This worried her if the number of parking spaces would be reduced. Had this been considered? D Fenton said that this was reviewed on an ongoing basis. There was now a lot of people working from home, and were comfortable working from home, so the desk to officer ratio had been reduced from 6 to 10, to 4 to 10, and there would be a lot less people driving in.

Councillor Brady went on to comment on the paragraph on furniture, fixtures and fittings and noted that collaborative workspaces were not a good idea now. D Fenton replied that there would still be room for social distancing in the new set up. Officers would carry out a risk assessment in January and there would be a lot of people still working from home.

Councillor Brady then asked about the air conditioning system spreading germs. D Fenton said that all fans and the air conditioning were not allowed to be switched on as they were seen to be a Health and Safety risk.

Councillor Neville asked when would the travel plan be put into practice, January or before? H was told that it would be January or February when officers moved back into the building.

Councillor Neville then asked what type of gas would be used in the air conditioning system. D Fenton did not have an answer with and said she would put something in the minutes.

Councillor Jon Whitehouse asked which partners were we in discussion with? He was told that there were several potential partners such as Citizens Advice, libraries and Voluntary Action. They were still in the early stages in the discussions with them. A desk ratio of 4 to 10 would allow us to have more space for our partners. If it was helpful, she could provide a statistical update around this area at the next meeting

Councillor Whitehouse asked that for the commercially let space, was the intention to have lots of individual leases with businesses or lease it to a big provider who would then sub-let it out. He was told that the understanding was to have individual leases.

Councillor Murray was glad to hear that discussions were going on with potential partners. Had these discussions enabled them to influence this project as they all would have individual needs and requirements. D Fenton said that this was an ongoing piece of work, we had discussion with them on what they needed and what they could afford as we were still in the planning stages.

Councillor Murray expressed his surprised that this committee was happy that the contract had been awarded to just one tenderer. This committee should be scrutinising this more deeply. He noted that six expressions of interest had been received but only one company put in a bid. He was very unhappy that we had let this contract on the basis of one tender. Although he accepted that we had a detailed report from a consultant about this, he thought that this select committee should be putting on record that they were not happy with the way this was awarded.

The Chairman noted that this had been discussed at a previous Cabinet meeting and there was some disquiet about this raised then.

Councillor Neville said that he was at that Cabinet meeting, and that it was not usual practice to accept just one tender and he was unhappy about it. He did ask at the time why only one tender was put in; he was told that official processes had been carried out but did not receive a full answer. He did not think that things like this should happen on a regular basis as it was a lot of money and was not good practice.

Councillor Rackham commented that we needed to look at these things moving forward. As we had only got one tender then it would be difficult for us to choose a different one, however 'we are where we are'. It was something to investigate to stop it happening again. A valid point was made and as a select committee we would need to look out for this sort of thing in the future.

Councillor Jon Whitehouse said that he had expressed his concerns at Cabinet. It should be noted that the Cabinet made the decision and not officers. He agreed that this committee should note its concern, given the size and importance of the contract.

Councillor S Kane asked from the Cabinet perspective, if it would be helpful if an officer could remind the committee of the number of initial enquires we had and how many progressed forward before we ended up with a 'Hobson's choice' of one. A Small told him that six expressions of interest had been received that ultimately came down to just one bid. We recognised that we would have preferred more to get best value, but in the absence of having more bids we benchmarked the cost submitted by an independent cost consultant and were assured that these costs were fair.

Councillor S Kane went on to make the point that there were also time constraints and if they went out to tender again, they would have to extend the project timeline by a number of months. They were faced with a difficult decision to make, it was not good practice, but faced with the alternative of extended delays to go back out to tender and maybe end up again with only one bid, the Cabinet made the decision to move forward with this well assessed bid.

Councillor Bolton asked if there were any comments on how they could improve the methods of pre-scrutiny.

Councillor Dorrell noted that the only meeting taking place at that time was the Cabinet meetings because of the lock down and was not sure it would go through that process that far and that fast again. But they needed to ensure that that they pre-scrutinised things like this the next time, before Cabinet made their decision.

Councillor Jon Whitehouse noted that it was more productive to make comments before things went wrong or issues arose than afterwards. It was part of this committee's responsibility to say what was important to them and that that they wanted full reports on whatever issue they considered important and deep dive into certain potential area of concern. It was also important that this committee did not just nod and note reports but to make comments and have them reported to the Cabinet.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee noted the update on the Accommodation Project.

10.   **FINANCE UPDATE**

The Strategic Director, Andrew Small gave a short verbal report on the financial position of the council. He noted that things were moving quickly in terms of the cost of Covid at present. He was pleased to announce that the final accounts for 2018/19 had been signed off on 18 June 2020 and they were now finalising the accounts for 2019/20. The Government had recognised that because of the impact of the Covid outbreak there had been less capacity for local government to complete the normal end of year tasks and had given us an extended timetable for closing the end of year accounts. That was, until the end of July to get the accounts published and then until the end of October to get them signed. This reflected the fact that the council staff had been tied up with other emergency work such as administering the new grants.

There was a large range of potential costs to the council this year, most of it was lost income as opposed to additional cost to the council. The current estimates of lost income were between £4.6 million and £7.6 million, a huge financial impact. This was before any government support was taken into account. Thus far the government had provided us with £1.36 million in grant support and we had been told that more money would follow. This would be from three funding pots, money for the cost implications for councils; an income loss scheme, uncapped at present, with the councils having to pick up the first 5% of lost income; and beyond that the government would pay for 75% of lost income. And beyond this there was a scheme for loss of income from Council Tax and Business Rates; we used to have to recoup it over a year, the government now says that we have three years to recoup it.

We did not know what the net impact would be on the Council at present, but it would be significant. He was pleased to say that over a number of years the council had built up a healthy balance and should have around £7million pounds in reserve, which should cover the worst financial impacts of this event. But we needed to keep it under close scrutiny in the coming months, to understand how the actual cost of this event emerges and make sure we have enough financial resources to ensure the council was secure. We will then have to start thinking about financial planning for future years. Not least the onward impact brought upon us by Covid and some structural changes to local government finance that had been planned for 2021/22, around the governments distribution of grant support and changes to the business rate system as well.

Councillor Rackham was concerned about what would happen if we had a second wave, did we have a plan B? She was told that things were very fluid, and the council had to react to events. The government had said spend what you need to, and they would support us, although the council would have to cover some of the costs. So, we can expect mitigation from the government towards the final costs. But we need to be mindful of the second event and what support we have to give to the communities. Also, it was not just about continuing to provide existing services but there was a role for this council in dealing with the impact on the local community that will have cost implications. So, monitoring the finances would be very important throughout the course of this year.

Councillor Bassett noted that it was difficult at present. He asked if we knew how the rent payments were going, were they up to date as more people were being made redundant and had any businesses handed in their keys yet? A Small said that he was not aware of any businesses wanting to hand back their keys as he believed they were waiting to see what happens. Incomes would dip and we must not force any tenants into bankruptcy. Officers were working with tenants and were developing recovery plans with them. A report was going to the next Cabinet with more details.

Councillor Brookes asked if they could have the figures for the first three months Council Tax collections. She was told that these figures were in the Cabinet report, and there had been some defaults this time, so we were sending out soft reminder letters and also signposting people to the help that was on offer for those in difficult financial circumstances.

Councillor Brookes went on to ask about the impact on the HRA account and the possible drop in housing rents. A Small said that there had been a reduction in rental paid, we had not formally stopped chasing rents during the lockdown period, we still contacted our tenants to encourage them to pay but had not taken any enforcement action. There had been a reduction of around £300,000 in terms of rental paid. There was less emphasis on rent recovery action during that time as well.

Councillor H Kane asked if the extra money from the government would be able to cover the Town Council's loss of revenue. Mr Small said that would be a choice for us to make, but the government money would not cover our losses in the first instance.

Councillor Brookes noted that a lot of people tended to pay their bills in person; would we be opening the Civic Offices to take these payments. A Small said that this was being discussed at present, there was a desire to open some facilities such as the cash office at Debden Broadway.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the financial update given.

