



NOTICE OF COUNCIL MEETING

You are hereby summoned to a meeting of the EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL to be held in the CONFERENCE SUITE - CIVIC OFFICES at 7.00 pm on Thursday, 16 December 2021 for the purpose of transacting the business set out in the agenda.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G Blakemore'.

Georgina Blakemore
Chief Executive

Democratic Services
Officer:

Gary Woodhall / J Leither Tel: (01992) 564243
Email: democraticservices@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

WEBCASTING/FILMING 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. The meeting may also be otherwise filmed by third parties with the Chairman's permission.

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 entering the Conference Suite you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for web casting and/or training purposes

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

BUSINESS

1. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

This meeting is to be webcast. Members are reminded of the need to activate their microphones before speaking. The Democratic and Electoral Services Team Manager will read the following announcement:

“The Chairman 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).

It is likely that the recording cameras will capture your image and this will result in the possibility that your image will become part of the broadcast.

This may infringe your human and data protection rights and if you wish to avoid this you should speak to the webcasting officer before the meeting.”

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To be announced at the meeting.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To declare interests in any item on the agenda.

4. MINUTES (Pages 7 - 24)

To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the meeting held on the 28 October 2021, as attached.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Chairman’s Announcements

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

To answer questions asked after notice in accordance with the provisions contained within Part 4 of the Council Rules of the Constitution on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the District:

(a) to the Leader of the Council;

(b) to any Portfolio Holder; or

(c) to the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Questions, if any, will follow if not received in time to be incorporated into the agenda.

7. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS UNDER NOTICE

To answer questions asked after notice in accordance with the provisions contained within the Council’s rules in Part 4 of the Constitution on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the District:

(a) to the Chairman of the Council;

- (b) to the Leader of the Council;
- (c) to any Member of the Cabinet; or
- (d) the Chairman of any Committee or Sub-Committee.

The Council's rules provide that answers to questions under notice may take the form of:

- (a) direct oral answer;
- (b) where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to that publication; or
- (c) where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, a written answer circulated later to the questioner.

Answers to questions falling within (a) and (b) above will be made available to the member asking the question one hour before the meeting. Answers to questions falling within (c) above will be circulated to all councillors.

Questions, if any, will follow if not received in time to be incorporated into the agenda.

8. REPORTS FROM THE LEADER & MEMBERS OF THE CABINET (Pages 25 - 116)

To receive reports and any announcements from the Leader and members of the Cabinet on matters falling within their area of responsibility:

- (a) Report of the Leader;
- (b) Report of the Community and Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder (attached);
- (c) Report of the Corporate Services Portfolio Holder (attached);
- (d) Report of the Customer and Partnerships Portfolio Holder (attached);
- (e) Report of the Environmental and Technical Services Portfolio Holder (attached);
- (f) Report of the Finance, Qualis Client and Economic Development Portfolio Holder (attached);
- (g) Report of the Housing Services Portfolio Holder (attached); and
- (h) Report of the Planning and Sustainability Portfolio Holder (attached).

9. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS WITHOUT NOTICE

The Council's rules provide for questions by any member of the Council to the Leader or any Portfolio Holder, without notice on:

- (i) reports under the previous item; or
- (ii) any other matter of a non operational character in relation to the powers and duties of the Council or which affects all or part of the District or some or all of its

inhabitants.

The Council's rules provide that answers to questions without notice may take the form of:

- (a) a direct oral answer from the Leader or, at the request of the Leader, from another member of the Cabinet;
- (b) where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to that publication;
- (c) where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, a written answer circulated later to the questioner; or
- (d) where the question relates to an operational matter, the Leader or a member of the Cabinet will request that a response be given direct to the questioner by the relevant Service Director.

In accordance with the Council's rules, a time limit of thirty minutes is set for questions. Any question not dealt with within the time available will receive a written reply. The Chairman may extend this period by up to a further ten minutes at their discretion.

10. MOTIONS

To consider any motions, notice of which has been given under the Council's rules.

Motions, if any, will follow if not received in time to be incorporated into the agenda.

Reports of the Cabinet

11. LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL SIZE AND BOUNDARY WARD REVIEW (Pages 117 - 126)

(Leader) To receive a report recommending that the report of the Leader be noted and that the Council resolves whether to continue with elections by "thirds" or whether to commence public consultation on moving to a 4 yearly "all out" election cycle.

12. TREASURY MANAGEMENT OUTTURN 2020/21 (Pages 127 - 144)

(Finance, Qualis Client and Economic Development) To consider and note the Treasury Management Outturn report for 2020/21, (Appendix A).

13. TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR UPDATE 2021/22 (Pages 145 - 158)

(Finance, Qualis Client and Economic Development) To consider and note the Treasury Management Mid-Year update for 2021/22, (Appendix A).

14. APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR (Pages 159 - 162)

(Finance, Qualis Client and Economic Development) To consider a report of the Audit and Governance Committee to Council recommending that the Council continues to participate in the national procurement process led by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) for the appointment of external auditors.

15. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2021/22 (Pages 163 - 164)

(Customer and Partnerships) To receive a report from the Cabinet recommending that Council note the Local Council Tax Support scheme for 2021/22 will continue unchanged for 2022/23.

16. PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2022/23 (Pages 165 - 172)

(Corporate Services) To consider a report from Cabinet recommending the Pay Policy Statement to Council be noted.

17. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2022/23 (Pages 173 - 176)

(Customer and Partnerships) To consider a report from Cabinet recommending that the Council adopts the Calendar of Meetings for the 2022/23 municipal year.

18. CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP (Pages 177 - 184)

To receive the report of the Chairman of the Constitution Working Group and to recommend a review of Article 4, The Full Council Terms of Reference sub-paragraph 1(c).

19. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (Pages 185 - 186)

To receive the report of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to answer any questions without notice asked in accordance with Council Rules.

20. ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION STRATEGY (Pages 187 - 218)

(Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee) To consider a report of the Audit & Governance Committee recommending that the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy be approved.

21. JOINT ARRANGEMENTS & EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

(a) To receive from Council representatives the reports (attached - if any) on the business of joint arrangements and external organisations and to receive answers to any questions on those bodies which may be put without notice; and

(b) To request written reports from representatives on joint arrangements and external organisations for future meetings.

22. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Exclusion: To consider whether, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press should be excluded from the meeting for the items of business set out below on grounds that they will involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the following paragraph(s) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended) or are confidential under Section 100(A)(2):

Agenda Item No	Subject	Exempt Information Paragraph Number
Nil	Nil	Nil

The Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, which came into effect on 1 March 2006, requires the Council to consider whether maintaining the

exemption listed above outweighs the potential public interest in disclosing the information. Any member who considers that this test should be applied to any currently exempted matter on this agenda should contact the proper officer at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.

Background Papers: Article 17 of the Constitution (Access to Information) define background papers as being documents relating to the subject matter of the report which in the Proper Officer's opinion:

(a) disclose any facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the report is based; and

(b) have been relied on to a material extent in preparing the report and does not include published works or those which disclose exempt or confidential information and in respect of executive reports, the advice of any political advisor.

The Council will make available for public inspection for four years after the date of the meeting one copy of each of the documents on the list of background papers.

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COUNCIL MINUTES

Committee:	Council	Date:	28 October 2021
Place:	Council Chamber - Civic Offices	Time:	7.00 - 9.23 pm
Members Present:	Councillors H Kane (Chairman), N Avey, R Balcombe, R Baldwin, N Bedford, P Bhanot, P Bolton, H Brady, R Brookes, L Burrows, I Hadley, S Heap, S Jones, S Kane, P Keska, J Lea, J Leppert, T Matthews, J McIvor, A Mitchell, R Morgan, S Murray, S Neville, C Nweke, M Owen, A Patel, J Philip, D Plummer, S Rackham, K Rizvi, B Rolfe, M Sartin, D Stocker, D Sunger, B Vaz, H Whitbread, J H Whitehouse, J M Whitehouse and K Williamson		
Members Virtual Attendance:	Councillors S Heather, B Jennings, J Jennings, H Kauffman, Y Knight, S McCredie, C C Pond, C P Pond, C Roberts, P Stalker, C Whitbread and D Wixley		
Apologies:	Councillors J Share-Bernia (Vice-Chairman), D Barlow, R Bassett, D Dorrell, J Jogia, A Lion and L Mead		
Officers Present:	G Blakemore (Chief Executive), G Woodhall (Team Manager - Democratic & Electoral Services), J Leither (Democratic Services Officer), N Boateng (Service Manager (Legal) & Monitoring Officer), A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer), P Seager (Chairman's Officer), S Mitchell (PR Website Editor) and N Cole (Corporate Communications Officer)		

33. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

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

34. FORMER COUNCILLORS H TAYLOR AND D KELLY AND SIR DAVID AMESS, MP

(a) Former Member of Parliament Sir David Amess

The Chairman paid tribute to the sad loss of Sir David Amess who served as a Member of Parliament for Southend West from May 1997 until his death on 15 October 2021. Deepest condolences go to his family and friends and all those who knew him.

(b) Former District Councillors Harry Taylor and Doug Kelly

The Chairman informed members that former Councillors and Chairmen of Council Harry Taylor and Doug Kelly had recently passed away.

Former Councillor Harry Taylor had served as a Conservative District Councillor and represented the High Beach Ward of Waltham Abbey from 1974 to 1987 and then Waltham Abbey West from 1991 to 1995 and 1999 to 2003. He became Vice-Chairman of Council in 1978/79 and was elected Chairman of Council in the 1979/80 municipal year. During his terms of office

former Councillor Taylor served on various committees, sub-committees and working groups.

Former Councillor Doug Kelly served as a Liberal Democratic District Councillor representing the Roothing Country and Moreton and Fyfield Wards from 1996 to 2008. He became Vice Chairman of Council in 2001/02 and was elected Chairman of Council in the 2002/03 municipal year. During his terms of office former Councillor Kelly served on various committees, sub-committees and working groups.

Members paid tribute to the memory of Sir David Amess MP and former District Councillors Harry Taylor and Doug Kelly and a minute's silence was held in their honour.

35. APPOINTMENT TO VICE CHAIRMAN

In the absence of Councillor J Share-Bernia, who had tendered her apologies for the meeting, the Chairman requested that Councillor M Sartin be appointed as the Vice-Chairman for the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor M Sartin be appointed Vice-Chairman for the duration of the meeting.

36. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 29 July 2021 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor S Murray declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 11 Motion, regarding Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit by virtue of being a weekly volunteer at the Epping Forest Foodbank and the Free Food for You, Loughton Hub.

38. ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Chairman's Announcements

- (i) The Chairman advised that she would like to acknowledge that one of our Members, Richard Morgan, who after a delay of over 18 months, had now been presented with a national honour at Windsor Castle by Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal. Richard Morgan MBE had been awarded with this honour in recognition for his services to the community. Without a doubt, Richard had been, and still was, one of the most active and influential Local Councillors serving Epping Forest District Council.

Richard was elected as a local Ward Councillor on the District Council in 1983 and as we all know he was still serving and representing local people to this day. He was elected Chairman of Council in the 2004/05 municipal year.

Richard, I speak on behalf of all Members, would like congratulate you on receiving this honour and we are all delighted that you have been recognised in such a way, by becoming a member of the Most Excellent order of the British Empire.

Councillor Richard Morgan thanked the Chairman for her kind words and stated that it was a great honour to have received this award from Princess Anne who he found to be an extremely nice lady to talk to. He advised that he should have gone to Buckingham Palace in March 2020 to receive this award which had to be postponed 2 days before due to the Pandemic.

Councillor Morgan stated that he and his family had a lovely day out at Windsor Castle and he felt really honoured to have received such an award.

- (ii) The Chairman advised that she had been very busy attending Civic functions since the last Council meeting in July. Although it had been good to feel that some normality was returning we still need to be very careful as Covid had not gone away.
- (iii) The Chairman highlighted some of the engagements that she had recently attended:
 - She stated that she was delighted to attend the all-day Health and Wellbeing event at the Civic Offices in the Community Hub, it was a great event to happen and in the newly refurbished Council offices; and
 - She advised that it was an honour to present the Arts Awards at the Waltham Abbey Museum. It was wonderful to see so many young people in the district and how they have been engaging with the arts, it showed what we did best, collaborate and work with the local community.
- (iv) The Chairman congratulated everyone who participated in the London Marathon, Councillor Jon Whitehouse who finished in record time, Keira Seager, the daughter of Pat Seager, who raised £3,500 for the Dogs Trust and one of our officers Gerry Greenwold who works in the Business Rates Team, well done to them all.

(b) Flowers

The Chairman announced that she intended that the flowers from this evenings meeting to go to the Community Hub in the Civic Offices to be enjoyed by all of the visitors.

39. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

The Council noted that there were no public questions that had been submitted for consideration at this meeting.

40. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS UNDER NOTICE

Question by Councillor C C Pond to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Sustainability, Councillor N Bedford

“Could the Planning and Sustainability Portfolio Holder agree;

To prevent uncontrolled exercise of inappropriate and deleterious development, will the PFH for planning please give 12 months public notice of issuing article 4 directions to prevent the use of permitted development rights in respect of the following:

- Conversion of shops to residential units;
- Conversion of offices and similar buildings to residential units; and
- Any works to frontages, boundaries, roofs and the surfacing of front gardens in conservation areas and heritage assets, similar to those imposed by EFDC on two CAs 25 years ago.

Response to Councillor C C Pond from Councillor N Bedford

The District Council can only impose an “Article 4” directions in very limited situations where it was necessary to avoid wholly unacceptable adverse impacts and protect local amenity. It must be based upon robust evidence and can only apply to the smallest geographic area possible.

The Council have controls in place through their policies in the emerging Local Plan which seek to limit the loss of office and retail space. Planning permission will not normally be permitted unless evidence demonstrates that there was no longer a reasonable prospect of the site being used for the existing employment use.

It was important to note that article 4 directions to restrict the change of use of shops/offices to residential use may accelerate conversions as applicants can apply for the change of use prior to the Article 4 direction taking effect.

There was also a risk of compensation for those owners/occupiers affected by the additional burden of securing planning permission for something that would otherwise be permitted development.

Additionally, it could be seen as contrary to the Government’s objective to provide flexibility and adaptability for businesses, particularly during periods of uncertainty such as the pandemic.

Likewise, seeking to restrict permitted development rights in relation to conservation area/heritage assets requires careful consideration. The Council would need to identify the harm being caused to such assets and assess their significance to justify Article 4 for restrictions. Again, it would need to be routed in evidence.