11. **UNACCEPTABLE CUSTOMER BEHAVIOUR POLICY**

The Service Manager (Customer), S Lewis introduced the report on unacceptable customer behaviour. This policy set out the Council's approach to dealing with unacceptable behaviour by service users and members of the public and it was anticipated its application would be minimal. The Council had a duty to safeguard its employees from unacceptable behaviour which may otherwise cause us to breach legislation unless we take appropriate action. The policy was to protect our staff whilst dealing with unacceptable behaviour both internally and externally by our customers.

Councillor Neville welcomed the report but asked about the statement that the council 'would not accept unimportant questions'. Who would decide this, the wording seemed a bit cold. S Lewis said that she would review the wording and amend.

Councillor Brookes also welcomed the report and noted the bit on vexatious callers, would this apply to what councillors would deem to be reasonable and could councillors be made aware of who these callers were. She was told that this would be checked out in regard to the Freedom of Information regulations and how it would affect the sharing of this information.

Following the meeting officers were advised that they could not share the customers details without specific reason. If a councillor had a specific interest they should contact Nichola Gambrill.

Councillor Bassett was happy with most of the report and asked if it could be confirmed that a second member of staff would have to confirm that a caller was

being abusive and that it was unacceptable to record calls. He was told that we should be made aware that the member of the public was recording a call. This was mentioned in the report and precluded secret recordings. Following on from this Councillor Bassett asked if we checked that a supposed annoying caller was not just a clash of personalities. S Lewis replied that the contact centre would be made aware of these customers and an investigation would be carried out.

After the meeting the following information was given on the recording of calls:
Most calls within the Council were recorded, there is an announcement at the beginning of the call telling customers we record their call for training purposes.

When an employee has evidence of a vexatious caller, managers go through the evidence with the employee and collate findings to 'make the case' to the customer that they are being vexatious. The customer doesn't receive copies of their emails etc they are given a list within the letter detailing when they contacted us.

We can listen to most calls and quite often the vexatious caller leaves voicemails across service areas so we can listen to them anyway.

RESOLVED:

That the Unacceptable Customer Behaviour policy, subject to the above comments, was approved for launch to all staff.

12. **CORPORATE PLAN 2019-20 - QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE**

The quarter 4 performance figures for the Corporate Plan 2019-20 was introduced by L Wade, Service Manager (People and Performance). The Corporate Plan Action Plan provided a mechanism for reporting to Members on the Council's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and key programmes of work and highlighted the Councils overall performance against agreed Corporate Objectives.

She asked that the Committee acknowledges the impact that Covid has had on the corporate objectives. The council had moved on since this report and part of the planning cycle looked to establish the corporate priorities for 2020/21 by this point, but with the focus being on Covid response and recovery this had not been the case. What had been completed was a summary update for each of the areas and that is as part of the supplementary paper published for the agenda. This provided an overview of the capacity for each of the service areas. We will be reviewing the corporate programmes and the service objectives; but most importantly the Covid recovery activities and the financial impacts and the prioritisation around these and taking into account the capacity of resources available and the funding needed to deliver these. We will also be looking at the KPIs to see if they needed to be refreshed.

Councillor Bassett commented that the maths on the report did not seem to add up, such as the target on page 49 of the agenda 'safeguarding and supporting people in vulnerable situations' the target keeps going up but the actual suddenly drops in Q4 and also on page 51 when the Q1 figures were higher than the target. There seemed to be inconsistencies throughout on how things were reported. L Wade said that she would investigate this.

Councillor Neville noted that some of the swimming attendances in Ongar and Loughton, figures were below target but still marked as green. L Wade replied that it was probably related to the fall in direct debits. Councillor Neville went on to ask about (page 43) how many calls completed positively after feedback, figures only for one quarter but no other quarters. He would like to know how many people called us and how many people then completed the survey and how many were positive. L Wade noted that they would be refreshing the KPIs and would include this for next year.

Councillor Dorrell noted that the recycling targets had dropped due to a change in the recording system. Any details on what this was about and were we planning to change the target because of this. He was told that the officers involved in this would be asked to provide a response for the minutes.

Councillor Bassett commented that there had been comments made that we did not pick up green waste at certain times of the year. He was told that a report was being produced at present on this. Councillor Neville noted that the Waste Task and Finish Panel report would be going to the next O&S Committee.

Following the meeting L Wade supplied the following comments to answer some the questions raised:

Page 49 – KPI – Households accepted as being unintentionally homeless - Q4 actual number should read 91 as cumulative number rather than the quarterly number.
Page 50 – RAG status for casual swimmers in Q3 and Q4 should be red due to it not meeting the target in Loughton and Ongar.
Page 51 – Cultural activity attendance – Albeit reported in 2019, it has been noted that the Q1 figure in the comments was incorrect and was a different number than the table.
Page 51 – Cultural activity attendance - It was also noted that the Q1 attendance was unusually high and that the target was not adjusted in line with this. The reason being a "Man on the Moon" exhibition was held during this period and contributed towards the high number of attendees. As this was unusual and the planned exhibitions for the year were not seen to have attracted the same numbers the future targets did not include this.
Page 53 – Increase in recycling KPI - Cllr Dorrell asked what the system reference was in the recycling figures:
There was no directly understood impact of this. The reference to the adjustment on the system was an update as opposed to an impact on the number.

RESOLVED:

That the Committee reviewed and commented on the Q4 performance in relation to the Key Performance Indicators and work programmes within the Corporate Plan.

13. **QTR.1 SERVICE PLAN OBJECTIVES - PROGRESS**

L Wade (Service Manager – people and performance), introduced the supplementary report on quarter 1 service plan objectives. This report referenced the capacity and Covid-19 restriction impact on each service, and the subsequent impact on the delivery of Q1 Service Plan Objectives. This provided an overview of the services areas, of the activities they had been involved in and also the impact that Covid had on the work that we would have otherwise completed, if we had not had to respond to this emergency.

Councillor Bassett noted that under the Housing Section, some people were still struggling to pay their rent, were we prepared for the possible need for emergency housing and possible homelessness. L Wade said that would be part of our recovery plan. A Small added that we were aware of this, lockdown had been a difficult time for a lot of families for many reasons and we did expect to see an increase in homelessness and the housing team were gearing up for this. This is also something that Councillor Patel was interested in and was being looked at by his portfolio advisory group.

Councillor Brookes asked if all homelessness case interviews were now done over the phone. A Small said that it varied. They did like to deal with the most difficult cases face to face if they could, but there were problems of health and safety over this. Officers were aware that they got better outcomes when talking face to face. S Lewis added that initial enquiries were done online but teams were available for face to face interviews in the Conder building.

RESOLVED:

(1)   That the Committee reviewed the impact to Q1 Service Plan objectives as a result of Covid-19 impact; and

(2)   That the committee acknowledged that the impact of Covid-19 and that the Covid-19 recovery plan would require that services review their priorities and objectives within their service plans and with their Portfolio Holders.

14.   DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Committee noted their future meeting dates.

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Reason		2018/19	2019/2020
Dismissals		1	1
End of Fixed Team		10	3
End of Temporary		5	1
Other		5	4
Redundancies		14	12
Resignations		68	69
Retirement		7	12
Retirement - Ill Health		1	4
Death in Service		0	1
Totals		111	107
Establishment Average Totals		658	624
		17%	**17%**

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Executive Area	Item	Revenue General	Revenue HRA	Notes	Capital General	Capital HRA	Notes
Business Services	ICT infrastructure to support Flexible Working strategy	5,000	-		229,000	-	
Business Services	Resiliance Phase 1	120,000	-			-	
Business Services	Increased Storage	-	-		60,000	-	
Business Services	ICT Infrastructure to support Accommodation Strategy	38,000	-		678,000	-	
Business Services	ICT training and knowledge	50,000	-			-	
Housing	Procurement of new housing system and asset Mgmt solution	-	-		-	572,000	
Business Services	Firewall additions	-	-		15,000	-	
Business Services	E Financials Upgrade or Lower Cost New System (e.g. SAGE)	30,000	-			-	
Contract and Technical	Grounds maintenance	-	-		30,000	-	
Business Services	20.01.20 - Maintenance agreement for disk drives 3 yr agreement	-	-		30,000	-	
Customer	Assure/Elections Gazetteer/migrate Confirm/GPS tech refresh	32,000	-		30,000	-	

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ICT Strategy

Stakeholder Document

Epping Forest District Council

Contents

Introduction

As with all technology, changes develop rapidly, which has led to a review of our 2018-2023 ICT Strategy and a decision to replace this with a two-year strategy for 2020-22.