Conclusion

At this point, the Council does not have the evidence or justification to demonstrate that it would be appropriate and proportionate to consider the introduction of Article 4 directions. However, the Council will continue to monitor the loss of office and retail space and the economic and social impact it has upon the evolution of our town centres and any future compensatory measures that may need to be made to offset the loss of retail and office floorspace.

Councillor C C Pond stated that the question was phrased as it was, as by giving six months’ notice any question of compensation could be avoided. I have heard what the Portfolio Holder has said and I will write to him, particularly in respect of the bullet point added regarding demolitions, where some rather sharp practice has been going on.

41. REPORTS FROM THE LEADER AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

The Council received written reports from the Portfolio Holders. The Chairman invited the Leader of Council to provide an oral report and the opportunity for other members of the Cabinet to give any updates on matters concerning their relevant portfolios.

(a) Leader of Council

The Leader expressed his disappointment at having to join the meeting on zoom due to him having contracted Covid and he advised that it was bad enough to have Covid after having both vaccinations and would recommend to everyone present if you get an opportunity of having the booster vaccination to take it as well as the flu vaccination as he would not want to wish Covid on anyone and was quite unpleasant.

He advised that he had watched the DDMC meeting the previous evening and stated what a good result it was for Epping with a new sports centre with a swimming pool being approved, at a very well chaired and very well debated meeting and he thanked the Members that participated in the meeting.

The summer seemed a long time ago and much had happened since. Firstly the Boundary Commission were looking at the size and nature of the Council going forward. A Portfolio Holder Advisory Group had now been set up and the first meeting was on the 4 November 2021 and that would progress by starting to look at the make-up of the Council, the number of Members, whether the Council should opt for all out for selection or stay as thirds. There was a huge amount of work to be done around this review and Officers were addressing some of the background work.

He advised that he had recently met with the Leader and Deputy Leader of Essex County Council where he had the opportunity to show them around the Civic Offices and the Civic Hub which they were very impressed by and other Councils were now looking towards what EFDC had done as a way forward post pandemic, to make buildings work in a more productive manner. He stated that partnership working with County and all levels of local government was the way forward for the future to get the best value for money and the best services for EFDC residents.

He advised that he and Councillor J Philip had been meeting regularly with planning colleagues, the Harlow Garden Town Team and the Leaders of Harlow and East Herts. Members may be aware that there will be a new Leader of Harlow shortly and that he would speak more about that at the next Council meeting in December 2021.

There were challenging times ahead of the Council, the Government had done what it could to help through the Pandemic, to which we are still all recovering from and it was encouraging news that the high streets were starting to show signs of recovery. Everyone should still take precautions and wear a mask in closed areas, do the right thing to help protect each other and the local economy.

(b) Housing Services Portfolio Holder

Councillor H Whitbread advised that she had an update on the Key Policy Consultations and the work that was presently being undertaken, she advised that the Council were on their second round of consultation and scrutiny. A Policy Briefing had been arranged and the dates for this can be found in the Council Bulletin dated 22 October 2021. She appealed to Members to make sure that they took part in the online forms as well as the debate and the consultation.

Councillor H Whitbread then went on to highlight a great piece of work around tenant arrears, since March 2020 to May 2021 there have been no income related evictions at our council properties which was due to the approach the Council were now taking in relation to working with the tenants and supporting them in terms of debt and finance advice. This was a really good piece of news on the intervention the Council were doing to support tenants.

(d) Environmental and Technical Services Portfolio Holder

Councillor N Avey advised that an issue had been raised recently at the Waste Management Board Meeting. As Christmas was approaching it was likely that residents would buy more gifts online than ever before which leads to more packaging and asked residents, where possible, to break down cardboard boxes and put the packaging into recycling bags rather than pile it free on the roadside. This was leading to an enormous strain on the Biffa crews that collected the recycling around the district and delays the whole recycling process. A notice in the next collection calendar, due to be released shortly and delivered to all residents will highlight this issue.

(c) Corporate Services Portfolio Holder

Councillor D Sunger advised that he would like to update the Council on the Engagement and Wellbeing project that has been rolled out and am pleased to announce that we have a Director, Rob Pavey who has stepped up to become a volunteer mental health first aider which shows the initiative that he had taken to come onboard. Last month in training there are a cohort of around 90 trained mental health first aiders and it was important to note that these people really are the place where officers and staff can go to if they have any challenges with their mental health.

Councillor S Heap asked the Finance, Quality Client and Economic Development Portfolio Holder why there was a delay in refurbishing the 2nd floor of the Civic Offices and getting the tenant in situ and was this one of the problems by renting to a start-up company.

Councillor J Philip advised Councillor Heap that the letting of the 2nd floor of the Civic Offices had no relationship to Quality as Councillor Heap had pertained to before asking his question.

He stated that there was a delay on the agreement of the letting of the 2nd floor due to the Civic Offices being a listed building status therefore the fit out for the services offices were delayed due to the lessee not allowing the time for coping with a listed building permission and what it would entail. The way the Council were taking it forward was the overall term of the lease would stay the same and therefore the rent payments would start three months later but would also end 3 months later to enable the lessee to complete the fit out.

42. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS WITHOUT NOTICE

The Chairman thanked Members for giving notification of their intention to ask a question without notice.

(a) Waste Management Contract

Councillor S Murray advised his question was to Environmental and Technical Services Portfolio Holder and expressed concerns regarding the shortage of suitably

qualified HGV drivers and that there were contingency plans put in place and what were these plans. Secondly what contingency plans are being made to deal with the issue around the shortage of wheelie bins.

Councillor N Avey advised that the Council were constantly discussing with Biffa driver issues and contingency plans around the countrywide shortage of HGV driver and that was affecting Biffa. They have advised us that they were managing to have enough drivers to meet the needs and I would like to praise Biffa, especially over the last couple of difficult years, at the wonderful service they had given the Council throughout the Pandemic and even with the HGV driver shortage they are providing a terrific and professional service to the residents of Epping Forest.

Regarding the wheelie bin shortage I believe there are still stocks of both the household waste and the green waste wheelie bins but as the Portfolio Holder I will be looking at that situation and find out why there was a shortage and when it would be resolved.

(b) Viability assessments on planning applications

Councillor K Williamson advised his question was to the Planning and Sustainability Portfolio Holder and stated with the viability assessments on planning applications that do not meet the 40% affordable housing criteria, who pays the consultants' fees for Epping Forest District Council (EFDC). If EFDC pay these then shouldn't it be on a similar basis to party wall awards where the applicant pays. He further expressed concerns with the basis that the 40% could not be achieved due to enhanced specifications.

Councillor N Bedford stated that the starting point for affordable housing provision for residential developments providing 11 units or more and a requirement of 40% of the total provided in-situ, as set out in the emerging Local Plan. The target set out in this policy included provision for the amount of affordable housing permitted under the policy to be subject to viability, in practice this meant that if the applicant wished to argue that their scheme could not afford to make the required on-site provision, or an offsite affordable housing contribution, in lieu of an on-site provision, the applicant could seek to make their case through the submission of detailed viability assessments and evidence to the Council.

The Council used viability consultants to consider the information and could decide to accept a lower amount of affordable housing where viability issues had been clearly demonstrated. The cost of the consultant was paid for by the applicant, the cost of what they have purchased for their site was not a determining factor in the viability argument and was not an issue for the Council.

The Council are looking to see if they could provide some member training or a better understanding of how this complicated issue could be more easily understood.

(c) Qualis debt

Councillor S Heap advised his question was to the Finance, Qualis Client and Economic Development Portfolio Holder and asked if it would be unfair to describe Qualis's performance as a million pounds in debt and not a home built.

Councillor J Philip replied no.

(d) Customer dissatisfaction

Councillor Jon Whitehouse advised his question was to the Customer and Partnerships Portfolio Holder and asked about the customer dissatisfaction with residents not getting responses to queries and issues raised. In the Portfolio Holders report it was presented as mainly a technical issue to do with tracking software. I can understand that tracking software may have a part to play, but when the Portfolio Holder looks at this issue, could he also look at the wider picture in terms of staff who are motivated and engaged and understand their place in the organisation and have their workload balanced to enable them to respond to queries and staff that are not motivated or feel they don't fit in or just don't have the capacity to do everything they are expected to do. This problem cannot just be a technical issue there was obviously a wider issue.

Councillor S Kane stated that it was a valid point and agreed that it was not exclusively technical issues, there were staff involved, and over the last 18 months these staff were learning to operate in a completely different way, some working remotely and some working in the office and then the technical problems come back in again because of the way the telephone system works and group ringing. The Council were working on a number of front end challenges with one of the biggest challenges being a problem with staffing levels and the Council were constantly playing catch-up with staff moving on, being seconded or leaving. Staffing issues in terms of numbers of people, communication channels needed to stay open so there was team work, which was valuable in providing customer service to maintain direct connections between the support workers and the customers, also not forgetting the technical issues.

The Council recognises that not all residents are capable to go the digital route and a front facing service must continue either by telephone or face to face and we were working to resolve these issues.

He reiterated that anyone who comes across any difficulties that residents have encountered to please feed back to him with specifics of any issues.

(e) New Platform for Land Searches

Councillor P Bhanot advised that his question was to the Corporate Services Portfolio Holder and asked if he could provide more details on the rollout of the new platform for local authority land searches.

Councillor D Sunger stated that he was pleased to announce that the migration of the local land charges database had been successfully moved to the cloud environment. EFDC officers have completed all of the tasks in preparation of the date that would be migrated to Her Majesty's Land Registry (HMLR) database. The migration of the HMLR database will take place in quarter 4, HMLR have not yet confirmed a specific date when this will be rolled out. He advised he was pleased to report that the Council was on track to receive a transition fee of £75,000. The cost of the ICT applications required will be taken from the £75,000, costs have not yet been confirmed.

The HMLR database will allow the public to complete their own searches when buying a property, the searches will be available online 24/7. He thanked the officers for all their work into getting this ready for the database rollout especially Seth Mahadoo, Daniel Harris and Dawn Tracey.

(f) Budget shortfall for 2022/23

Councillor P Bolton advised that his question was to the Finance, Qualis Client and Economic Development Portfolio Holder and asked him to comment on the potential shortfall in next year's budget of £1.5m, particularly in respect of the money spent on the refurbishment of the Civic Offices and whether Qualis has had an impact on the situation and how much reserves are involved.

Councillor J Philip advised as stated in his report the Council were currently looking at a potential gap between the amount the Council needed to spend and the amount that would be coming in and this was in the region of £1.5m. Although the issues Councillor Bolton had raised were good it was important to note that when you were looking at the budget in terms of the Council's ongoing expenses there were two different areas to look at, one was the expenditure which was where the £1.5m came from and secondly there was capital expenditure and it was the capital expenditure. It was capital expenditure that was used to refurbish the Civic Offices and it was worth pointing out that by renting out the second floor of the Civic Offices, a significant revenue stream would be coming in from that, it would not help the Council for next year but it will thereafter and we will therefor get a return for the capital spent on the Civic Offices.

In terms of Qualis, they had a significant impact on the budget but Qualis are making the job of the Council much easier and the revenue the Council were receiving from Qualis in terms of the margin of the loans we have given them mean that the Council only have £1.5m to look for. Qualis pay a significantly higher rate of interest that the Council were able to get on the Public Works Loans than we have for those particular loans. The Conder building had now been sold to Qualis and the Council were now getting the interest on that and it would be shown in the budget for next year. He stated that he would be working closely with Qualis to see if there was anything further that could be done to reduce the deficit.

Finally, onto the reserves, the Council were obliged to keep a certain level of reserves, it was prudent to keep roughly half of what the Council receive from Council Tax as reserves for the forthcoming year.

There were two main reasons why the Council's reserves are lower going into 2022/23 was an issue with the 2019/20 accounts which when agreed with the Auditors what needed to be done resulted in a reduction in the reserves that were available. When the budget was agreed for 2021/22 it was agreed to make use of some of the Council's reserves further to make this year easier for the Council and to reduce the pressure on our residents. Those two issues combined brought the Council's reserves down very close to the minimum that the Council could actually reasonably retain active and therefore that meant the Council could not make significant use of those reserves in the budget for 2022/23 to reduce the pressure.

Significant progress was being made towards this deficit with Cabinet Members looking closely at their Directorates to see where savings could be made and hopefully this gap would be closed in the appropriate time.

(g) Benefits for Local Businesses

Councillor J McIvor advised his question was to the Finance, Qualis Client and Economic Development Portfolio Holder and stated that in the recent Chancellor's budget, which included many benefits for local businesses and tailored benefits specifically for the hospitality and fitness sectors and asked if the Portfolio Holder would be able to advise how the Council would be promoting those benefits to the various local businesses so they could make full use of the benefits, such as, a reduction in rates. He also stated that any major news which would affect the Epping

Forest District should be reported at Council, in the Chamber before it made the press.

Councillor J Philip advised in terms of publicity to our local businesses that there was a monthly newsletter that went out to businesses, unfortunately the copy date for that was Wednesday which made it a bit late to get anything published. He stated that he had made a request to see if we could get anything included to do with the rate changes but was still waiting for an answer. An in depth article would be published in the next publication.

It was worth noting that the agendas were published before a meeting, in accordance with legislation, therefore the news does become public knowledge before the meeting and that was why, when we meet in the Chamber, news stories have already been published and sometimes these stories were misrepresented and are corrected at the meetings.

(h) Supporting Elderly Residents during the Winter months

Councillor K Rizvi advised his question was to the Community and Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder and stated as a local GP and someone acutely aware of the forthcoming winter pressures that he was keen to understand how the District Council supported the elderly residents during the winter months, so for the benefit of the public and my member colleagues could you explain what the Council did in this respect.

Councillor A Patel stated that the County Council had the statutory responsibility to the elderly through Adult Social Care, we as a District Council support elderly residents in a different way and the team that lead on predominantly supporting these residents was the Community Culture and Wellbeing Team. On the 11 October the team held a 'Stay Well this Winter' community event to which they hold every year and I am pleased to advise that this was the first event of this kind to be held at the Community Hub at the Civic Offices. A number of partner organisations showcased the work that they did and spreading key messages around health and wellbeing. Residents that attended were also offered the flu vaccine whilst they attended. The next event would be taking place in Waltham Abbey on the 2 December.

The Community Culture and Wellbeing Team also support the 22 Community Champions that are available across the district and essentially the work of the Community Champions was to reach out to older residents and proactively signpost them to support services which they feel are needed whilst raising awareness around local befriending groups.

The Council work with partner organisations like the NHS and the Council were able to deliver the 'Falls Prevention Programme' which helped promote strength and conditioning in a bid to prevent falls in elderly residents. The Council were also trialling a range of other services that would support elderly residents.