The intention of the 2018-2023 ICT Strategy was to improve corporate performance and customer service, improve ICT performance, enable the reduction in accommodation, and the changes in the use of that space and to enable users to work flexibly and more efficiently. All of those intentions remain the same.

The roll out of laptops to employees, as well as the roll out of O365 Teams were achieved by the current strategy and both support flexible and remote working.

This document is for Stakeholder use and sets out the overall aims and objectives of the revised ICT Strategy for 2020-22. By the end of this period there will be a new Corporate Plan, that will require a new ICT Strategy.

Alongside this document there will be a programme of works that captures actions, key milestones, risks and mitigation, interdependencies, a communications plan, programme governance, an issue log, budget V actual spends and other items.

Updates on key milestones will be presented at the Stronger Council Quarterly Performance meetings.

Who are ICT Stakeholders?

Anybody with a vital interest in ICT, including all employees and Members.

Aim

The aim of the revised ICT Strategy is to focus on improving the basics, by making better use of what we already have and investments that we have already made. This aim promotes an element of the Council's Customer Strategy; fixing the basics and an element of the MHCLG Local Digital Declaration; fixing our own plumbing.

Each theme of the ICT Strategy supports an area of the Council's Corporate Plan, with the aim to become Customer First and to be Digital by Default.

Technology alone cannot change the way we work; it should be an enabler to support and facilitate the organisation to have a digital focus.

The ICT Strategy promotes the **Business Services Principles** of
- providing excellent advice and service to our customers
- building resilience
- building flexibility and agility in terms of thinking, ways of working and service delivery, and
- driving continuous improvement

The ICT Strategy also reflects the **Councils drivers for change**
• Customers – Building services around the people we serve
• Efficiency – Making the very best of our people, time and money
• Effectiveness – An agile, flexible workforce achieving our ambitions and working together and in partnership

Costs

A budget of £1.2m has been allocated through the budget process for 2020-2022 to support the delivery of the Strategy. There will be a resource cost associated with every theme.

Key Themes overview

	Strategy Theme	FY 20/21	FY 21/22	Stronger Council	Stronger Communities	Stronger Place	Essential Maintenance	Corporate Compliance
1	People/restructure of ICT	✔		✔			✔	✔
2	Reimplementation of HOTH - Service Desk Software	✔		✔			✔	✔
3	Accommodation Programme	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
4	Flexible and remote working	✔		✔	✔	✔		
5	Device, desktop and laptop strategy	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔	✔
6	Mobile Phone review	✔		✔	✔		✔	
7	Infrastructure review	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
8	Cyber Security review	✔	✔	✔	✔		✔	✔
9	Business Application Review	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔
10	New Housing and Asset Management ICT Solution	✔	✔	✔			✔	
11	Supporting the Customer Strategy	✔	✔	✔	✔			
12	Members Digital Roadmap	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔

Key themes detail

What are we doing? What are the benefits?

1. **People/restructure of ICT**
   The changes proposed are to reorganise the ICT Team at the Team Manager and Employee level. As part of the People Strategy most of the Council has been through this process, however, some Teams in Business Services were put on hold for various operational reasons and ICT was one of those teams.

   Whilst the proposed restructure reduces FTE, we will be increasing the capability of the ICT Team and making improvements to the operating model, whilst adopting best practices and frameworks.

   We will be assessing service provision throughout the delivery of the Strategy and may need to supplement resources at certain points, where additional interim capacity is required.

   Benefits: The organisation should expect to see a reduction in operating costs and a structure designed to (a) ensure skills and capability in place to support overall strategy (b) continue to deliver our transformation programme and continuous service improvement, resulting in service improvements.

2. **Reimplementation of HOTH (House on the Hill) - Service Desk Software**
   Most employees would have used HOTH as an internal customer to log service requests or faults and we often hear of frustrations regarding how complex it can be to use. ICT also use HOTH to receive and manage their workloads.

   The current version has been heavily customised and is no longer fit for purpose, so we are currently working with the provider to reimplement a simpler version.

   Benefits: The new version will be user friendly and will contain an ICT asset management module and a variety of management reports that we require to monitor and measure performance across ICT, which we can share with our Stakeholders.

3. **Accommodation**
   The Accommodation Programme requires substantial ICT support to provide high quality ICT services and technology solutions to support the Council in delivering excellent services to residents, regardless of the office location. There is a separate milestone plan for this programme, which includes supporting decant, cabling, audio and visual provisions and testing and commissioning of workspaces.

   Once we return to the building following the refurbishment works, we know that the space will be used in a different way, allowing collaboration, so we need audio and visual provisions that are fit for purpose.

   Whilst building our audio and visual architecture, we will also review our telephony with the intention to reduce costs and move to a modern cloud hosted and managed

solution, whilst ensuring the solution is fit for working remotely and supporting the Customer Contact Centre as the largest user group.

Benefits: The ability to generate income via use of the meeting spaces available. An improved telephony user experience, also resulting in improved customer service.

4. **Flexible and remote working**
   Where their role permits, all employees have been issued with an EFDC laptop to enable them to work flexibly and remotely.

   We have also rolled out O365 Teams so that employees can communicate with their colleagues or teams without being in the same location. We are due to enable the external use of Teams, so that those we communicate with outside of the organisation can also use this method to connect with our employees; making collaboration easier.

   As we move towards a 6/10 desk ratio and employees want to take advantage of the opportunity to work in a different way, we want to ensure that employees have the best possible working experience when working away from the office, with a well-maintained infrastructure, security provision and reliable connectivity using an EFDC laptop, a mobile device or their own computer equipment.

   The wider Office 365 rollout will enable staff to access Office 365 tools on any device including a mobile phone and will reduce the costs of using other current technologies (Blackberry mobile).

   EFDC have recently signed up to be a user of Gov Roam Wifi and are in the process of carrying out the necessary works to go live. The use of Gov Roam Wifi means that our employees will be able to connect to and work from any other site that is Gov Roam Wifi enabled, and EFDC will be able to host those employees who have had their devices enabled with Gov Roam Wifi; this allows collaboration and an opportunity to work in a different way and from various other sites.

   Benefits: The ability to work flexibly and remotely, whilst collaborating with colleagues and partners and meeting the 6/10 desk ratio requirement.

5. **Device, desktop and laptop strategy**
   We are currently in the process of ensuring that all ICT devices are on supported versions of operating systems and application software; reducing support issues.

   We will standardise on fewer remote connection methods (VPN), which will drive small cost reductions over time.

   Up until recently we did not have any policies in place around what was being installed on lap tops and the set-up of laptops; we now do.

   The team that manage our Servers, Security and Network are currently separate to the team that manage and support desktops, laptops, iPads and mobile phones,

which can cause delays in finding resolutions for users. In the restructure, those areas of responsibility sit together in one team, providing a quicker turnaround time on resolutions.

Benefits: A reduction in ICT's effort in maintaining the ICT estate through use of automated tools, resulting in an improved user experience.

6. **Mobile phone review**
   As an organisation we currently have a contract for in place for 700 mobile phones, which would mean that every employee has at least one mobile phone, and in some cases, two.

   The purpose of this review is to understand our assets by carrying out an audit of mobile phones not being used to reduce the volume in the current contract and then significantly reduce current costs by (a) encouraging and supporting BYOD (visibility of EFDC emails on a personal device) and (b) negotiating a contract with a supplier.

   Once this review has been carried out we must ensure that there is a management process in place for requesting the purchase of a mobile phone.

   Benefits: A reduction in the cost of our mobile phone contract.

7. **Infrastructure review**
   The Council currently has its own private network, which is set up and manged well, however, this comes with a dependency on the Civic Office and a limited Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery capability, resulting in business risks.

   Focusing on Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery, ICT Consultants, Itica, have recently carried out an options appraisal which explores cloud hosting of our server infrastructure, resulting in an optimum BC/DR service.

   As an interim measure, we are currently increasing the speed of our current network.

   Benefits: Increases resilience across the network and users that work from satellite offices and from home will notice an increase in the speed of their technology.

8. **Cyber Security Review**
   We recognise that users often become frustrated by our heightened ICT security, as it can be a barrier to operating as a modern business and this also generates lots of contact to the Service Desk regarding blockers.

   Due to the security methods that we use, we are fortunate to have never had any major security issues or breaches with ICT and we must continue to remain PSN and Coco Compliant, whilst ensuring the right balance between threat protection and delivering a modern ICT service.

   Decisions on a balance of risk acceptance and usability will be made by the Leadership Team, rather than the responsibility being with our Security Officer(s),

whilst also carrying out an independent reviewing and seeking advice from other Councils.

Benefits: Improved user experience in modern ways of working and a reduction of contact to the Service Desk.

9. **Business Application Review**
    There are currently 90 plus applications used across the organisation. We are in the process of building a portfolio of all of these applications, including user groups, costs, and contract renewal information; amongst many other things. We will need the support of the organisation to identify any 'grey', unsupported applications that we may not be aware of.

    By working with the business, we want to ensure that the Council is getting optimum value for money from its business applications, whilst reviewing if they are fit for purpose and for the future by reviewing the compatibility of the application with mobile devices, our CRM tool and integration with online web services, as well as the suppliers plans to move towards a web based or cloud hosted service.

    This review will also identify duplication, reduce unnecessary use of spreadsheets and associated risks and ensure that business applications can support Council's strategic objectives (we will devise a plan for those that cannot, including options appraisal/soft market testing).

    We will work with the organisation to prioritise which order we review applications in.

    We will create a blueprint for assessing all potential new applications.

    As the restructure introduces Business Partner roles, they will be responsible for monitoring and managing supplier performance and with the reimplementation of HOTH our data regarding faults and issues will drastically improve.

    Benefits: Applications that are value for money and fit for purpose. Improved supplier performance. A reduction in duplication across applications, resulting in a reduction in processing time. An increase in online self-service options for customers; resulting in a reduction of direct contact to the Customer Contact Centre. A reduction in the total cost of Business Applications.

10. **New Housing and Asset Management ICT Solution**
    ICT Consultants, Itica, are currently supporting EFDC to procure a Housing and Asset Management ICT solution, to replace the current of the end-of-life application; starting with a Housing Repairs module.

    Benefits: A reduction in the use of spreadsheets and associated risks, increase in staff performance through automation of tasks, digital service delivery, mobile service delivery, increased tenancy sustainability, improved revenue collection and debt prevention.

11. Supporting the Customer Strategy

Proposed structure introduces a Business Partner and Assistant Business Partner roles focusing on Digital Focus, with a considerable amount of their capacity being focused on supporting our Customer function. Their focus will remain on automation of tasks and processes.

Benefits: An increase in online self-service options for customers; resulting in a reduction of direct contact to the Customer Contact Centre and a reduction in back office time of processing requests.

12. Members Digital Road Map

Cabinet have drafted a digital road map for Members, which in the main features across the key themes listed above. Members will be treated as a business unit in their own right throughout the delivery of the ICT Strategy.

Benefits: Improved user experience and an uptake in the use of technology solutions.

High level timeline

Key Theme	FY 2020/21				FY 2021/22			
	FQ1	FQ2	FQ3	FQ4	FQ1	FQ2	FQ3	FQ4
People/restructure of ICT	■	■						
Reimplementation of HOTH - Service Desk Software	■	■						
Accommodation Programme	■	■	■	■	■	■		
Flexible and remote working	■	■	■	■				
Device, desktop and laptop strategy	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Mobile Phone review	■	■	■	■				
Infrastructure review	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Cyber Security review	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Business Application Review	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
New Housing and Asset Management ICT Solution	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Support of the Customer Strategy	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Members Digital Roadmap	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

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STRONGER COUNCIL SELECT COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE 2019/20

Core Areas of Responsibility

(1)   To provide scrutiny for the following corporate projects:

- People Strategy;
- Accommodation Strategy; and
- Digital Enablement

(2)   To monitor the Corporate Plan Action Plan performance report and provide scrutiny of services that are not performing to standard and develop proposals for their improvement. The Stronger Council Select Committee in its review of Corporate Key Performance Indicators can task other Select Committees to review service performance and develop proposals for improvement.

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.

S. Tautz (April 2019)

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		Stronger Council Select Committee Work Programme 2020/21 Chairman: Councillor P Bolton				
No.	**Item**	**Deadline**	**Progress and Comments**	**Programme of Meetings**	**Lead Officers**
1.	Corporate Plan Action Plan (KPI's by exception) – performance scrutiny	~~Corporate Action Plan KPI's, Q1 Apr, May, Jun – 14 July 2020 meeting~~ Q2 Jul, Aug, Sept - 13 Oct 2020 meeting Q3 Oct, Nov, Dec - 19 Jan 2021 meeting Q4 Jan, Feb, Mar – 13 Apr 2021 meeting Live system reporting – by exception. No pre- distributed reports, projection of live data on the night.		~~14 July 2020~~ 13 October 2020 19 January 2021 13 April 2021	Louise Wade
2.	People Strategy	~~14 July and~~ 13 October 2020 – 19 January 2021 & 13 April 2021 Project reporting, issues focussed.			Paula Maginnis Jo Budden
3.	Digital Enablement	Prioritisation of Council Technology strategy. Outcome focussed 19 January 2021			Paula Maginnis Maryvonne Hassall

A. Hendry (June 2020)

4.	Accommodation	~~14 July and~~ 13 October 2020 - Project reporting, issues focussed			Sacha Jevans Victoria Wright
5.	Financial Issues Paper	~~14 July 2020~~ Scrutiny of MTFS 20/21 onwards			Andrew Small Christopher Hartgrove
6.	Draft budget scrutiny	2021/22 budget setting 19 January 2021			Andrew Small
7.	Asset Management Strategy	Council asset strategy (new)	Approved by the Cabinet 13/06/19 and referred to Council 30/07/19 for adoption.		Andrew Small
8.	~~Review of Polling Places, Polling Districts & Polling Stations~~	~~July 2020~~			Gary Woodhall
9.	~~Review of Local Elections 2019~~	~~October 2020~~			

A. Hendry (June 2020)

Report to Stronger Council Select Committee

Date of meeting: 13 October 2020

SCRUTINY

Epping Forest District Council

Subject: Accommodation Programme

Officer contact for further information: Louise Wade

Democratic Services Officer: Adrian Hendry

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

That the Committee note the progress on the Accommodation Programme.

Executive Summary

The accommodation programme is progressing. We are now at a critical stage of the project, in confirming the design. The accommodation Programme Board continues to meet monthly to oversee the delivery of the programme and covers the following workstreams:

1. Refurbishment works
2. Infrastructure and Technology
3. Travel Plan
4. Furniture, fixtures and fittings
5. Change & Ways of Working
6. Partners and Commercial opportunities
7. Customer Service Workstream

There are also several opportunities which are managed in line with the accommodation programme looking at reducing our storage footprint, cost reduction and efficiency by outsourcing printing and posting services.

This report notes the progress made across the seven programme areas. The corporate plan provides key milestones for the full year 2020/21.

Officer responsibility for delivery has now been transferred from Sacha Jevans to Louise Wade as of October 01st 2020.

1.   Refurbishment Works

The contract with ISG is now a third of the way through having completed successfully the strip out and partition removal works. With the removal of walls, the Civic has now transformed in to an open and bright space. The contractor is currently completing the mechanical and electrical installation including ventilation and running power cables. The contract is remaining on time and budget. The refurb works will be undertaken over quarters 2, 3 and 4 of 2020/21 with an anticipated completion date in quarter 1 next year. ISG are still operating on a 'covid' free environment with all appropriate policies and guidelines in place.

The consultants Gardiner and Theobald who are appointed as Cost Managers and Employers Agent are providing regular cost and quality reports reflecting the progress while raising risks with mitigation actions as appropriate. The Programme Board's decision for our people to continue to work remotely has enabled the contractor to minimise all health and safety related

risks. Most employees continue to work from home due to the Coronavirus pandemic effectively.

2. Infrastructure and Technology

The design for an audio visual (AV) solution is completed and the relevant technical specifications align with our vision to create collaboration spaces enabled by technology. We have also approved a resource booking tool that will allow us to book the appropriate space to suit our activity such us meeting rooms, desks, pool cars etc. See Appendix 1 for further information on the AV solution and meeting room booking system.