(i) Late objection to the EFDC Local Plan Submission Version

Councillor C C Pond advised his question was to the Leader of Council and asked was he surprised to read press reports that Harlow District Council were at a very late stage of objecting to certain aspects of the Epping Forest Local Plan submission version and what did he think would come of these objections and how would they be processed in the timetable which was now very strictly limited of the Inspector.

Councillor C Whitbread stated that he was surprised but that had always been the position of the Conservative Group in Harlow they had issues that they wanted addressing and they have a right to make comments as does everyone else. The most important thing that they needed to bear in mind was that the Harlow sites weren't included in the main modifications. He stated that he looked forward to having a Local Plan that can be seen through to the end.

(j) Council House Building Programme - Ward Member Consultation

Councillor D Wixley advised his question was to the Housing Services Portfolio Holder and asked why the correct process had not been followed by the Council Housebuilding Programme with a particular site in his Ward.

The process was that Ward Members would meet with Officers to discuss the proposed site affecting their Wards before a formal planning application was submitted. He stated that he was surprised to find on the upcoming Area Plans South Agenda an application in his Ward. There were special circumstances relating to this application, which he would have liked to discuss with the Service Manager for Development, he advised that he had previously discussed with her the possibility of arranging a meeting which had yet to take place. He stated that while he appreciated that this was a resubmission of a previously approved plan, he still felt that the current practice of consultation with Ward Members should have been applied in this case. Therefore, would the Portfolio Holder use her influence, to have this application removed from next week's Area Plans Sub-Committee South agenda, pending the accepted process of consultation with the Service Manager for Development.

Councillor H Whitbread apologised that a meeting had not been arranged with the Service Manager for Development that that she would chase that now and make sure that a conversation would be had by the end of the week. She further added that she would consult with officers to find out the reasoning around this decision. It was very important that as the Council moves forward with the Council Housebuilding Programme that officers do engage with Ward Members which has been a foundation of the process. The Portfolio Holder advised that she would be in contact with Councillor Wixley the following day once she had an answer.

43. MOTIONS

(a) **Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit**

Moved by Councillor S Murray and seconded by Councillor S Neville

That Epping Forest District Council notes that:

- (1) The Government has, as from 6th October 2021, cut universal credit and working tax credit by £20 a week;
- (2) This weekly cut is equivalent to £1,040 a year;
- (3) The Epping Forest Food-bank estimates that here in Epping Forest this decision is likely to have a serious impact on more than 9,000 people.
- (4) That Epping Forest District Council resolves to ask our three local MP's to actively seek the reinstatement of this £20 cut as soon as possible.

Amendment moved by Councillor S Kane and seconded by Councillor N Avey

That Epping Forest District Council notes that:

- (1) The Government has, as from 6th October 2021, withdrawn the £20 per week uplift to Universal Credit- a temporary measure brought in to help people on lower incomes during the coronavirus pandemic;
- (2) There are currently over 8,000 claimants of Universal Credit in the District, some of whom may experience difficulties as a result of the decision to withdraw the uplift to UC;
- (3) Epping Forest District Council welcomes the increase in the minimum wage to £9.50 an hour and the cut in the Universal Credit taper by 8% by 1 December, bringing it down from 63% to 55% - allowing claimants to keep more of the money they earn; and
- (4) That Epping Forest District Council resolves to continue to support affected residents, providing access to:
 - **Household Support Fund**, Small grants worth up to £500 million intended to help struggling families meet costs for daily needs such as food, clothing and utilities;
 - **Free school meals**;
 - **The provision of half term holiday camps from Essex County Council delivered by Active Essex and school meal vouchers**;
 - **Food bank vouchers**;
 - **EFDC Hardship Fund**;
 - **Support and assistance** in returning to work through schemes such as:
 - **The Kickstart scheme** - this is funding to encourage employers to take on 16 to 24 year olds who receive Universal Credit, with the government covering the cost of 25 hours of work per week for a total of 6 months, as well as the employer's national insurance contributions. This will be extended until the end of January.
 - **Job Entry Targeted Support scheme** - people who have been on Universal Credit for more than 13 weeks can get employment support for 6 months, which includes a personal careers adviser.
 - **Apprenticeship Incentives** - this encourages employers to take on apprentices, with a payment of £3,000, in addition to the £1,000 already on offer.
 - **Working in partnership** – with local organisations including Voluntary Action Epping Forest, Epping Forest Food Bank and Citizens Advice to ensure that the most vulnerable receive the support they require.
 - **Ensuring advice and support is accessible** – enhancing delivery of such services through technology and the new 'Civic Hub.'

Carried

Motion as amended ADOPTED

RESOLVED:

That Epping Forest District Council notes that:

- (1) The Government has, as from 6th October 2021, withdrawn the £20 per week uplift to Universal Credit- a temporary measure brought in to help people on lower incomes during the coronavirus pandemic;
- (2) There are currently over 8,000 claimants of Universal Credit in the District, some of whom may experience difficulties as a result of the decision to withdraw the uplift to UC;
- (3) Epping Forest District Council welcomes the increase in the minimum wage to £9.50 an hour and the cut in the Universal Credit taper by 8% by 1 December, bringing it down from 63% to 55% - allowing claimants to keep more of the money they earn; and
- (4) That Epping Forest District Council resolves to continue to support affected residents, providing access to:
 - **Household Support Fund**, Small grants worth up to £500 million intended to help struggling families meet costs for daily needs such as food, clothing and utilities;
 - **Free school meals**;
 - **The provision of half term holiday camps from Essex County Council delivered by Active Essex and school meal vouchers**;
 - **Food bank vouchers**;
 - **EFDC Hardship Fund**;
 - **Support and assistance** in returning to work through schemes such as:
 - **The Kickstart scheme** - this is funding to encourage employers to take on 16 to 24 year olds who receive Universal Credit, with the government covering the cost of 25 hours of work per week for a total of 6 months, as well as the employer's national insurance contributions. This will be extended until the end of January.
 - **Job Entry Targeted Support scheme** - people who have been on Universal Credit for more than 13 weeks can get employment support for 6 months, which includes a personal careers adviser.
 - **Apprenticeship Incentives** - this encourages employers to take on apprentices, with a payment of £3,000, in addition to the £1,000 already on offer.
 - **Working in partnership** – with local organisations including Voluntary Action Epping Forest, Epping Forest Food Bank and Citizens Advice to ensure that the most vulnerable receive the support they require.
 - **Ensuring advice and support is accessible** – enhancing delivery of such services through technology and the new ‘Civic Hub.’

44. **APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODY - WHIPPS CROSS JOINT HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Leader advised that clarification had now been sought for the appointment of a non-voting representative to the JHOSC and advised that as there were no other nominations Councillor J Share-Bernia would be the Council's representative.

45. COUNCILLOR D PLUMMER - RESOLUTION TO EXTEND 6-MONTH RULE - SECTION 85 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

The Chairman advised that as Councillor D Plummer had attended this Council Meeting there was no need to take this item as the 6-month rule had not been breached.

46. AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

Councillor I Hadley, Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee

Councillor I Hadley presented the Audit and Governance Annual Report 2020/21. He advised that the Audit and Governance committee comprised of 7 members, 2 of which were independent members. The makeup of the committee was to ensure that EFDC was compliant and robust over financial and non-financial transactions, fraud, risk and value for money.

He advised that there had been a delay in the previous year's accounts being approved due to the Pandemic and going forward it had been recommended that the Audit and Governance Committee be given delegated authority to approve the Council's annual Statement of Accounts.

The Finance, Qualis Client and Economic Development Portfolio Holder thanked the officers and members of the Audit and Governance Committee for their work throughout the year.

RESOLVED:

That the Annual Report of the Audit & Governance Committee for 2020/21 be noted.

47. CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP

Councillor S Rackham, Chairman of the Constitution Working Group

Councillor S Rackham advised that at the Constitution Working Group meeting on the 2 September 2021 they covered the regulations governing the publication of the Council's Statement of Accounts that had changed with the deadline being brought forward by 2 months to the 30 September 2021. Currently the Audit and Governance Committee considered the Statement of Accounts and the report of the external auditors before referring this to Full Council.

The Constitution Working Group recommended:

- (1) That the Constitution be amended to give the Audit and Governance Committee delegated authority to approve the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts with effect from the 2020/21 financial year; and
- (2) That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make the necessary revisions to the Council's Constitution.

Councillor S Rackham also advised that the Constitution Working Group recommended the decision taken by the Cabinet Committee at its meeting on the 3 December 2020 (Report ref: C-045-2020/21). The Cabinet agreed the updated Procurement Strategy for 2021-2026, which came into effect on the 1 January 2021,

this had been updated to reflect how Procurement supported the delivery of the Council's Corporate Objectives and the Covid-19 recovery plan.

The Constitution Working Group recommended:

- (1) That the updated Procurement Rules amended in August 2021, as set out in the report be agreed; and
- (2) That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make the necessary revisions to the Council's Constitution, Part 4 – Procurement Rules.

Councillor J Philip stated that it made sense for the Audit and Governance Committee to be given delegated authority to approve the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts and if they felt there was something of sufficient concern with the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts then they could still refer them back to Full Council.

Councillor J H Whitehouse stated that at the Constitution Working Group meeting she did express some reservations regarding giving delegated authority to the Audit and Governance Committee to approve the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts as they were only a small committee and when that report came to Full Council it alerted all members. Councillor Philip had given assurance that it would be brought to the attention of Full Council, although would not be debated and I would ask him to repeat these assurances for members.

Councillor J Philip stated that he was happy to repeat the assurances and that it would be flagged in the Members Bulletin when the Annual Statement of Accounts would be going to the Audit and Governance Committee to be approved so that all members would be aware.

Councillor J M Whitehouse stated that he could see the practical advantages of the accounts going to the Audit and Governance Committee and thought that this was something all Councillors should take an interest in. He referred to page 98 of the agenda which had been added to the Terms of Reference of the Audit and Governance Committee which read:

- (r) **to review and adopt the Statutory Statement of Accounts (yearly).** Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit. ~~that need to be brought to the attention of the Council;~~

Councillor Whitehouse expressed concern about the deleted part which read:

~~'that need to be brought to the attention of the Council;'~~

and as discussed earlier, Councillor Philip stated that if there were any concerns from the Audit and Governance Committee regarding the Annual Statement of Accounts, they could be referred to Full Council and therefore he suggested that the deleted line should remain in the Terms of Reference.

Councillor J Philip stated that he was happy for those words to be removed as it didn't restrict the Audit and Governance Committee bringing anything to Full Council that they believe the Council needs to be aware of. Keeping the Annual Statement of Accounts firmly within the Audit and Governance Committee was the right thing to do and it was discussed in depth at the Constitution Working Group and this was their recommendation.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendations of the Constitution Working Group as set out below be agreed:

- (1) That the Constitution be amended to give the Audit and Governance Committee delegated authority to approve the Council's Annual Statement of Accounts with effect from the 2020/21 financial year;
- (2) That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make the necessary revisions to the Council's Constitution;
- (3) That the updated Procurement Rules amended in August 2021, as set out in the report be agreed; and
- (4) That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make the necessary revisions to the Council's Constitution, Part 4 – Procurement Rules.

48. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**Councillor M Sartin, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Councillor M Sartin presented her report from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 12 October 2021.

She referred to paragraph 2 of the report where it had been proposed to plant around 2,300 trees on Jessel Green, which had led to some discussion and subsequently a call-in had now been received regarding that item, which will go through the correct process to move forward.

Councillor S Murray stated that there was no malice behind the Jessel Green call-in and that an amicable solution to the issue could be found. He advised that he would like to absolutely acknowledge and thank Epping Forest District Council for the turnaround to not build houses on this green space but to save it and plant trees on the green instead.

Councillor H Whitbread thanked Councillor S Murray for highlighting this issue. Discussion regarding the call-in were in progress and she advised that she was very open to listen to those discussions and an amicable solution being found. She stated that a huge amount of grant funding from an external organisation, looking to plant thousands of trees to help offset carbon emissions and really buying in to the districts green agenda. Although 2,300 trees were to be planted they were very young trees and the survival rate of the young trees would mean that a majority of them would die. This was a really positive initiative and she advised that she was listening to local concerns and would be working with local community groups regarding this project.

Councillor C C Pond advised that this was a cordial call-in because he agreed with what Councillor H Whitbread had said and advised that he would be looking to plant the 2,300 trees, to which the Council had obtained grant funding, but in different locations.

Councillor C C Pond asked the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny committee whether the information in the report given by the Climate Change Officers regarding the proposed electric bus between the Broadway, Loughton and the Epping Forest Shopping Park, have indicated what form it would take and when would it start.

Running up to Christmas the footfall at the shopping park would more than double and the carbon emissions from idling vehicles would therefore also more than double.

Councillor M Sartin advised that she did not have an answer to Councillor Pond's question and asked Councillor N Avey if he could answer as this was in the remit of his portfolio.

Councillor N Avey stated that he did not have the answer but there would be a report at the next Council meeting on transport and it would be reported then.

Councillor D Wixley advised that he was the Ward Councillor for Fairmead which included Jessel Green. He stated that the Save Jessel Green Group would be involved with the tree planting proposed, the Climate Change Officer had contacted Councillor Wixley with a view to informing her of a lead contact in the Save Jessel Green Group to which he was able to furnish and he knew that they had now been in contact. He agreed with the call-in and stated that the trees must be planted in the correct places and excellent that this should move forward.

Councillor M Sartin stated that meetings were taking place regarding the call-in with Councillor C C Pond, Councillor D Wixley, the Portfolio Holder and Officers within the next week.

RESOLVED:

That the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 12 October 2021 be noted.

49. JOINT ARRANGEMENTS & EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

(a) The Royal Gunpowder Mills

The Chairman advised that the Royal Gunpowder Mills was still closed to the public but work was being done in the background ready for them to open at Easter 2022.

(b) Premier Nature Reserve

Councillor S Murray advised that he represented the Council on the Premier Nature Reserve in the district managed by the Essex Wildlife Trust the Warden had left to take up a new position, a temporary Warden was in place and arrangements were being made to appoint a permanent Warden.

CHAIRMAN

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Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 16 December 2021
Subject: Community and Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder
Portfolio Holder: Councillor A Patel

Recommending:

That the report of the Community and Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder be noted.