Employees have responded with positive feedback on the provision of ICT equipment which has enabled them to continue to work remotely and from home in the past few months. Specifically, in the use of Microsoft Teams as a document collaboration tool as well as for the use of video calls.

We are in the process of developing a training plan for all new tools that will be available to ensure employees are using them consistently and effectively.

3. Travel Plan

Our intention was to bring a travel report to this committee meeting and whilst we are not ready to provide a detailed report of solution, we would like to highlight that detailed discussions with the newly appointed Sustainable Transport Officer are underway. We are exploring sustainable options for travel to the office as part of the wider sustainable transport project and the use of DRT (Demand Responsive Transport). This is a bookable service which allows users to plan journeys in advance. Officers are in discussion with Epping Forest Community Transport who provided a DRT service to Princess Alexandra Hospital staff during the peak of Covid-19 earlier in the year. It is intended to run a DRT pilot scheme early next year and for which a report will be presented to Cabinet in December. The available spaces in the Civic building are currently being modelled based on both the council and commercial use of the building and considering the new effective flexibility way of working. A full travel plan proposal will be shared with members in advance.

4. Furniture, Fixtures and Fittings

The requirements for furniture and fittings are at the final stage of design. The result will be an open and modern environment retaining and showcasing the listed features of the Civic. The space will offer a mix of collaborative workspace areas for employees and Members. Our reception will become a welcoming space for our guests, partners and public. While our officers will be able to support people by appointment, our customer services will also be available and there will be self-serve stations in reception and online channels of communications all of which will be supported by Customer Services and communications.

In the next few weeks the programme team will be engaging with the Members and employees on 'look and feel' sessions to take them through the space layout, furniture, technology and colour scheme.

5. Change and Ways of working

Throughout the most recent months we have experienced a different way of working and one that has introduced greater flexibility. From October, our communications and engagement plan will focus on training and workshop delivery on how the new space can be used effectively and consistently. Our vision and objectives around 'Effective Flexibility' will be

communicated through interactive sessions, policies, standards and user guides to ensure we embed and sustain our new ways of working.

We have taken several actions to support our employees during this time including use of IT equipment and peripherals, vouchers to procure office furniture and wellbeing toolkits.

Our employees continue to embrace remote working and make full use of the digital collaboration tools available to support the public, members and colleagues. Many initiatives and quick wins have been implemented to ensure our customer services continue without disruption and are improved.

An individual has been appointed to specifically focus on the change and communications of the project with our stakeholders, including members, employees and residents. This is a critical role in the successful delivery and adoption of the project.

6. Partners and Commercial Opportunities

We are in the process of appointing Estates Agents who will be leading the marketing of the commercialisation of some of the space within the Civic offices. This will help with generating more income for the Council as well as bringing more businesses on the high street offering job opportunities. Negotiations with Partners are progressing following recent site visits. A further detailed report will be provided as part of member briefings.

7. Customer Service Workstream

It was recognised that a specific workstream to ensure the customer journey was a key focus of design and implementation was part of the programme. Ensuring that both the expected use of the civic and the digital channels of engagement ensured we were catering for all of our residents. An initial design of the journey has taken place to understand how a customer would visit the civic and discussions with the dependent workstreams to understand how these are being met and where alternative options would need to be considered.

Programme governance:

The contract sum is within the agreed 2020/21 budget approved at Full Council and is monitored via the Programme Board on a monthly basis.
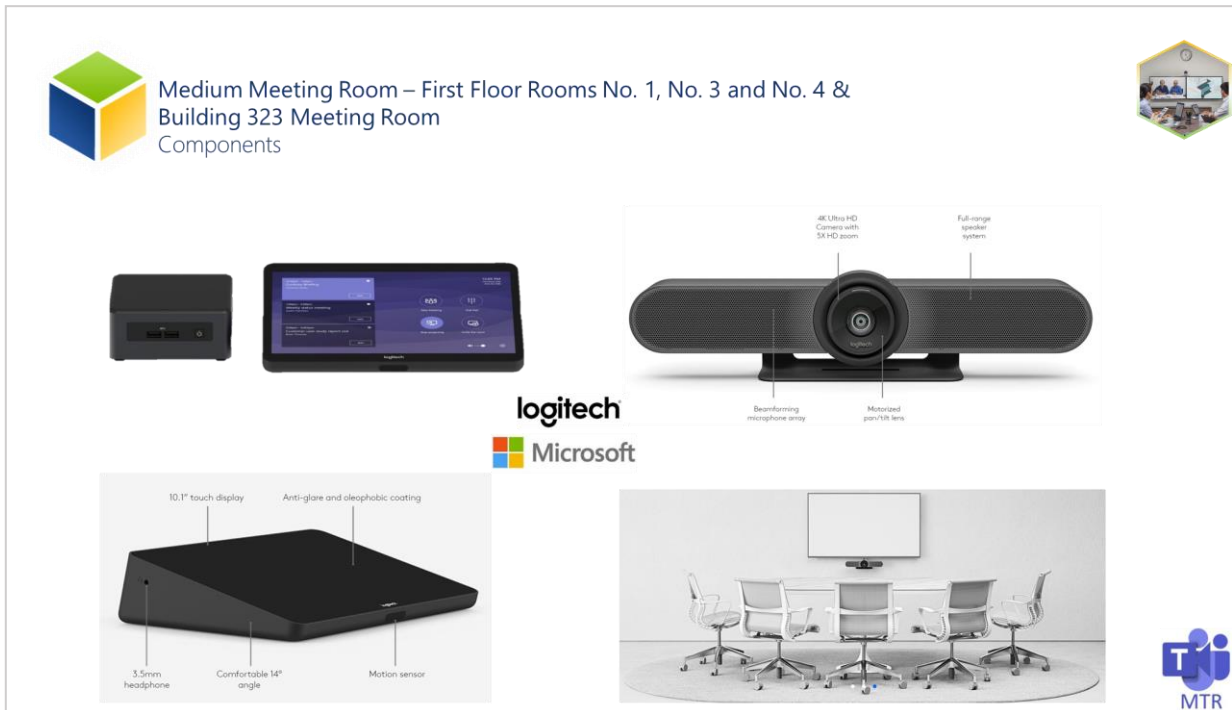
APPENDIX 1 – Audio Visual Solution

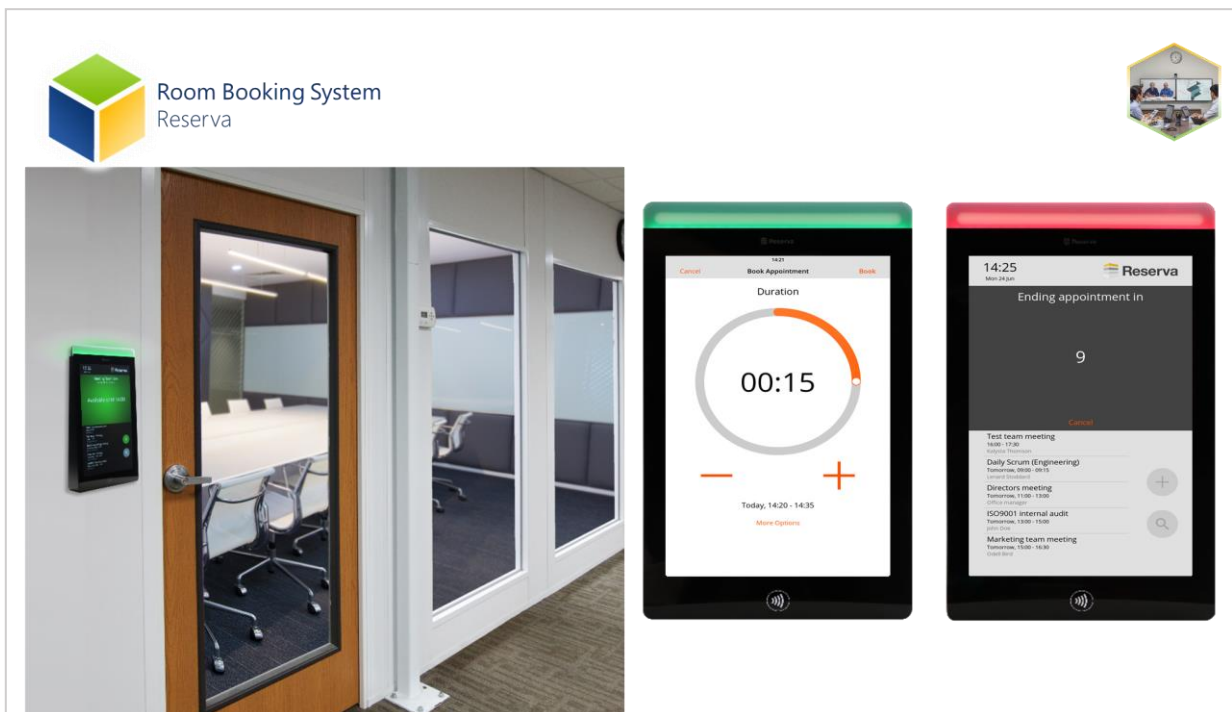**Image 1:** Meeting room AV components and Teams Meeting room interface

Image 2 – Meeting room booking system touchscreen

Image 3: Examples of our AV solution in meeting rooms

Report to Stronger Council Select Committee

Date of meeting: 13 October 2020

Portfolio: Corporate Support Services (Cllr S Kane)

Subject: People Strategy

Officer contact for further information: P Maginnis (01992 564536)

Democratic Services Officer: A Hendry (01992 564246)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

To note the report.