Community, Culture & Wellbeing

Funding secured for the WorkSpace Health Programme

The Health, Wellbeing & Grants Team has secured £2,150 from Active Essex to support the further development and implementation of a programme of wellbeing activities for employees. Activities include; Yoga, Pranayama, Revive, a running club, a book club and workshops such as floral art, cushion cover making and “learn to draw with charcoal”. In addition, a ‘Wear it Pink’ event raised money for breast cancer awareness. The Council’s employee programme saw 55 attendances across September and October. The WorkSpace Health Programme and Health & Wellbeing Champions initiative was promoted at the October all-staff briefing and this was also used as an opportunity to consult with colleagues. Volunteering opportunities, such as befriending, are also being trialled. In partnership with the People Team, arrangements are being made to pilot a menopause awareness workshop with the Council’s Mental Health First Aiders in the New Year.

Crucial Crew

The Crucial Crew Project reached 1,002 Year 6 pupils from 23 primary schools across Epping Forest district this year. Partnering with other councils across Essex, a multi-award-winning theatre production company Hyperfusion (TickTok productions) was jointly commissioned to develop a bespoke piece inspired by a true story focussing on child exploitation. The film produced was called ‘Lines’ and dramatically unravels the story of a young boy who was groomed and criminally exploited by a gang. The aim was to raise awareness of crucial personal safety issues, empowering pupils as they transition into secondary school and helping them to recognise potentially exploitative friendship or relationships via the powerful theatrical performance and associated interactive workshop. Evaluation of the new style Crucial Crew Project has been extremely positive with pupils and schools reporting excellent interaction, and powerful and engaging discussions as a result of participating.

Project You

Project You, the six-week programme co-facilitated by the Council’s Community, Culture & Wellbeing service and the Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (EPUT) has been awarded £3,240 external funding from the “Find Your Active” fund. The funding will enable the combined physical activity and mental health workshops to be further rolled out across the district.

Epping Forest Inclusion Programme

Following the success of the summer programme this year, the Council's Disability Inclusion Programme, continues to go from strength to strength. The programme of activities on offer includes; tennis, trampolining, boxing, football and horse-riding sessions, to name a few. Since resuming face-to-face delivery, Disability Inclusion staff have actively engaged with 22 new families as part of the term time and holiday activity programmes. The new participants and their families have all reported being made to feel welcome and comfortable attending sessions. The October half term programme included an exciting "sleep over" at the Epping Forest District Museum, when great fun was had by all!

Further funding was secured from Essex County Council to support the multi-agency "Holiday Activity Food" (HAF) initiative and facilitate 15 spaces for the holiday activities and food for those most in need.

Disability Inclusion Programme participants continue to develop their social and communication skills with many becoming confident enough to attend CCW's mainstream sports sessions, particularly the Saturday morning tennis and athletics sessions. These are huge success stories and demonstrates how the programme supports children and families to develop key skills and increases their social interaction with the wider community.

Falls Prevention funding success

The CCW team has secured further funding totalling £110,685 from the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) for the continuation of the "Social Active Strong" falls prevention programme across West Essex. The programme in Epping Forest will be led by Council's new Falls Prevention Officer, Lucinda Harvey, and will aim to engage even more residents who have been referred for support to build their strength and confidence in order to improve their health and wellbeing.

Epping Forest Youth Conference

On 19th November the Epping Forest Youth Council hosted its bi-annual Youth Conference. The full day event saw 100 local teenagers from the district's secondary schools attend the Civic Offices for a day focussed on climate change issues and youth democracy. A fabulous array of guest speakers, including past Youth Councillors Cllr Holly Whitbread and Cllr Jaymey McIvor, delivered informative presentations to the delegates, with the highlight of the day being a heated debate on the topic of climate change protest. Captivating films were shown to spark ideas, interactive voting tools were employed, and awareness was raised in respect of climate action projects for local secondary schools to participate in.

The day, which was webcast live, was a huge success with the energy and passion of the young people shining through. It was noted that the Epping Forest Youth Council was a model of good practice across Essex and beyond in terms of youth voice and enabling local youth democracy.

Limes Farm community initiatives

Continuing to utilise funding totalling £8,966 from the BBC, the Community & Culture Team has organised a programme of festive activities for residents living on the Limes Farm Estate in Chigwell. Lights have been purchased for a community Christmas tree and a Christmas Craft Camp has been organised for local school children and families. Plans to progress the community football programme, in partnership with Colebrook Royals FC, are well underway and support will be given to build capacity through offering training and qualifications to local volunteers.

Community Champions and Limes Farm Community Cafe

Community Engagement Officers, supported by Ward Members, have recruited two new Community Champions from the Limes Farm estate in Chigwell bringing the current total to 22 across the district. The Community & Culture Team supported the Residents Association

and Community Champions to set up a Community Café in The Limes Centre on a Monday which is going from strength to strength.

Ongar Puzzle and Games Club

Since the opening on 16 September, the Ongar Puzzle and Games Club established by the Community & Culture Team has attracted 68 visitors. Participants and volunteers have worked hard to raise £63.95 to re-invest in the club. The group is developing a growing loyal fan base and has the support of the local Church. The relationship with Epping Forest Foodbank is excellent with volunteers helping at sessions.

Community Gardening Initiatives

With support from local residents and the Ninefields Residents Association, the lavender from the sensory gardens in Ninefields Square, Waltham Abbey was harvested for the Grand Lavender Harvest in October. The event was well attended by 66 residents who came along to make lavender wreaths, figurines and lavender bags in the Leisure Centre.

The Wheelers Farm allotment now has enough volunteers working on the plot to make the project sustainable and able to run without direct support from staff.

The most recent work with the Council's Sheltered Housing Schemes has been at Leonard Davis House & Buckhurst Court where new hexagonal raised beds have been installed for the residents.

Dementia Friends Awareness Training

Dementia Friends Awareness Training has been organised for all staff in the Community & Wellbeing Directorate, the People Team and the Council's Mental Health First Aiders, to raise corporate awareness and support the concept behind the forthcoming Georgie Meadows Exhibition at Epping Forest District Museum. Members will shortly also be invited participate in a training session during the period the exhibition is open between January – April 2022.

October Half Term

To celebrate the opening of the Game Plan Exhibition at Epping Forest District Museum, a range of activities inspired by "the games we know and love", alongside CCW's usual spooky offering, took place over October half-term. 155 children took part in activities such as Play in the Forest, a Games Galore Craft Camp and Cup Cake decorating. 150 lantern-making kits were also put together ahead of the Waltham Abbey Festival and Cavalcade of Light. Resources were also made available on the Museum website. In addition, CCW facilitated pupils from Hill House Primary School, Upshire Primary School and High Beech Primary School to take part in the lantern-making event.

Creativity & Sports Awards and Young Citizen of the Year

Applications for the Creativity and Sports Awards closed on 12th December and those for the Young Citizen of the Year closed on 26th November. Some fantastic nominations have been received and winners will be announced at the Civic Awards event in the New Year.

Arts Award Bronze

Arts Award graduates received their certificates from the Chairman of Council at the Museum in October. Arts Award is a nationally recognised qualification in the arts for young people age 7 – 25 years and all participants passed with flying colours.

Takeover Day at Epping Forest District Museum

Friday 12 November saw Epping Forest District Museum participate in the national "Kids in Museums Takeover Day" initiative. The atmosphere in the Museum was fantastic as secondary school pupils from King Harold Academy in Waltham Abbey took over the running of the Museum for the whole day. Pupils facilitated tours for members of the public, 60 pupils from Upshire Primary School and special guests. Museum education staff and members of the Community & Culture Team worked with pupils in advance of the day to plan interactive

activities and informative presentations which were all well received, with a real buzz in every gallery! Takeover Day is a national initiative encouraging engagement in museums for children and young people of all ages. A representative from the national Kids in Museums team visited on the day and highlighted Epping Forest as an exemplar in this work.

The Museum also hosted a separate virtual takeover with students from Cardiff University and Essex University facilitating career sessions, Q&A's and practical training on collections care as part of this initiative.

Museum Education and Outreach

The Museum's education service has been in high demand with schools. In person sessions at the Museum have been taking place every Thursday as well as sessions also taking place in schools. In total, since April 2021, the service has engaged with over 6000 pupils.

Collections Rationalisation Project

To date the Rationalisation Project Team has reviewed all items at the Museum in Store 1 and Store 2, the North Weald store and the Crate offsite store. This means these items have all been photographed, condition checked and assessed as part of the first phase of the project. The Museum currently has agreement from other museums to take approximately 30 items which are more relevant to their collections from the selection of items that have been through the Council's Portfolio Holder decision process to date. The Museum has secured an additional £2,000 to support this project from SHARE Museums East focusing on the photography collection. A pilot will be undertaken to digitize, review and gather more information on 700 photographs in the collection.

Exhibitions

The Museum is delighted to have opened the 'Game Plan' exhibition, which is on loan from the Victoria and Albert Museum of Childhood and explores the history of boardgames in a highly interactive display. Following this the Museum will host the Wellcome Collections exhibition 'Georgie Meadows: Stitched Drawings' which brings together 24 textile artworks exploring personal experiences of ageing and dementia. The exhibition will be accompanied by a full programme of public engagement as well as professional development and training. The Museum itself has been recognised by the Epping Forest Dementia Action Alliance as working toward being a Dementia Friendly venue with a clear action plan to support this work. Part of this will include Dementia Friends information session for partners, local businesses and other colleagues in the Council as well as ensuring all staff at the Museum are Dementia Friends Awareness trained.

Interfaith Week

To mark Interfaith Week, the community display case based in the Museum's Core Gallery is showcasing a display of objects selected by religious denominations in the district which groups feel reflect key attributes of their religious practice and community. The display aims to celebrate, increase awareness, promote discourse and build relationships between multiple faith groups, the Museum and visitors. Interfaith week ran from 14th to 21st November but the display will remain on view to the public until February 2022.

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 16 December 2021
Subject: Community and Regulatory Services Portfolio Report
Portfolio Holder: Councillor A Patel

Recommending:

That the report of the Community and Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder be noted.

Community Resilience:

Essex Police have launched their new Crime Strategy (appendix 1), CSPs are a key partner in the delivery of this work going forward.

Recruitment continues for a Senior Environmental Enforcement Officer and Anti-Social Behaviour Officer.

A new Safeguarding Officer has been appointed and due to start imminently on 1-year fixed term contract, the officer will provide support across all teams focussing on domestic violence.

ASB Team/Police:

The Police were involved in closure order attendances, one officer has been on detachment to COP26 earlier this month.

A Multi Agency meeting was held at Debden college to proactively combat ASB in Debden Broadway.

Activity

- 1 full closure order successful for a property in Bardfields in Loughton
- 1 partial closure order successful for a property in Hillfields in Loughton
- ASB complaints: 14
- Data request: 25
- Sanctuary referrals: 7
- Stay well this winter event attended, crime prevention advice and materials given out.
- Coffee with cops held with internal colleagues.
- Halloween visits to shops with CPT on the lead up to Halloween.

Environmental Enforcement Team:

Travellers have moved away from Theydon Bois but set up an illegal encampment in High Ongar. The Essex Countywide Traveller Unit (ECTU) are currently aware of this encampment and are managing it through the local authority powers available to them.

A warrant to enter a property for an ongoing dog noise complaint is being sought through the Magistrate Court further Court action despite being successfully prosecuted twice previously the dogs continue to be allowed to bark incessantly disturbing a number of other residents.

Ex Job Ltd have been assisting with the current shortfalls in the OOHs noise team.

A formal PACE interview will be taking place for a fly-tipping incident following a cloned vehicle investigation.

A review of a premises licence for a business in Loughton has been requested.

In November there was a 26% decrease in out of hours noise complaints.

Activity

- Community Protection Warnings Served 5
- Statutory noise abatement notices served 3
- An ongoing noise complaint has been now closed following an extensive 9-month investigation

CCTV

The team assisted with recent Missing Person request possibly staying in Waltham Abbey.

The Digital Innovation footfall project is now progressing after a recent delay due to external commitments by others involved.

3rd quarter CCTV requests have increased in line with normal third quarter activity

There are currently 6 Rapid Deployment cameras in operation in the area.

Activity

Key incidents that the team have assisted Essex Police with;

- Gang related fight in Debden Broadway involving weapons.
- Tracking Drug dealing suspects Debden Broadway.
- Drug dealing operation Barrington Close (hall).
- Drug deal involving weapon Burton Road car park, Debden.
- Bail jumping suspect repeatedly using cash point at Santander Loughton.
- Stabbing incident in High Street Epping.
- Male exposing himself, Ongar car park.
- Assisting Essex Police on Halloween Surveillance.

The team have also assisted internal teams with:

- Fly tipping offence, Lodge Close, Lambourne (EEO).
- ASB/Noise issues, Lower Queens Road car park (EEO).
- Car parking attendant involved in vehicle collision, Bakers Lane car park (Parking Officer).

Safeguarding

A council tenant re-engaged with the mental health team after being notified that we were seeking to obtain a full closure order on her property. The CPN who picked up her case and the Senior MH Social Worker were concerned that the client might be given the same support as

other vulnerable adults. A meeting was co-ordinated with the Senior Crime and ASB Officer and Senior Homeless Officer who were able to provide more details.

An ASC referral was made on behalf of a terminally ill man with cancer who was being evicted by a family member; however direct contact details for him was refused to be provided and temporary accommodation was refused on his behalf so concerns for coercive control were raised.

Activity

13 new cases

- Children only 2
- Adult only 9
- Adult and children 2

There were 6 opportunities for children to be harmed and 12 opportunities for adults to be harmed.

Referrals

- Social care 7
- EFDC Homeless Officer 1
- Police 1
- External organisations 2

The majority of referrals to Adult Social Care were for threats of suicide.

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Crime Prevention Strategy 2021-2025

Crime Prevention Strategy 2021-2025

Foreword - Chief Constable

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Few would argue with the sentiment and approach of 'prevention is better than cure'. I see on a daily basis the impact that crime has on victims, their friends and families and the wider communities, the resources we plough into catching criminals and ensuring we do the best job possible to deliver the right outcome.

Policing has seen significant changes over the last decade; the landscape of crime has shifted and our response has evolved to address this. Over the last year, significant global events have required us to change how and where we work, flex, learn and improve. Society has changed, we face a tough recovery from Covid but in every recovery there is opportunity to do things differently and this is what this new Crime Prevention Strategy presents: a new whole system approach to preventing and reducing the harm caused by crime.

This last year we have strengthened partnerships during crisis, seen the exceptional capabilities across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to respond to the biggest crisis of the modern day and respond together, as one team.

So what's different? The new strategy builds on the success of its predecessor and uses intelligence and evidence to predict our future challenges forecast over the next five years, and prepares us for the anticipated increase in volume and complexity of crime within a significant political, economic and community recovery period post-Covid.

As a force we continually strive for a safer Essex in which people feel safe and communities and businesses thrive. We know preventing crime is not a single agency endeavour. Everyone has a role to play in preventing crime and making Essex a safe place. That is why we have adopted a whole system approach to crime prevention - building on problem solving capabilities, developing proactive preventative activity, working with partners to co-produce sustainable solutions, identifying the most vulnerable and at risk, working towards cohesive communities and ones with reduced crime.

We recognise that the causes of crime are complex. This Crime Prevention Strategy forms part of a partnership approach to provide a whole system response to issues which present the most harm to our communities.

Whilst this list is not exhaustive, Essex Police have identified 14 thematic strands which not only pose the greatest potential threat, harm and risk to our people and communities, but also present the greatest opportunity for prevention. These are:

Knife Crime	Rape	Night-Time Economy
Child Abuse / Child Sexual Exploitation	Domestic Abuse	Drugs & Alcohol
Mental Health	County Lines / Exploitation	Serious Organised Crime
Cybercrime & Fraud	Places	Burglary / Robbery
Prevent	Hate Crime	

Essex Police is committed to doing everything it can to tackle the challenges we face. Helping people, keeping people safe and catching criminals through working in partnership to reduce and prevent crime is at the heart of what we do.




Crime Prevention Strategy 2021-2025

Foreword - Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

My vision for Essex is that safe and secure communities are the bedrock on which we build success and wellbeing for all.

There is no better way to make our county safer than having a strategic commitment from all of our community safety partners to prevent crime from happening in the first place and we can do that using a model of targeted prevention and early intervention.

We need to help and protect those who are vulnerable and at risk, deliver effective interventions based on evidence, and work in partnership with our communities to identify where people are most exposed and keep them safe.

More investment is being made to prevent crime through neighbourhood policing. Building on the success of our Community Safety Partnerships, where local councils and voluntary groups work in partnership with police, we are targeting hotspots and known offenders to tackle crime and antisocial behaviour and new Disruptor Teams for our district policing areas are working in local communities, using intelligence to deal with and prevent crime.

The recently established Essex Police Town Centre Teams are successfully reducing crime, using a highly visible and proactive approach. It is great to see the positive impact of their presence.

These officers are supported by Essex Police's Business Crime Team and Rural Engagement Team who are proactively working across Essex to beat both business crime and rural crime – a key element in both teams being crime prevention.

This Crime Prevention Strategy is an excellent document which sets out quite clearly our challenges in Essex and what we can all do together to prevent crimes from happening in the first place. A lot has been achieved but there is still more to be done and only by working together can we keep our communities and residents safe.

Roger Hirst

PFCC
POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME
COMMISSIONER FOR ESSEX



Crime Prevention Strategy 2021-2025

Foreword - Chair of Safer Essex

We all have a part to play in making our communities safe.

Through Safer Essex, our voluntary and public authority partners work together across Greater Essex to make our county a safer place for everyone. Its membership includes representatives from Community Safety Partnerships, Essex Police, Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, health colleagues, criminal justice partners, probation, education and of course the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex.

This wide membership gives us a unique ability to pull together to effect change across our county. We have worked together to help create this updated strategy and are committed to delivering against its objectives, ensuring we can succeed.

Committing to this strategy together is a significant step for us as a partnership and shows the commitment and dedication our members have to preventing crime, keeping our communities safe and delivering the change we all want to see.

The strategy aligns how we will all work in partnership to respond collectively to the issues which present the most harm in Essex, as identified in the 14 thematic strands which have been outlined in this strategy.

It will be our job to monitor progress and support each other so we can create safer and stronger communities in which our residents and visitors feel safe and our communities and businesses thrive.

Essex does have challenges, but we have many more positives to build upon and we have shown repeatedly that we are stronger and more effective when we work together. As Safer Essex we will realise our partnership capabilities and capacity to support and deliver on what's needed. There's lots to be done but will do it together and make Essex an even safer place for all.

Pippa Brent-Isherwood
Chair of Safer Essex



Crime Prevention Strategy 2021-2025

Essex Police Force Plan 2020/2021

The Essex Police Force Plan summarises the priority areas of work and how Essex Police will deliver them. It should help to remind officers and staff why they are all part of Essex Police: to help people, keep people safe and catch criminals, and that everybody contributes to achieving those aims.

The plan was developed with input from staff and officers on what matters to them, and the force priorities align with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's (PFCC) Police and Crime plan.

The main effort helps focus energy on **our priorities** and think about helping victims, identifying vulnerability, preventing violence, and being visible in everything Essex Police does, whatever the role.

All of the work and the strategies across the force link to the Force Plan and this is the internal point of reference for **our priorities, main effort** and **how we work**.

THIS STRATEGY RELATES TO THE FOLLOWING AREAS OF THE FORCE PLAN:

Our priorities:

- ▶ Prevent
- ▶ Violence in all its forms
- ▶ Online crime
- ▶ Anti-social behaviour
- ▶ Gangs
- ▶ Domestic abuse
- ▶ Burglary
- ▶ Visibility in communities



Crime Prevention Strategy 2021-2025

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We are Essex



ONS population projections 2016 predict that by 2034 the total population will increase by another **195,160** people to a total of **1,650,500**



The proportion of the population classified as "Working Age" is **2%** lower than the national average whilst the population aged 65+ is **2%** higher



At the time of the 2011 census the BAME population of Essex was **9.2%** of the total population. More recent statistics are not available



Essex, Southend & Thurrock Councils cover approximately **3,670** square miles

In 2018 across Essex there were:

- **2,376** Looked After Children
- **28,225** adults receiving long term support



Average weekly earnings FTE higher than the national average at **£618.6/week** (higher than national average)



72.1% of children achieved a good level of development at the early years foundation stage in 2018, similar to the average for England



In 2018 there were **67** rough sleepers (equivalent to 1.08 rough sleepers/10,000 households). **1,560** households were classed as "homeless" regardless of statutory duty to be housed

Pan-Essex JSNA 2019

Crime Prevention Strategy 2021-2025

We are Essex

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21.11% of children in reception year were classified as overweight (including obese) **8.59%** were classed as Obese (including severely obese). By year 6 est. **32%** of children are overweight or obese with **17.9%** classed as Obese or severely obese



63.6% of adults were classed as overweight or obese (higher than the England)



Males from birth had a healthy life expectancy of **64.53 years** whilst females were slightly lower at **64.18 years**

The rate of GP registered children who have received both of MMR vaccination injections by age five is **89.4%**. This is higher than the England average (87.2%) but is well below the **95%** needed to eliminate measles within the population

Public Health England estimates that there was a three-year average of **475.2** Accident and Emergency attendances by children under the age of 5 across Essex as a whole compared to an England rate of **551.6**



ONS 2017 Crude Birth Rate was **11.3** (similar to England)



Essex Residents Survey 2018 showed **25.5%** of residents (aged 16 to 65+) reported feeling isolated from others



12.5% reported depression and anxiety

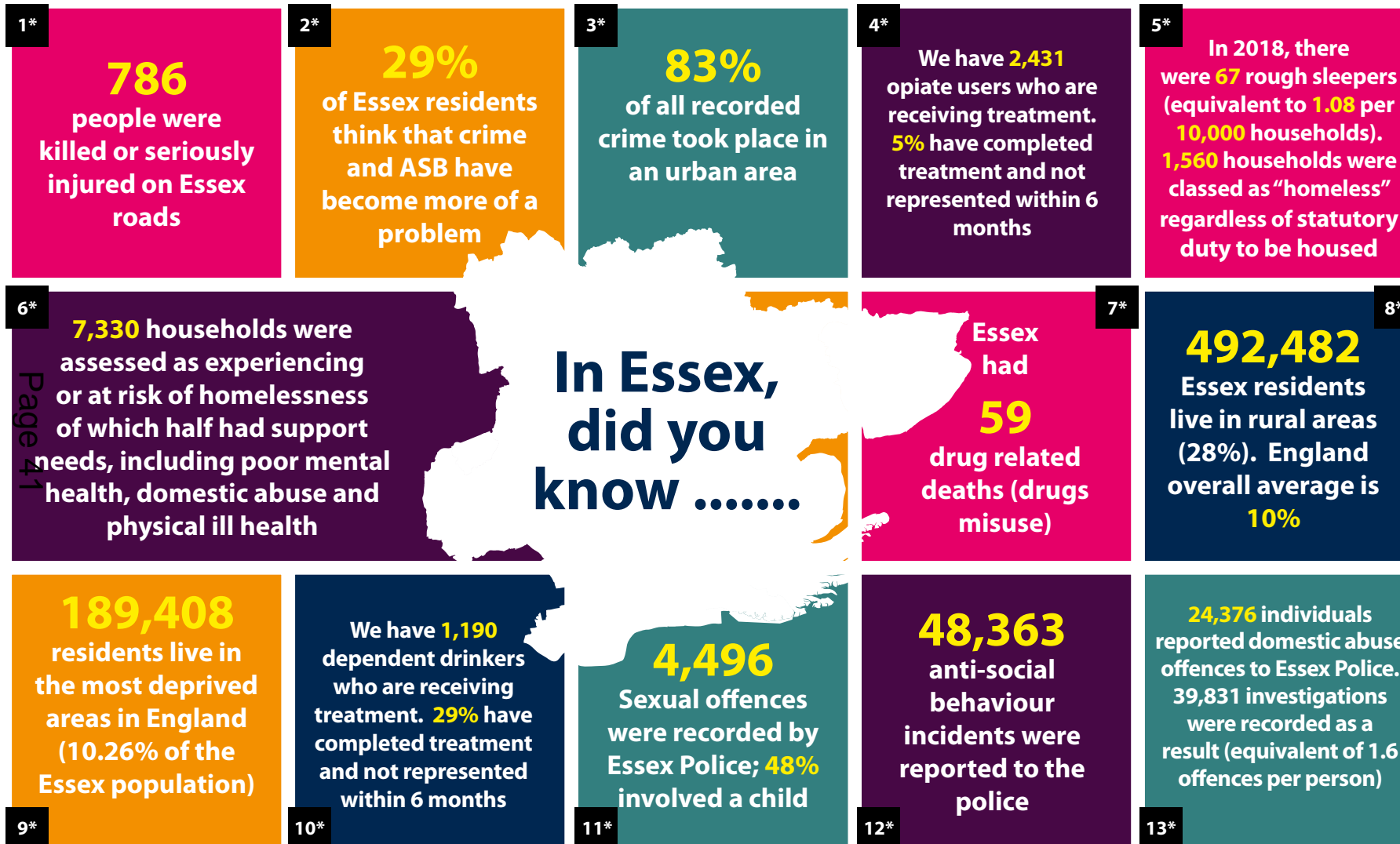


Rate of emergency hospital admissions for intentional self-harm among persons of all ages across Essex was **156.98**

Pan-Essex JSNA 2019

Crime Prevention Strategy 2021-2025
















2020/21 challenges



SOURCE - 1* EP data Nov 19 to Oct 20. Number of the KSI collisions where people were killed or seriously injured **2*** SMSR Q2 2020/21 (Oct 19 to Sept 20) **3*** EP data Nov 19 to Oct 20 **4*** Public Health England: NDTMS - National Drug treatment Monitoring System **5*** From page 5 of the strategy report **6*** www.gov.uk Statutory homelessness live tables **7*** ONS Drug-related deaths by local authority, England and Wales 2019. Drugs misuse. Essex also includes Southend and Thurrock unitary authorities. Death classified as drug misuse must be a drug poisoning and meet either one (or both) of the following conditions; the underlying cause is drug abuse or drug dependence, or any of the substances controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 are involved. Deaths classified as a drug poisoning must have an applicable International Classification of Diseases (ICD) code assigned as the underlying cause of death; this is determined by international coding rules from the condition or conditions reported by the certifier, as recorded on the certificate. Essex had 114 in 2019 versus 50 for Cornwall - Cornwall references drug misuse figures **8*** ONS: 2011 Rural-Urban Classification of Local Authorities and other geographies **9*** English indices of deprivation 2019 (www.gov.co.uk) **10*** Public Health England: NDTMS - National Drug treatment Monitoring System **11*** EP data Nov 19 to Oct 20 **12*** EP data Nov 19 to Oct 20 **13*** EP data Nov 19 to Oct 20

Crime Prevention Strategy 2021-2025













FMS demand profiling

	CURRENT STATUS		FORECAST	
	TREND	CONTEXT	TREND	CONTEXT
 Knife Crime	INCREASING 	Improvements in data quality resulting in increases, previous status not known as a result.	STABLE 	Data quality improvements likely to even out any increases as data is reviewed and corrected.
 Rape	INCREASING 	Long term increases although smaller this year due to Covid-19 restrictions.	INCREASE 	Increases in reporting expected to continue. Spike in recent reporting expected in short term. Non recent domestic rape also expected to increase.
 Night-time Economy (NTE)	INCREASING 	Large decreases this year (Covid 19) but longer term increases. Strong correlation to violent crime.	STABLE 	Slow longer term stable increases expected. Sharp post-Covid-19 pandemic spikes expected as NTE opens more fully. Longer term less clear due to changes in behaviour and impact of pandemic on number of licenced premises.
 Cybercrime / Fraud	INCREASING 	Recent increases largely driven by Stalking and Harassment. Growing volume of sexual offences.	INCREASE 	A growth area as technology continues to become more integral to daily life and offending.
 Dwelling Burglary / Street Robbery	DECREASING 	Falls in the past few years further accelerated by Covid-19.	STABLE 	Short term spikes in offences expected post Covid-19 but longer term little change expected.

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Crime Prevention Strategy 2021-2025

FMS demand profiling

	CURRENT STATUS		FORECAST	
	TREND	CONTEXT	TREND	CONTEXT
 Hate Crime	INCREASING 	Year on year increases in hate crime recorded.	INCREASE 	Increases expected to continue.
 Child Abuse / CSE	INCREASING 	Child abuse increasing, Child Sexual Abuse (CSE) stable.	INCREASE 	Increases expected to continue longer term with child protection investigations. CSE stable. Reports of abuse / neglect likely to increase post Covid with higher harm due to delayed reporting.
 Domestic Abuse	INCREASING 	Large long term increases although by a smaller volume in the past year.	INCREASE 	Expected to continue to increase although at a slower rate than previously seen. Short term spikes and non recent reporting with higher harm expected post Covid-19.
 Mental Health	STABLE 	Long term increase in the volume of mental health incidents but now stable. Likely under reported.	INCREASE 	Increases expected to continue longer term. Long term impact of restrictions may have precipitated a mental health crisis, particularly among the young which will have longer term impacts on demand.