Report:

Context

1. The People Strategy and Plan sets out clear actions and timescales over a two-year period to support the Council deliver its strategic objectives and is divided into 6 workstreams;

    - Attracting, on boarding and retaining the best talent
    - Developing our leadership
    - Embracing change to support EFDC evolution
    - Creating a culture of engagement and wellbeing
    - Developing our skills and behaviours to make EFDC a great place to work
    - Achieving organisational goals through a high performing and flexible workforce

    At the core is transforming the People Team to become an enabler for the organisation.

    The Strategy sets out the ambition for our workforce – the right people with the right skills, highly motivated high performing and business efficient.

Update

2. **Attracting, on boarding and retaining the best talent**

    Our onboarding (induction) process has been designed and guidance is currently being tested with recently recruited candidates/new employees. The new process will bring together IT and Health & Safety Induction requirements. Feedback from the pilot programme will be considered and the process changed if necessary.

3. **Developing our Leadership**

    A development programme for leaders and managers is being developed to include core essential skills and where continuous professional development is required. We aim to implement the programme in Q1 21/22.

4. **Embracing Change to support EFDC evolution**

   a. The People Team are supporting the work on the Accommodation Project by providing policy updates and guidance packs supporting the Council's aim for our employees to work flexibly during and after the refurbishment of the Civic Office building. The People team have designed a manager and employee 'Effective Flexibility' guidance tool to support a more agile mindset to working in different and remote ways. This is a follow on from our 'New Ways of Working' document produced and launched in January 2020.

   b. The Team have supported the 'go live' activity of Qualis Management with various workstreams one of which is the transfer of the Council's Housing Repairs employees to Qualis. Employees are subject to the provisions of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations, commonly known as TUPE. The Housing Repairs employees moved to Qualis on 1 October 2020.

5. **Creating a culture of engagement and wellbeing**

   a. The Covid-19 pandemic has meant that this workstream has been accelerated and accentuated. A 'Let's get talking' wellbeing initiative was launched, building a repository of mental wellbeing, financial and family support tools for employees, their friends and family members.

      We are also in final stages and due to launch our winter wellbeing initiative 'Keeping you a little bit warmer this winter'. This support guidance offers managers and employees hints and tips around winter wellbeing. There is a strong message of a wintertime mindset change associated with going into the winter months and the People Team have focused on more of this using studies associated with a Norwegian approach to dark winter months.

   b. We have also launched a new Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), which is known to our employees as Perkbox. The platform enables employees to access online counselling, financial and legal support and discounts from major retailers. As part of this platform there is also an integrated Wellbeing platform providing easy online access to mental and physical wellness programmes. The launch of this platform concluded on 1 September 2020.

   c. We have trained 97% of our managers on 'Mental Health for Managers' through MHFA England and have four cohorts of employees currently training to become Mental Health First Aiders. We continue to train employees in Mental Health and have set an ambitious target of 1 in 10 trained by February 2020 but due to exceed.

6. **Developing skills and behaviours**

   EFDC have been working with other authorities and SOLACE to develop a 2-year, Level 5 Management Apprenticeship for local government. The Emerging Leaders programme offers an Institute of Leadership & Management Level 5 qualification for developing middle managers and covers a range of topics including Leading People, Managing People, Finance, Project Management, Operational Management, Communications and Problem Solving/ Decision Making. The training is funded from our Apprenticeship Levy. EFDC has 7 employees starting this programme in October 2020.

   In addition, the Apprenticeship Levy is being used to offer 4 new apprenticeships in Housing. The Housing Careers Pathways programme offers a great opportunity for anyone of any age to join the programme to launch a career in Housing, whilst studying for an accredited Chartered Institute of Housing Qualification. Housing Managers are currently shortlisting for the 4 opportunities.

   The Council currently has 23 apprentices in the organisation from Level 2 (GCSE level) to

Level 6 (Degree level). This means we are far exceeding the public sector target of employing 2.3% of our workforce as apprentices (which equates to 15 apprentices)

7. High performing and flexible workforce

a. The Council needs to ensure that our services are aligned as effectively as possible so that we can deliver on our priorities and outcomes. Recognising there will always be change within Local Government that require structures to adapt, our intention is to review our current services and ensure they are aligned to deliver the corporate plan and the new recovery actions. This has necessitated some redistribution of service responsibility into functional groupings which in turn align to our priorities.

There are three phases of change taking place over the coming months, phase 1 has recently seen a realignment of services/functions so that corporate projects are delivered. This realignment has also considered the impact of support to Covid recovery projects and services moving across the Qualis.

b. There are a number of phases to automate and improve our recruitment process using our iTrent platform and working with partner organisations (Braintree and Colchester). Phase 1 aims to automate our application process which is on track to launch in Q4 20/21.

Reason for decision:

Not applicable the report is for noting.

Options considered and rejected:

Not applicable the report is for noting.

Consultation undertaken:

Not applicable the report is for noting.

Resource implications:

Within current resources

Legal and Governance Implications:

Not applicable the report is for noting.

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications:

N/A

Consultation Undertaken:

The Trade Unions are informed and consulted as required.

Background Papers:

N/A

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

Risk is assessed as part of the individual project development

Equality:

Equality is considered as part of the individual project development

Report to the Stronger Council Select Committee

Epping Forest District Council

Date of meeting: 13th October 2020

Portfolio:	**Finance & Economic Development – Cllr J Philip**
Subject:	**Revenue & Capital Outturn 2019/20**
Responsible Officer:	**Andrew Small** **(01992 564278).**
Democratic Services:	**Adrian Hendry** **(01992 564246).**

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) To note the Revenue outturn for 2019/20 for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) as presented within the report, including *Appendix A.*

(2) To note the General Fund Reserve position presented in Section 4.

(3) To note the HRA Balance set out in Section 4, including the retention of £0.5 million originally approved for transfer to the Self-Financing Financing Reserve (prior to consideration for approval by Cabinet).

(4) To note the Capital Programme outturn for 2019/20 as presented within the report, including *Appendix B*.

Executive Summary:

This report provides the Stronger Council Select Committee with an overview of the Revenue and Capital outturn, compared to budget, for 2019/20.

The figures included within the report are still subject to external audit so should be considered provisional at this stage. The report also briefly considers the Council's unallocated reserve balances for both General Fund and the HRA.

Revenue
The Council has ended the year with an overall positive revenue variance on General Fund service budgets of £908,000, whereas the ring-fenced Housing Revenue Account recorded a negative revenue variance of £285,000.

The revenue outturn figures are reflected in the reserves held on the Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2020; specifically, regarding unallocated balances held:

- General Fund Reserve – £7.759 million; and
- HRA Balance – £2.030 million.

The minimum contingency balance requirements adopted by the Council have been met at year-end on both the General Fund and the HRA. The movement on the General Fund balance is summarised in the table below.