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FMS summary only

 Drugs and Alcohol	Lack of data quality and analysis for demand forecasting. Crimes with an alcohol marker have increased in recent years.	 County Lines / Exploitation	FMS states urban increases in violence, County Lines, drugs supply and Serious Organised Crime.	 Serious Organised Crime	FMS expects urban increases in violence, county lines, drugs supply and Serious Organised Crime.
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Crime Prevention Strategy 2021-2025

Strategic Aims

We want a safer and stronger Essex in which our people and visitors feel safe and our communities and businesses thrive.

We want a whole system response to issues which present the most harm to our communities.

We will deliver in partnership a 5-asset approach across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors to have the biggest impact and unlock the greatest potential to create a safer & stronger Essex

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We will promote safer communities



We will cut crime and criminality



We will evolve our workforce, culture and infrastructure



We will support Safer Essex to realise partnership capabilities and capacity



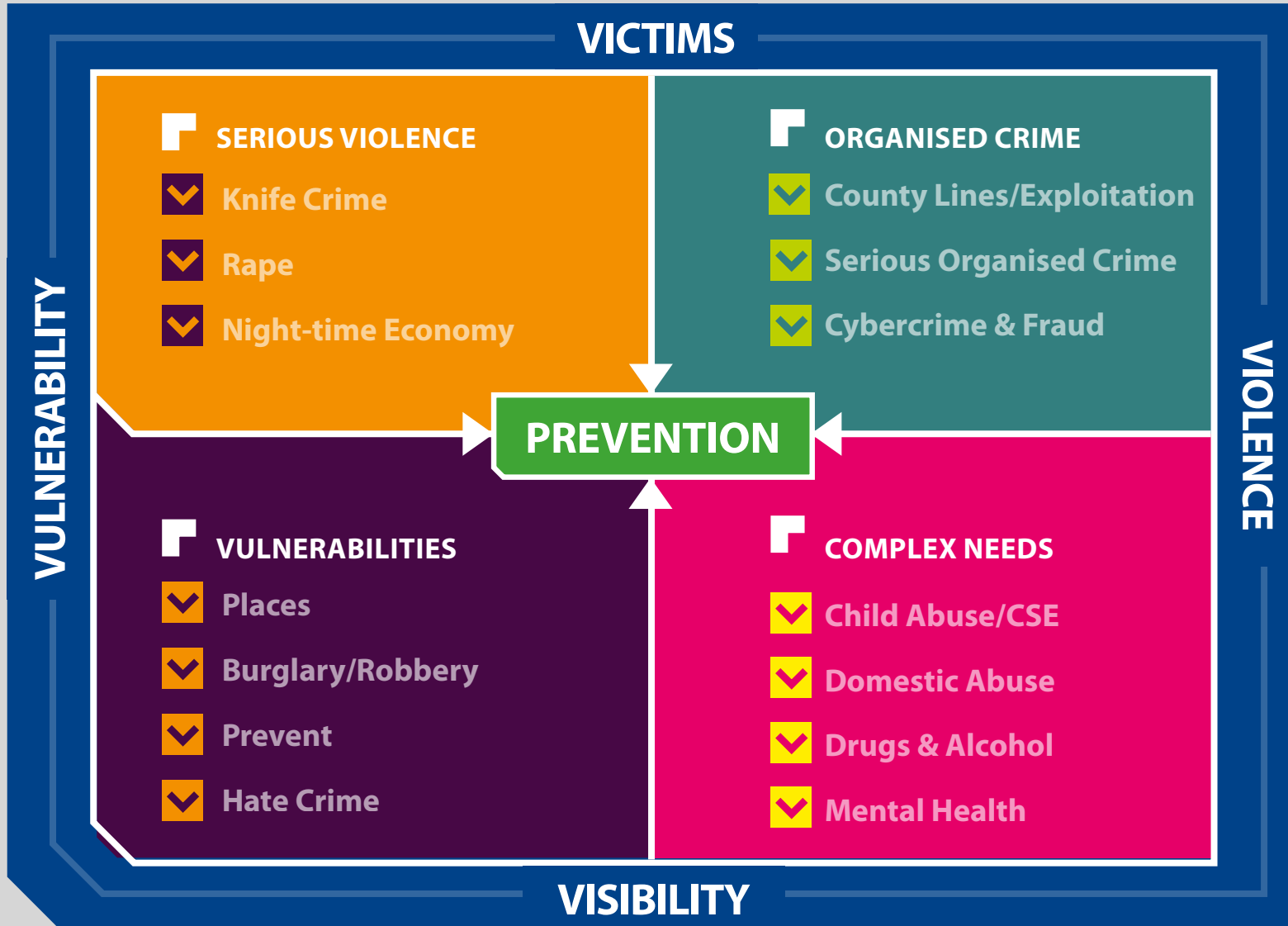
We will support ECVS to unlock community potential, develop & deliver community led solutions



Crime Prevention Strategy 2021-2025

Threat, Risk and Harm

While these 14 thematic strands present the greatest potential threat, risk and harm to our people and communities, they also present the greatest opportunity for prevention.



SERIOUS VIOLENCE

Knife Crime

To work with our partners and the community to tackle and reduce knife crime

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Serious Violence

Knife Crime

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Develop Integrated Offender Management processes with knife crime offenders to prevent reoffending



Deliver a consistent partnership media campaign looking at prevention



Ensure information sharing with key partners, especially A&E Departments, to understand and develop intelligence relating to knife crime



Work with education to develop a consistent knife crime education programme



Support local and national knife awareness and amnesty campaigns, highlighting the use of amnesty bins and preventing the circulation of knives



Enable prevention work through effective analysis, targeting high harm areas and individuals through Local and Force Tasking and working with Community Safety Partnerships



Ensure relentless enforcement and pursuit against knife crime offenders operating in Essex



SERIOUS VIOLENCE

Rape

To continuously improve our services to victims and our approach to tackling Rape and Serious Sexual Offences

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✓ Serious Violence

Rape



Focus on tackling repeat victimisation and offending to prevent rape and serious sexual offences



Work in partnership to support more victims of rape and serious sexual offences, by listening to their needs and experiences, improving victim satisfaction and public confidence



Enhance partnership working, information sharing, resources and expertise, improving the service provided to victims, quality of investigations and bringing more offenders to justice



Work in partnership with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), ensuring a cohesive approach in line with their Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) strategy



Make appropriate use of legislation allowing vulnerable victims and witnesses to provide evidence and cross examination via video recording in advance of trial, removing the need to attend court



Continuously improve and develop by learning from past experiences, seeking new ways of utilising evidence-based practice to inform our activity

SERIOUS VIOLENCE

Night-time Economy

To prevent and reduce harm associated with the night-time economy, with a focus on tackling violence

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✓ Serious Violence

Night-time Economy

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Identify Crime trends, patterns or hotspots and respond appropriately



Deliver joint tasking and co-ordination to proactively tackle Night-time Economy (NTE) issues



Improve data sharing with partners to inform the allocation and deployment of resources



Work collaboratively with partners to prevent and reduce sexual harm on the NTE



Reduce harmful effects of alcohol and drugs on the NTE



Reduce anti-social behaviour, supporting a healthy, happy and productive NTE

A person wearing a dark hoodie and light-colored pants stands with their back to the camera, looking towards a brick wall. The scene is overlaid with a teal tint. A yellow rectangular graphic element is positioned in the upper right corner.

ORGANISED CRIME

County Lines/ Exploitation

To work with our partners and the community to dismantle county lines, reducing the harm and exploitation that they cause

Organised Crime

County Lines and Exploitation

Page 53



Ensure up -to-date effective Drug Market Profiling to understand the demographic of drug dependency with a view of reducing and supporting that user base



Working with our partners and the community to better understand and tackle the exploitation and harm caused by gangs and county lines



Ensure the Violence and Vulnerability Unit takes a collaborative public health approach to reducing serious violence through intervention, diversion, prevention and education



Learn from others by being actively engaging to identify and embed best practice from across the country



Ensure relentless enforcement and pursuit against county lines operating in Essex

A person wearing a dark hoodie and light-colored pants stands with their back to the camera, looking towards a brick wall. The scene is outdoors with trees in the background. The image has a teal color overlay. There are white L-shaped corner brackets on the left and right sides of the page. A yellow rectangular block is positioned behind the main title.

ORGANISED CRIME

Serious Organised Crime

To reduce the threat, harm and risk posed to communities within Essex from organised crime by maximising crime disruption opportunities with the support of key stakeholders.

Organised Crime

Serious Organised Crime

Page 55



Work with partner agencies within law enforcement and the financial industry to identify and focus on organised crime enablers



Increase the use of Serious Crime Prevention Orders to ensure continued disruption and targeting of career criminals engaged in organised crime



Support Youth Engagement Officers, schools and universities in educating young people of the dangers and consequences of organised crime



Ensure use of media to effectively update communities regarding the police response to organised crime



ORGANISED CRIME



Cyber Crime and Fraud

To work in partnership to reduce fraud and digital crime by supporting victims, reducing enablers and tackling offenders



Organised Crime

Cyber Crime and Fraud



Work in partnership to identify and safeguard those most vulnerable to fraud and repeat victims



Work in partnership to reduce the number of enablers of economic crime



Work with partners and wider law enforcement to identify those targeting the vulnerable through fraud and seek to bring them to justice



Work with local businesses to identify their network vulnerabilities and in turn help strengthen them against cybercrime



Work with partners and wider law enforcement to identify emerging trends and software and those involved in digital crime, and work to disrupt offenders

A background map of the East of England region, showing various towns and rivers. The map is overlaid with a dark purple gradient. A white L-shaped graphic is positioned in the top left corner, and a yellow L-shaped graphic is in the top right corner. The text 'VULNERABILITIES' is written in white, bold, uppercase letters.

VULNERABILITIES

A yellow banner with a dark purple gradient, containing the word 'Places' in white, bold, uppercase letters.

Places

To work in partnership to develop sustainable solutions that improve community safety and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour by targeting persistent problem places and people within the geographical areas

Vulnerabilities

Places

Page 59



Ensure a co-ordinated partnership approach to community safety issues, encouraging local ownership and leadership of community led solutions that provide public reassurance, reduce harm and protect the vulnerable



Ensure effective use of cross sector data and Residents Survey feedback to create place-based evidence profiles and identify key priorities within geographical areas



Develop and deliver communication plans with the public and stakeholders in line with 'you said, we did' to raise awareness of key issues, promote partnership work and reduce fear of crime and anti-social behaviour



Deliver targeted local interventions to raise awareness and draw vulnerable people away from serious and organised crime and assist their distancing from it.



Unlock community potential to co-produce place based responses to issues that matter to them.



VULNERABILITIES

Dwelling Burglary and Street Robbery

To work in partnership across the public, private and voluntary sectors to reduce the volume, severity and adverse impact of house burglary and street robbery offending

Vulnerabilities

Dwelling Burglary and Street Robbery

Page 61



Engage, support & safeguard victims and affected communities to prevent repeat and near-repeat victimisation, inspire confidence and reduce fear of crime



Ensure a high-quality response and investigation to bring offenders to justice



Work with our criminal justice and community safety partners to prevent reoffending



Collect, analyse and disseminate intelligence to identify and respond to emerging threats, hotspots, series and trends



Provide our communities with up-to-date crime prevention advice, information and resources so they take action to protect themselves and their property



Take an evidence-based design and problem-solving approach to reducing the factors and vulnerabilities that enable burglary and robbery crimes

VULNERABILITIES


Prevent

To work in partnership to safeguard and support those vulnerable to radicalisation, to stop them from becoming involved in, or supporting, terrorism


Vulnerabilities

Prevent


Page 63




Tackle the causes of radicalisation and respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism




To work in partnership to safeguard and support those vulnerable to radicalisation, to stop them from becoming involved in, or supporting, terrorism




Enable those who are already involved in or supporting terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate



Ensure the statutory Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 'PREVENT' requirements are met by Essex Police



Inform, monitor and respond to recommendations arising from the annual Counter Terrorism Local Profile (CTLP)



Identify and embed best practise and learning arising from the PREVENT agenda



Identify emerging trends, threats and community tensions and hate crime relevant to the PREVENT agenda and ensure effective partnership response



VULNERABILITIES

Hate Crime

To work with partner agencies and communities to reduce hate crime and the harm caused by it, by bringing offenders to justice and educating people around the significant impact hate crime can have

Vulnerabilities

Hate Crime

Page 65



Build the trust and confidence of individuals and groups affected by hate crime



Reduce under-reporting, repeat victimisation and perpetration of hate crime



Provide high levels of victim care, safeguarding and support throughout the criminal justice process



Bring offenders to justice



Promote community cohesion



Promote hate crime awareness through effective partnership wide campaigning



Raise awareness of hate crime and educate people on the impacts hate crime has on victims, their families and their communities



Work in partnership with our communities to better understand violence, intimidation and abuse against women and girls

A background image showing a close-up of several hands of different skin tones being held together in a supportive grip. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent red filter. There are two white L-shaped corner brackets: one in the top-left and one in the bottom-right.

COMPLEX NEEDS

Child Abuse and Child Sexual Exploitation

To continuously improve our services to victims and our approach to tackling Child Abuse and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Complex Needs

Child Abuse and Child Sexual Exploitation

Page 67



Maximise opportunities for early interaction, intervention and prevention to reduce exposure to harm, including focus on repeat victimisation and offending to prevent child abuse and CSE



Make appropriate use of legislation allowing vulnerable victims and witnesses to provide evidence and cross examination via video recording in advance of trial, removing the need to attend court



Enhance partnership working, information sharing, resources and expertise, improving the service provided to victims, quality of investigations and bringing more offenders to justice



Work with partners to support more victims of child abuse and CSE, listening to their needs and experiences to shape our services and improve victim satisfaction and public confidence



Continuously improve and develop by learning from past experiences, seeking new ways of utilising evidence-based practice to inform our activity



Work in partnership with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), ensuring a cohesive approach in line with their Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) strategy.



COMPLEX NEEDS

Domestic Abuse

To work with partners and the community, to prevent domestic abuse by supporting victims and tackling offenders

Complex Needs Domestic Abuse

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Ensure effective working with partner agencies to provide quality service to victims through their entire experience from initial call for service through to court hearings and beyond



Ensure effective multi-agency approach to break the cycle of violence and offending against victims



Ensure we continuously improve and develop by learning from successes and failures, identifying and implementing multi-agency best practice



Ensure effective multi-agency approach to break the cycle of violence and offending against victims



Develop and ensure a 'differentiated response' to the types of domestic abuse



COMPLEX NEEDS

Drugs and Alcohol

To work in partnership to reduce crime and harm caused by misuse of alcohol and use of drugs



Complex Needs

Drugs and Alcohol

Page 71



Target enforcement action against individuals and groups willingly concerned in the production and supply of illegal drugs and those in breach of alcohol licensing legislation



Identify and protect vulnerable individuals and communities from the exploitation and harm caused by drug supply and use, and misuse of alcohol



Work in partnership to further develop and better utilise pathways into treatment for alcohol and drug misuse



Inform and influence the education and engagement of young people to divert them away from substance misuse



Develop an improved shared understanding of current local drugs markets and the impact of licenced alcohol sales to inform and direct partnership interventions



COMPLEX NEEDS

Mental Health

To ensure that any of us experiencing mental ill-health receive the best support.

Complex Needs

Mental Health

Page 73



Working in partnership to maximise opportunities for early intervention with those who require support



Identify and share national and international best practice



Ensure that accurate data is collated by Essex Police and partners to inform decisions



Ensure that officers and staff are trained to identify and respond to incidents of mental health crisis



Improve the quality of investigations and outcomes of crimes for victims and witnesses

If you are part of an organisation that you feel can lead or contribute to the delivery of aspects of our Crime Prevention Strategy please contact us.

We will endorse funding applications and work collaboratively to support delivery.



Do it online at:

essex.police.uk



Report to the Council

Committee: Council
Date: 16 December 2021
Subject: Community and Regulatory services Portfolio Holder
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Aniket Patel

Recommending:

That the report of the Community and Regulatory services Portfolio Holder be noted.

Regulatory services:

Environmental Health: Private Sector Housing and Grants

First Tier Tribunal

I am pleased to update Members, following my previous report to Council, that our Environmental Health Officers in the Private Sector Housing Team successfully defended an appeal about enforcement action taken against a rogue landlord in a recent First Tier Tribunal Property Chamber Hearing.

Officers had issued a total of 9 Civil penalty notices relating to 3 separate properties for the offences of operating an unlicensed house in multiple occupation (known as an HMO) and for the failure to comply with HMO management regulations relating to fire safety. The Housing and Planning Act 2016 allows Local Authorities to issue Civil penalties as an alternative to prosecution.

The Judge agreed with the Council that the appellant was guilty and upheld the decision. The penalties were reduced to reflect the Tribunal's view that the offences were a joint enterprise.

The case centred around two individuals who, masquerading as tenants, rented 3 large family houses in Buckhurst Hill and Chigwell. They then advertised the rooms on spareroom.co.uk and sub-let the rooms creating large unlicensed HMOs, using the "rent-to rent" business model; resulting in minimum outlay and maximum profit.

Extensive investigation work by EHOs along with the collaboration of property owners, managing agents and sub-tenants, resulted in a significant amount of evidence sufficient to prove the offences to the criminal burden of proof, beyond a reasonable doubt. The criminal activity would have netted them approximately £112k per annum had the operation been allowed to continue. The good work of officers meant that once it was discovered, the illegal activity was quickly stopped.

Our enforcement policy takes a zero tolerance to this type of offending. Landlords are offered every opportunity to access free and comprehensive advice from our experienced EHOs and we welcome engagement with landlords to help them secure compliance with Housing standards legislation to provide good quality accommodation for tenants.

It was clear in this case that these individuals had identified EFDC as rich pickings and they thought they could continue undetected. It was due to the positive working relationships officers have with our reputable managing agents and landlords that helped identify and crack down on these offences.

Our financial penalty charging matrix (approved in June 2018 Decision Ref: HSG-003-2018/19) calculates the amount of penalty, taking into account the seriousness of the offences, and the amount of Local Housing allowance, along with the size of the property. The Council's policy allows a 50% early payment discount, much like a parking ticket. Meaning the original £30,000 maximum fine would be reduced to £15,000.

As these offences were committed jointly, the Tribunal's decision was to firstly apply the 50% early payment discount, and then reduce the penalty by a further 50% to reflect the joint liability.

The fines were set at £31,500.00 - £7,500 per unlicensed property (total £22,500) and £9000 in total for the HMO management regulation offences.

So whilst at first glance it would appear disappointing that the Tribunal didn't fully uphold the penalties issued – they tried to apportion a level of fairness to acknowledge it was a joint enterprise, where one of the parties has vanished behind a limited company.

Empowering private renting tenants living in inadequate accommodation

I am pleased to report on an initiative to help empower private renting tenants who are living in substandard conditions.

The Housing and Planning Act 2016 introduced the ability to the First Tier Tribunal to issue a Rent Repayment order where a landlord has committed a housing related offence. A Rent Repayment Order (RRO) requires the landlord to repay rent paid by a tenant or to repay the Local Housing Authority any universal credit paid for a property where an offence has been committed.

There are 6 relevant Housing offences; including illegal eviction or harassment, failure to comply with an improvement notice or prohibition order, operating an unlicensed HMO and renting in breach of a banning order.

A RRO must be applied for within 12 months of the relevant offence, but the First Tier Tribunal must be satisfied of the offence beyond reasonable doubt, which is the criminal burden of proof. It is unlikely that most tenants would have the time, knowledge or confidence to make a successful application for an RRO.

Officers are looking to empower tenants to apply for RROs in appropriate cases, and it is also a further penalty to rogue landlords who exploit vulnerable people for their own financial gain, by failing to comply with Housing law.

I am pleased to advise that we are entering into a Service Level Agreement with a non profit organisation called Justice for Tenants which allows tenants to be fully supported during the RRO application process by expertly trained staff. They are very skilled in this area and currently have a 98% success rate. This service is at no cost to the Council and it allows tenants to apply for an RRO immediately, without having to rely on EHOs to prove their prosecution case before they can start the claims process. In addition, where all or part of the rent is included as part of Universal Credit, any reward will be proportionally directed to the Council. Justice for Tenants receive 30% of the amount awarded. This work encourages an information sharing partnership providing a strong deterrent for offending landlords.

Environmental Health: Public Health and Air Quality

Covid

I am pleased to advise that our Covid Marshals continue to be active across the district, distributing Lateral Flow Tests and giving positive messaging and information about vaccination. They also continue checks that residents that have tested positive and have been notified by the NHS, are self-isolating as required. Following the recently introduced requirements for wearing face masks in certain establishments, the marshals will be providing information to the businesses concerned, distributing face mask posters on request and supporting business where possible. The direction from Government is to support business in compliance and use enforcement as the last sanction.

The Environmental Health Team have engaged the Health and Safety Executives 'Spot Check' scheme. Funded by Govt Covid money the HSE set up a Spot Check scheme to check on the controls businesses had for covid. The scheme for EFDC is targeting businesses on trading estates who would not have received as much focus as those businesses on the High Street. Using a variety of data sources 161 businesses were identified for intervention. The businesses initially receive a phone call, if not satisfactory it escalates to a site visit and if still not resolved refers back to EFDC Env health team to visit and where necessary a more formal approach is taken.

I am pleased to report that to date 56 businesses have been completed with a satisfactory outcome.

Licensing

Market Policy

Members will be aware of the Consultation on the Councils proposed Market Policy ending on the 6th December.

The purpose of the policy is to create a market trading environment that compliments the surrounding area and retail offer, is sensitive to the needs of all users of or town centres and provides a diversity of choice for consumers. It seeks to encourage and stimulate investment from local traders and to create a quality and sustainable offer to our residents and visitors.

The policy has been written with a view to supporting the following objectives:

- Recognise the importance and contribution of markets to the wellbeing of the local economy;
- Enhance the economic diversity of the area;
- Protect and, where possible, enhance the amenity and character of the District and local communities within it;
- Offer opportunity for local traders and businesses;
- Provide traders with guidance and clarity;
- Encourage residents to spend locally on their High Streets and support their local business community;
- Ensure coherence with Council policies and relevant legislation; and
- Promote fairness, transparency and consistency.

A number of responses have been received and certain modifications to the policy are being proposed, particularly in relation to charity and community-based markets, to ensure that they

will not be subjected to unnecessary financial and administrative burden, and these have been positively received.

During the consultation, conversation has taken place with Epping Town Council regarding the powers given to those with Charter Market status. These conversations are ongoing and legal opinion is being sought regarding this position, before proposed report submission to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27 January 2022.

Commercial services:

North Weald Airfield:

Aviation: I am pleased to report that the official opening of the new Essex & Herts Air Ambulance base took place in October with the Chairman of Council and Chief Executive representing EFDC.

General aviation continues to be very busy with the flight training schools and landing fees bringing in good levels of income, approximately £5-6k per month.

Market: I am pleased to report that the new market lease is very close to completion with the start date of the new agreement being Jan 1st 2022. The Commercial Assets team have negotiated a considerable increase in the rent. **(Commercially sensitive - £133k to £275k)**

HMRC site: I am pleased to report that the HMRC site continues to operate without disruption to any of the local road networks as the number of vehicles attending the site remains low. Vehicle numbers from January 1st 2021 to October 30th 2021 totalled 19743, an average of approximately 65 per day.

General: I am pleased to report that the Airfield hosted the National Street Road Association Auto Jumble in October that attracted several thousand visitors. In late January the Airfield is due to host "The Carp Show" that has for many years been hosted at the Brentwood Centre. This show will obviously be subject to the latest Covid restrictions / guidelines.

NWA Master Plan: I am pleased to report that the latest master plan is now at the final public consultation stage. The second QRP (Quality Review Panel) took place last month that raised a number of comments for consideration. The final master plan will be presented to Cabinet in the new year.

Building Control:

The Local Authority Building Control (LABC) conference was attended by two members of the Building Control team where they learnt more about the changes coming to the competency and licencing requirements for Building Control Surveyors as they transition to a new titled role of Building Control Inspectors. LABC has secured government funding to provide enhanced training to all Local Authority Building Control Inspectors in key areas such as fire safety, enforcement and public safety at sports grounds. Registrations of interest have to be presented to LABC by January from each individual with a training requirement to secure the funding. I am pleased to report that Epping Forest Council has two members of the team who have undertaken competency assessments and validation in fire safety in High Risk Residential Buildings.

Income through fees and charges dropped in October to approximately 80% of the equivalent pre-pandemic level seen in October 2019 but remained an improvement of approximately £4000 on October 2020. November 2021 income of £44,580 inclusive of Partnership working

is roughly aligned to performance in 2020 and is not back to pre-pandemic levels expected at around £50,000 for the month.

Building Control attended a dangerous structure reported by Essex Police following a vehicle impact into one of the Council's own housing assets in Waltham Abbey on the 30th November. The building was assessed to be at imminent risk of partial collapse with residents unable to access or egress until made safe. Building Control's emergency works contractor attended and worked through the evening to implement shoring and removal of debris. Further assessment by Building Control confirmed the building was suitable for occupation by residents by 9PM that evening. I am pleased to report that this was an excellent example of collaborative working between Building Control and Housing colleagues that resulted in our tenants not being overly inconvenienced.

Work to implement the new digital Planning and Building Control software system is currently at the data migration planning stage. The current forecast date to go live is expected in May 2022.

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Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 16 December 2021
Subject: Corporate Services Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Councillor D Sunger

Recommending:

That the report of the Corporate Services Portfolio Holder be noted.

People Team

Common Operating Model

Consultation and recruitment are still underway for the remaining teams/positions to finalise the restructure process;

- Legal Team – proposals for a new structure - progressing to consultation
- Housing Asset and Property Team - service review - proposals costed, awaiting final approval
- Housing Strategy Team restructure - on hold pending further review

People Strategy 2020 – 2022

Attracting, On-Boarding and Retaining Talent

- iTrent - iRecruit Phase 2 – Letter templates for provisional offers of employment and reference requests are now “live” and being issued through the system. Contract templates will shortly follow and will be in the test environment in 2022.
- Our exit interview questionnaire has been launched, the Register of Interests questionnaire has been delayed, the new launch date will be the 1st December (original date was the 1st October).
- Onboarding Guide is being re-launched and re-communicated. New starters are contacted directly to be invited to HRBP Power Hours.

Developing our skills and behaviours

- In total we now have 32 Apprentices in the workforce. Our Public Sector target is 14. We are aiming to support LGA National Apprenticeship Week (February 2022) by creating videos of our apprentices in situ.

Engagement and Wellbeing project

- A Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) networking meeting will take place in November. MHFA’s are being asked to refresh their role and support colleagues through the darker winter months, and emphasise the huge amount of support available via Perkbox.

- Perkbox sign up is now sitting at 90.7% of the organisation, a total of 530 out of 584 employees' have logged into the site to access the fantastic employee benefits and tools with over 5228 perk redemptions so far. The free Caffè Nero perk is the most popular downloaded perk so far – 693 redemptions followed by Tesco.
- Our first Workbuzz survey went out in October 2021, employees had the opportunity to tell us what is working well and make suggestions for improvements. We are currently reviewing the data from this survey so we can produce engagement dashboards to share with service areas. We encourage our employees to complete the surveys and be an important part of organisational change at EFDC.
- We are preparing our second pulse survey to be launched on 6 December 2021.
- Perkbox Recognition, launched on 1 December 2020, continues to gain momentum, we have overwhelming engagement on the platform and this trend continues. Perkbox Recognition is now known as Perkbox Celebration.

Our Ways of Working (OWOW) – Creating Our Tomorrow

- Our employees are moving away from traditional styles of management and approaches, to more agile, creative ways of working, thinking and leadership. Embedding the changes that OWOW and the Accommodation Project started, empowering employees to evolve the culture of the organisation, ensuring we embed the changes and achieve the desired outcomes:
 - Making Best Use of our Assets
 - Embedding the Change - Assessing & Monitoring Adoption
 - Continued Employee Engagement and Wellbeing, including a Beyond the Pandemic Phase 2 survey for early 2022.
 - Enhancing skills and flexibility of our workforce – including Inspiring Great Performance and a refresh of EFDC Values & Behaviours
 - Inspiring Great Performance was presented to SLT in November. The option for a digital solution 'Clear Review' was chosen. This will be new project starting January 2022.
 - Review of Collective Agreement, Terms and Conditions and Employee Consultation is ongoing.

Internal Communications Strategy 2021 – 2023

- An internal communications strategy has been developed to enable effective engagement and communication with our employees so that they can flourish. The Strategy will help us take a fresh approach to internal communications and employee engagement, one that is flexible, intuitive and interactive.
- There are six key areas for development over the 3-year period, including content creation, corporate information platform, channels, engagement and insights, content management and recognising and celebrating success. Further details on the first 4 areas include;

1. Content creation and the introduction of Communication Ambassadors

- We carried out an audit of our existing communications activity in October, which identified where our most active content producers are within the organisation and the harder to reach areas.
- Next steps for December/January are to reach out to the areas that do not have much representation within our internal communications and to ask whether there is anything we can publish over the coming months. These will be our first steps in developing relationships with these areas.

2. Supporting the development of a new corporate information platform

- The work to collate the information into an overview for the project sponsor and ICT is yet to be completed and will likely now take place in the new year.