Description	£millions
Opening GF Balance	**7.437**
Add: Underspend on Services	0.908
Add: Surplus on Funding and Other Adjustments	0.261
Less: Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	(0.847)
Closing GF Balance	**7.759**

Capital

Overall spending on the Capital Programme this year was £43.713 million (General Fund £26.377 million, HRA £17.336 million) against a budget of £49.956 million (General Fund £31.926 million, £18.030 million). Unspent budgets of £6.243 million (General Fund £5.549 million, HRA £0.694 million) will roll forward into 2020/21 to enable the completion of unfinished capital schemes.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To update the Stronger Council Select Committee on the year-end financial position for 2019/20, thus supporting Cabinet in making better informed decisions on the allocation of the Council's financial resources based on up-to-date financial information.

1)   INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1   The Council budgets (both General Fund and HRA) for 2019/20 were agreed by full Council on 21st February 2019.

1.2   This report primarily provides the Committee with an overview of the year-end revenue and capital budget outturns for 2019/20.

2)   GENERAL FUND OUTTURN 2019/20

2.1 The General Fund outturn for 2019/20 – summarised by service area – is presented in *Appendix A*. It shows a that a Budget surplus of £908,351 on service budgets was recorded for the year.

2.2 The most significant recorded overspends were as follows:

- Business Support ("Other Activities") £864,820 – the most significant factor in the overspend was the need to make additional provision for Bad Debts of £515,410, primarily due to the impact of Covid-19 on the anticipated collectability of outstanding debt; and

- Contracts & Technical ("Car Parking") £271,269 – the overspend primarily related to the Off-Street Parking cost centre, with a shortfall of £139,763 in income from season tickets, which was added to by a general shortfall in income from parking fees of £55,573.

2.3 The most significant recorded underspends were as follows:

- Planning ("Local Plan Implementation") £778,493 – the Local Plan cost centre underspent by £502,531 due to delays experienced in the delivery of the Local Plan

- Chief Executive ("Support Services") £645,194 – a "Transit Grant" of £500,000 was received from HMRC in the year for the use of North Weald Airfield, which was not assumed within the original budget

- Commercial & Regulatory ("Private Sector Housing") £486,155 – the underspend was mainly driven by a budget underspend on Private Housing Grants of £322,393, with Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) received in the year £204,956 higher than that assumed within the budget being the biggest factor

- Contracts & Technical ("Cost Centres") £309,608 – the single largest factor in the budget surplus was an underspend on Salaries in the Countryside and Landscape cost centre of £104,364. The budget reflected the restructured staffing profile, but there were delays in recruiting to new posts; and

- Chief Executive ("Other Activities") £391,411 – spending on Qualis set-up costs was £336,768 lower than assumed within the budget.

3) HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) OUTTURN 2019/20

3.1 The Council's (unaudited) Housing Revenue Account (HRA) recorded a Deficit of £285,000 for the year (after accounting adjustments). There were two significant items to note:

- A planned contribution of £500,000 to the Self-Financing Reserve (to finance the repayment of a loan of £31.8 million, due to mature in March 2022) was not achieved in the year due to the need to set aside additional funds into the Major Repairs Reserve (MRR) in accordance with statutory requirements (impact £501,000); and

- An additional provision of £140,000 was made at year-end for Bad Debts, due to the anticipated impact of Covid-19 on the collectability of outstanding debt.

3.2 Whilst the HRA is generally in reasonably good financial health and has not been affected by the pandemic as much as the General Fund, there have still been some negative impacts, with Tenant Rent Arrears rising and, initially at least, a rise in Void periods. The full extent of default on Rent Arrears will be revealed as Lockdown restrictions are gradually lifted and there are competing pressures between indirect Government support to tenants (e.g. through the Council Tax Hardship Fund) and an expected rise in unemployment in Autumn 2020.

4)   REVENUE RESERVES (GENERAL FUND & HRA)

4.1 The movement on General Fund and HRA (unallocated) reserves in 2019/20 is summarised in the table below.

Description	31 March 2019	31 March 2020	Increase (+) Decrease (-)
	£000's	£000's	£000's
General Fund Reserve	7,437	7,759	+322
Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Reserve	2,315	2,030	-285

4.2 The closing General Fund balance as at 31st March 2020 is comfortably in excess of the minimum contingency balance of the higher of 25% of Net Expenditure or £4.0 million adopted by the Council in February 2019 (and reconfirmed in February 2020).

4.3 The closing HRA balance as at 31st March 2020 meets the minimum balance requirement of £2.0 million assumed within the adopted HRA 30-Year Business Plan.

5)   CAPITAL PROGRAMME (GENERAL FUND & HRA)

5.1 The Council approved an overall Capital Programme of £20.135 million (General Fund £3.328 million, HRA £16.807 million) for 2019/20 on 21st February 2019. Subsequent revisions to the Programme are as follows:

- 2018/19 Capital Programme slippage (£1.775 million) - unspent capital budgets ("slippage") at the end of 2018/19 were rolled forward and added (General Fund £0.454 million, HRA £1.321 million); then

- Re-Profiling – the Programme was then re-profiled in July 2019, to reflect progress and updated spending patterns on individual schemes; and finally

- Investment Property Acquisitions (£30.0 million) – additional capital funding for the purchase of suitable investment properties was approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 19th September 2019; this was added to the General Fund Programme.

5.2 The revised Capital Programme for 2019/20 is summarised – at a service level – in the table below. A more detailed analysis – at a scheme level – is included in *Appendix B*. The revised Programme totalled £49.956 million (General Fund £31.926 million, HRA £18.030 million). Total spending in the year was £43.715 million (General Fund £26.377 million, HRA £17.336 million), with the unspent balance of £6.243 (General Fund £5.549 million, HRA £0.694 million) rolled forward into 2020/21.

Description	Revised Budget 2019/20 (£000's)	Actual Expenditure (£000's)	Remaining Budget (£000's)
General Fund			
Business Support	292	172	(120)
Commercial & Regulatory	30,824	25,922	(4,902)
Community & Partnerships	465	76	(389)
Contracts & Technical	185	97	(88)
Housing & Property	160	110	(50)
Sub-Total	**31,926**	**26,377**	**(5,549)**
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	**18,030**	**17,336**	**(694)**
Total Capital Programme 2019/20 (Revised)	**49,956**	**43,713**	**(6,243)**

5.3 Significant variances (budget underspends or "slippage") to note on the General Fund Capital Programme are as follows:

- *Business Support* – the most significant factor behind the slippage, was the ICT Strategy; underspending of £122,000 occurred, due to several schemes being put on hold, whilst a project was carried out to re-assess ICT needs across the Council. Work also began on a major project to replace the Debtor system, which has continued into 2020/21

- *Commercial & Regulatory* – a total budget of £30.0 million earmarked for the purchase Investment Property was underspent by £4.8 million (Loughton & Centric Development and 90 Brooker Road only were acquired for £19.8 million and £5.3 million respectively). The unspent balance is available for future potential investment opportunities as they arise; and

- *Community & Partnerships* – the most significant item related to a planned contribution to the Superfast Essex Phase 4.1 (broadband) scheme of £350,000. Rollout was initially planned for December 2019. However, that timescale proved unachievable; rollout has now been re-scheduled for March 2021.

5.4 There were a handful of variances underlying slippage of £694,000 on the HRA Capital Programme. Most significantly:

- Structural Schemes (£688,000 overspend) – the budget overspent in 2019/20, primarily due to a higher than expected need for remedial works in respect of tree damage to properties (essentially root activity undermining property foundations). Other cost pressures were experienced on both external (e.g. wall rendering) and internal (e.g. ceilings and plasterwork) too in Council housing stock mainly built in the 1950s and 1960s. However, the overspend was identified during the year, with offsetting savings found in other budget areas to ensure that the overall Programme was brought in on budget. Most notably:

  o Kitchens and Bathrooms (£322,000 underspend) – e.g. savings of £70,000 and £120,000 were made on Kitchens and Bathrooms respectively; and

o Windows, Doors and Roofing (£307,000 underspend) – e.g. savings of £260,000 were made on both Windows and Balconies.

- Housing Development (£640,000 underspend) – over 90% of spending happened in accordance with the planned programme. The slippage that did occur was due to a combination of factors, including delays on the Phase 2 Burton Road scheme (due to the need for repair work following water damage caused by a fire) and on the Phase 3 Queens Road scheme (due to utility works). The start date on site for Phase 4 – originally scheduled for September 2019 – slipped into 2020/21 (partly due to Covid-19 preventing – an otherwise achievable – start date in March 2020).

Legal and Governance Implications:

The Council has a statutory obligation to maintain a balanced budget and the monitoring process enables the Cabinet to remain aware of issues and the process to be taken to maintain a balanced budget for the year.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

There are no direct SCG implications contained within the report.

Consultation Undertaken:

The development of the original 2019/20 budget was informed by the statutory public consultation process and the democratic scrutiny process.

Background Papers:

Management Accounts 2019/20 (Month 12)
Epping Forest District Council: Statement of Accounts 2019/20 (DRAFT)

Risk Management:

The report is primarily presented for information only and has no risk management implications, although regular monitoring and reporting of the type included in this report ensures early warning of significant issues that may place the Council at financial risk. This gives the Cabinet the best opportunity to take actions to mitigate such risks.

General Fund Revenue Outturn 2019/20

The table below summarises the 2019/20 outturn position for the General Fund.

| Service Area | Activity | Net Expenditure | | | Impairment Adjustments | Adjusted Variances |
		Budget (M12) £'s	Actual £'s	Variance £'s		
Business Support	Accommodation	19,320	1,045,465	1,026,145	(1,030,239.00)	- 4,094.03
	Business Support	1,787,970	1,608,863	(179,107)		- 179,107.24
	Cost Centres - Business Support	116,560	-	(116,560)		- 116,560.00
	Finance Support Services	772,870	838,807	65,937		65,936.89
	ICT	(142,680)	47,360	190,040		190,039.95
	Other Activities	(106,270)	758,550	864,820		864,820.09
	Other Support Services	1,315,360	1,504,075	188,715		188,715.18
	Sub-Total	**3,763,130**	**5,803,120**	**2,039,990**		**1,009,750.84**
Community & Partnerships	Community, Health & Wellbeing	973,460	931,517	(41,943)	(219,452.00)	- 261,394.52
	Community & Partnership	1,356,530	1,059,099	(297,431)		- 297,431.24
	Community & Partnership Support Services	264,000	324,631	60,631		60,630.76
	Cost Centres - Community & Partnerships	(152,190)	3,697	155,887		155,887.43
	Museum, Heritage & Culture	953,310	641,976	(311,334)	351,330.00	39,996.23
	Voluntary Sector Support	370,470	345,530	(24,940)		- 24,940.23
	Sub-Total	**3,765,580**	**3,306,451**	**(459,129)**		**- 327,251.48**
Commercial & Regulatory	Commercial & Regulatory Support Services	598,900	767,474	168,574		168,574.26
	Cost Centres - Commercial & Regulatory	(116,340)	25,464	141,804		141,803.91
	Emegency Planning & Other	186,100	86,392	(99,708)		- 99,708.26
	Environmental Health	814,880	724,680	(90,200)		- 90,199.53
	Land & Property	(6,332,570)	(7,057,030)	(724,460)	800,000.00	75,540.40
	North Weald Centre	48,030	(164,495)	(212,525)	164,321.00	- 48,204.36
	Private Sector Housing	519,090	32,935	(486,155)		486,155.40
	Regulatory Services	267,590	134,973	(132,617)		132,617.16
	Sub-Total	**(4,014,320)**	**(5,449,607)**	**(1,435,287)**		**- 470,966.14**
Contracts & Technical Services	Car Parking	(749,490)	(569,594)	179,896	91,373.00	271,268.91
	Contracts & Technical Support Services	305,090	281,451	(23,639)		- 23,639.04
	Cost Centres - Contracts & Technical	179,080	(130,528)	(309,608)		- 309,607.73
	Land Drainage/Sewerage	700,070	723,247	23,177		23,177.04
	Leisure Facilities	56,190	223,618	167,428		167,427.76
	Parks & Grounds	1,037,720	1,021,138	(16,582)		- 16,582.38
	Waste Management	5,413,940	5,416,541	2,601		2,601.46
	Sub-Total	**6,942,600**	**6,965,873**	**23,273**		**114,646.02**
Customer Services	Cost Centres - Customer Services	(208,170)	-	208,170		208,170.00
	Customer Support Services	1,569,170	1,478,297	(90,873)		- 90,872.57
	Elections	455,930	431,191	(24,739)		- 24,738.59
	Housing Benefits	953,850	760,887	(192,963)		- 192,963.17
	Local Taxation	1,173,280	1,223,039	49,759		49,759.12
	Member Activities	837,630	900,992	63,362		63,362.23
	Sub-Total	**4,781,690**	**4,794,407**	**12,717**		**12,717.02**
Housing & Property	Cost Centres - Housing & Property	(61,390)	-	61,390		61,390.00
	Facilities & Depot Management	(74,580)	1,786,680	1,861,260	(1,751,820.00)	109,440.35
	Homelessness	246,390	205,503	(40,887)		- 40,886.74
	Housing Policy	76,510	56,040	(20,470)		- 20,470.00
	Housing & Property Support Services	335,140	138,178	(196,962)		- 196,961.75
	Sub-Total	**522,070**	**2,186,402**	**1,664,332**		**- 87,488.14**
Planning	Cost Centres - Planning Services	(58,790)	-	58,790		58,790.00
	Local Plan Implementation	3,280,490	2,501,997	(778,493)		- 778,492.92
	Planning & Development	637,810	629,336	(8,474)		- 8,474.48
	Planning Support Services	440,610	423,961	(16,649)		- 16,649.29
	Sub-Total	**4,300,120**	**3,555,293**	**(744,827)**		**- 744,826.69**
Chief Executive	Chief Executive Support Services	856,030	210,836	(645,194)		- 645,193.67
	Corporate Activities	973,120	1,594,793	621,673		621,672.66
	Other Activities	745,120	353,709	(391,411)		- 391,411.25
	Sub-Total	**2,574,270**	**2,159,338**	**(414,932)**		**- 414,932.26**
General Fund Total		**22,635,140**	**23,321,276**	**686,136**	**(1,594,487.00)**	**(908,351)**

Capital Programme Outturn 2019/20

The table below summarises the 2019/20 outturn position for the Capital Programme.

Description	Budget (including 2018/19 roll forwards) (£000's)	Actual Expenditure (£000's)	Remaining Budget (£000's)
GENERAL FUND PROGRAMME 2019/20			
Business Support			
ICT General Schemes	0	2	2
ICT Strategy	292	170	(122)
Sub-Total	**292**	**172**	**(120)**
Commercial & Regulatory			
St. Johns	172	0	(172)
Accommodation Project	425	492	67
Epping Forest Shopping Park	30	8	(22)
Waltham Abbey SP	86	86	0
Landmark Building	111	31	(80)
Investment Property Acquisitions	30,000	25,167	(4,833)
North Weald Airfield	0	138	138
Sub-Total	**30,824**	**25,922**	**(4,902)**
Community & Partnership Services			
CCTV Systems	115	76	(39)
Superfast Broadband (Contribution)	350	0	(350)
Sub-Total	**465**	**76**	**(389)**
Contracts & Technical Services			
Leisure Centres	78	75	(3)
Grounds Maintenance	47	22	(25)
Parking & Traffic Schemes	60	0	(60)
Sub-Total	**185**	**97**	**(88)**
Housing & Property			
Depots	53	52	(1)
Investment Properties Works	90	41	(49)
Active Planned Maintenance	17	17	0
Sub-Total	**160**	**110**	**(50)**
Total General Fund	**31,926**	**26,377**	**(5,549)**

Capital Programme Outturn 2019/20 (cont.)

	Budget (including 2018/19 roll forwards)	Actual	Variance/Slippage
HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) PROGRAMME 2019/20			
Housing Developments	7,525	6,885	(640)
Heating & Rewiring	2,211	2,259	48
Windows, Doors & Roofing	2,277	1,970	(307)
Other Planned Maintenance	171	120	(51)
Kitchens & Bathrooms	1,660	1,338	(322)
Garages & Environment Works	315	187	(128)
Structural Schemes	2,255	2,943	688
Disabled Adaptations	491	497	6
Other Repairs & Maintenance	246	236	(10)
Service Enhancements	107	-1	(108)
Replacement Housing Vehicles	59	45	(14)
Oakwood Hill Depot Extension	1,013	858	(155)
HRA Leasehold Property Works (CR)	-300	0	300
Total HRA	**18,030**	**17,336**	**(694)**

Overall EFDC Capital Programme	**49,956**	**43,713**	**(6,243)**

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