3. Channels

- As part of the Civic Offices refit, five digital screens were installed (2 customers facing and 3 internal), Our brand-new digital signage is now LIVE with up-to-date content and employee news, graphics, video, meeting information, messaging, and BBC news updates

4. Employee engagement and insights

- Work has been done to collate the engagement scores and some high-level statistics for our wider management team and this will be communicated in November 2021.
- High level engagement score stats will also be communicated to the whole organisation in November 2021.

Business Support

Local Land Charges (LLC)

- All LLC data has been successfully migrated to Northgate's Cloud environment.
- We have provided HMLR with a new set of cleansed data, which HMLR are reviewing.
- Once the Register is live, we will be responsible for maintaining our records which will migrate onto the Register. LLC team will continue to be responsible for providing the responses to CON29 personal searches, which based, on previous data, is estimated to be around 1720 requests per annum.
- We are on track to migrate in Q4 to the HMLR database and our Service Delivery Manager is due to provide a go live date for the Register.

Projects

Purchase cards

- Business Support are currently responsible for managing purchase orders, invoices and payment runs across the Council and an opportunity has arisen to pilot the use of purchase cards for low value orders of up to £1000. Our data for the financial year 2019/20 tells us that around 63% of our purchases are low value.
- There are several benefits to using purchase cards; they will reduce the amount of time the overall ordering process takes, resulting in increased capacity for employees within Business Support and across the Council. Our suppliers will also get paid at the time of the order, rather than waiting for their invoices to be paid.

Print to Post

- The Council continues to migrate service areas over to the PSL print to post solution. Currently, multiple online training sessions are taking place to encourage more users to take up the solution.

Accommodation - Concierge Project

- We have had multiple enquiries and bookings for the Conference Suite over the past few weeks, with bookings being made by the NHS, Citizens Advice Bureau and local community groups.

Soft Facilities Management

- The Corporate Cleaning contract for the Civic and Corporate estate tender has closed and a winning bidder has been identified. A Portfolio Holder Decision has agreed the outcome of the procurement process. The new contract will start February 2022.

Storage and Archiving

- Since Iron Mountain were awarded the contract to provide a storage, archiving and retrieval service for EFDC, transferring data inventory and boxes has successfully started. Epping Depot and a Housing property have been emptied, and work has started to empty NWA and the North Weald storage unit. There are around 700 more boxes scheduled for collection from the Council in early December.

Multi-Functional Devices (MFD) replacement programme

- A project brief has been submitted to review the Council's current and future in-house printing requirements, undertake a procurement exercise and set out the ongoing contract management activities. The project proposes the following timeline;
 - By end November a high-level printer/scanning requirements list produced
 - Tender document and procurement approach – mid December
 - Competition – January 2022
 - Award and implementation of new solution – February 2022
 - Hand over to Business as usual – February/March 2022

Corporate Health and Safety

- Forty-two managers have booked onto or completed their Risk Assessment training. Another two sessions are booked for the New Year and Directors have been invited to attend their own specific course in Feb ahead of the launch of the new templates and guidance. This programme will meet legislative compliance for the Council, safe systems of work, training and monitoring.
- Specific teams have undergone manual handling and first aid training with identified budget allocated for 2022/23. A new trainer has proved very successful and can deliver a multitude of courses required for H&S. This has enabled dates to be pre-booked at discounted costs for First Aid, Manual Handling, Conflict Management, Lone Working and Fire Safety.
- The Civic Office Incident Management Team is under review. As a result of the recent incident at Southend and concerns raised by some employees, a full security risk assessment of the Civic has taken place the outcome of which will be considered alongside any improvements for employee, Member, tenant and visitor safety.
- COVID – there has been a review of the current COVID risk assessment for the Civic. Also there are separate measures in place for large meetings, gatherings and council business including members of the public. This is under constant review and follows government guidelines – this continues to be the case with some further discussion taking place as we approach the winter months to maintain employee and visitor safety.

Contingency Planning

- All Directors are now on the GOLD rota for the Council to deal with and initiate a response for emergencies whether internal or external.
- Further updates to our emergency plans are programmed for the new year.
- Business Continuity – A small ‘task and finish’ group will be brought together in January 2022 to begin to look at the updates required for the Corporate Business Continuity Plan and individual service plans.

Insurance

- Work continues to collate information required for the procurement of the insurance policies which will be in place for 1 July 2022.

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Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 16 December 2021
Subject: Customer and Partnerships Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Councillor S Kane

Recommending:

That the report of the Customer and Partnerships Portfolio Holder be noted.

1 Revenues and Benefits

- The Revenues & Benefits team continue to provide a daily frontline presence at the Civic Offices, as they have done since re-opening in June of this year. In addition, the team provide expert advice as part of the work being carried out by the Community Hub.
- The Revs & Bens team continue to process and support local businesses through the limited grants currently being made available by Central Government and the County council. Further information on all business support schemes, as well as the application forms, is available on the council website.
- The Revs & Bens team continue to provide support for families through the Government's Test & Trace Support Payment scheme, which has now been in place since October last year. In addition, the team also administers the County council scheme, which is less prescriptive than that of Central Government. We received a total of 1978 applications for support under the Government's Test & Trace Support Scheme, between the dates of 16/10/2020 and 25/11/2021. For those that satisfied the eligibility criteria, we paid 336 cases through the Government's funded scheme and a further 479 through the Essex County Council funded scheme; a total of 815 cases, amounting to £407,500. The primary reason for ineligibility is due to the fact that applicants have been unable to provide evidence of the loss of income as a direct result of either having contracted Covid-19 or being required to self-isolate. Further information on these schemes, as well as the application forms, is available on the council website.
- Housing Benefit and Local Council Tax Support caseload numbers continue to remain stable, despite the ending of the Government's Furlough Scheme, which came to an end 30 September 2021.
- During November the Revs & Bens team have gone live with the first phase of DWP's Atlas Automation for Benefits. The System Admin team will download files from the DWP of changes to customers benefits, uploading them directly to the Academy Benefits system to recalculate Housing Benefit and, or Local Council Tax Support within a set of parameters; the system will

automatically make any adjustments to the entitlement and produce notification letters for customers. Parallel testing has shown that this will drive up end-to-end automation of DWP Atlas records from the current level of 27% to around 70%. This will create efficiencies within the service, including; freeing up officer's time to concentrate on other work; improve statistics for Government Returns, more timely billing and, more importantly, will provide a quicker, more efficient service to our customers.

- By the end of November, the Revs & Bens team will carry out the first fully automated file transfer of change notifications from Universal Credit to the council's Benefit system, using Universal Credit Data Share (UCDS) files. Based on the team's parallel testing, a level of over 50% automation has been achieved. We intend to look at further automation in the second phase, which will be in Q1 of 2022-23.
- The Revs & Bens team have automated the delivery of emails, sent to Corporate Debt Recovery, directly into the workflow information system. Previously, this involved a member of staff monitoring the Recovery mailbox and manually moving emails from one system to the other.

2 Customer Services

- The new branding for the Civic Hub will be installed early December, as a reminder the branding will guide our visitors to the four customer areas which are namely, the Community Hub, the Payment Kiosks, the Customer Lounge (waiting area/informal meetings) and the Customer Terminals. Visits to the Civic Hub remain mainly for face to face meetings with Housing and Revenue & Benefits.

Community Hub Launch

- The Hub now has 15 different organisations (including Epping Forest District Council) offering their support and advice. Since opening in September, the hub has welcomed two new partner organisations. Employ-Ability who provide a number of services to help people with mental health issues find and maintain employment. Papworth Trust supporting those furthest from the employment market to gain employability skills including job searching, employment and education and training. The hub has received great feedback and helped many people with various issues. Two examples of which are given below.
- The EFDC Homeless team and Peabody worked together to help a man who came to the hub having left prison with nowhere to go, and no support to access. Both teams were able to get him accommodation and the support he needed to get back on his feet.
- A local resident had heard about the hub via Epping Forest Foodbank and upon seeing a homeless person with mental health challenges in need, brought them to the hub for help. Within 30 minutes, thanks to the quick teamwork between EFDC homeless team and CHESS, this customer had been helped with any relevant paperwork and had appointments to view accommodation and get financial support.

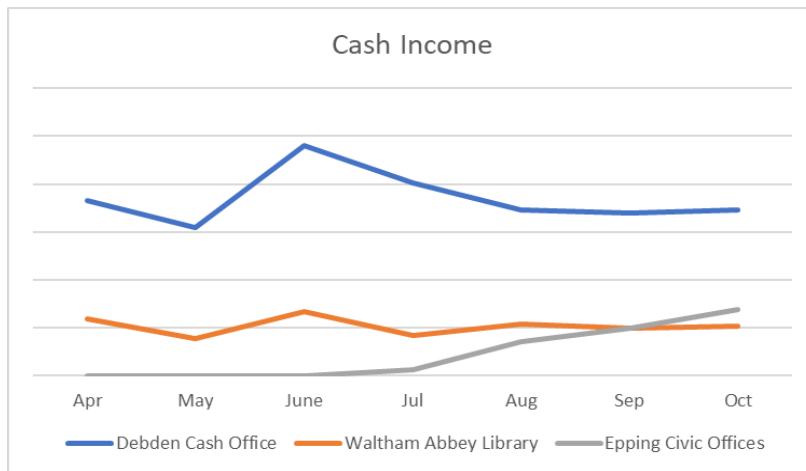
- A single father of 5 children had visited the hub after having tried to get support for nearly a month from different places. He wanted information about childcare vouchers and to get advice on issues with his benefits. At the time of his visit, there was no Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) partner on site; but, a team member from Family Solutions was able to contact a DWP colleague and together they helped the gentleman without having to ask him to return at a different time or day. He was reassured that if he had any other problems to come back at any point and someone would be able to help him further.
- Over September and October, we had a total of seventy-one visitors using the Hub partner services. Those receiving the highest number of visitors were Citizens Advice (12), DWP (11) and EFDC Homeless (11). To find out when each organisation is at the hub visit:
<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/community/epping-community-hub/>

Customer Contact Centre

- Our Team Manager vacancy has now been filled. Lisa Bannister-Wood joined us on the 8th November, and she will be managing half the contact centre as well as Members and Digital Inclusion. Lisa has a very strong background in contact centres as well as service improvements. In addition, to alleviate the pressure of the Contact Centre Officers covering reception dues we have appointed a temporary receptionist for the Welcome Lounge.
- Our overall service continues to be impacted by resourcing challenges due to long-term sickness, short term sickness and annual leave. Colleagues are being supported in line with our absence management process. As previously advised, to align with our corporate reporting process, KPI's are reported to Stronger Council in line with quarterly timelines.

Cash Payments

- Following a high in June not long after reopening, cash usage at the Debden Cash Office has dropped 15% for Aug-Oct when compared to the previous 3 months but remains consistent across the current 3 month period, serving on average about 274 unique cash customers per month. A similar pattern was seen at Waltham Abbey Library kiosk with a slight high in June followed by a smaller drop of 5% and stabilisation over the last 3 months and 117 unique cash users per month on average. Having not reopened until mid-July, the kiosks at Epping are seeing month on month increased usage of about 40%, currently serving on average 72 unique cash users per month though this is increasing.



- Due to work involved with the implementation of our new cash collection provider the report on options for our cash paying customers has been delayed. A meeting is planned for December to finalise the content and the report should be published early in the New Year.

Customer Strategy Update

'In Your Shoes' customer service behavioural training

- Approximately 120 colleagues attended these training seminars. The key skills will be launched to all colleagues via a training video on our new training platform Litmus over the coming months.

Customer Service Failures

- We are starting to hold Business Partner meetings with service areas on a monthly basis to discuss customer service challenges, feedback and concerns raised. The first of these was held with Planning and as a result further builds were made to our Contact Centre Agent scripts as well as improvements to the customer information on our website.

Digital Members Journey

- Lisa Bannister-Wood will be conducting a review of Members processes, technology, and training needs. Lisa will be in touch and is looking forward to working with Members. She can be contacted via email L.BannisterWood@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Simplified Member Contact Form

- We are finalising some simplifications to the Member Contact Form used to log enquiries. Full details will be communicated via the Members bulletin. If you need assistance using the form, please get in touch with the Member Contact Team. http://eppingforestdc-self.achieveservice.com/service/Member_Contact

Corporate Communications including Digital News Platforms

- Major projects supported through our website included the Local Plan Main Modifications. This largely online consultation closed in September with all

237 respondents (some submissions included more than one representation) subsequently uploaded to the website and available to the public. Further consultation on the Climate Change Action Plan concludes on 27 November and the Ongar Neighbourhood Plan will be available for comments until 23 December.

- A combination of distribution networks and platforms are utilised to publicise large projects such as the examples listed above and smaller day to day news and information items.
- The website forms the main information repository, for larger projects such as the Local Plan and Climate Change, these items summarise much larger sections of content pages specifically created to provide detail.
- Online consultation surveys are often included, and projects are supplemented with non-digital publicity such as the leaflets and posters created for the Climate Change Action Plan.
- A range of digital and non-digital platforms are used to signpost residents and stakeholders to where they can find information on the website. These platforms include social media: Facebook 4,173 followers, Twitter 9,586 followers, Instagram 2,043 followers, YouTube 207 subscribers, LinkedIn 2,313 followers.
- Many local residents subscribe to council news updates. As of Wednesday 17 November 2021, 891 residents subscribe to receive news releases directly via the council's Mailchimp account.
- Corporate Communications continue to issue Covid public service information and updates in conjunction with health and wellbeing partners.
- The integration of hybrid meetings has extended the range and scale of webcasting. While statutory regulation still requires all voting members to attend meetings of the council and its committees, the integration of hybrid has enabled officers and non-voting members to attend meetings remotely. External agencies such as the Planning Inspectorate have also started to utilise this functionality. Some 90 residents and stakeholders viewed the Roydon Chalet Planning Inquiry remotely.

Website Summary – 1 January to 17 November 2021		
Page views	2,907,884	A page view is a count of how many times a page has been viewed on a website or the chosen group within the chosen period of time. All page views are counted no matter how many times a user has visited the website in the chosen period of time.
Visits	917,788	A visit is defined as a series of page requests from the same uniquely identified visitor with a time of no more than 30 minutes between each page request.)
Weekend Visitors	19.2%	Approximately a fifth of website transactions take place at the weekend when the offices are closed
Webcasting Summary – 1 January to 17 November 2021		
Webcasts	106	The move to virtual and hybrid meetings has seen an expansion in the range of webcast meetings including

		Licensing, Planning Inquiries and Housing Webinars.
Live and Archive views	32,608	Most webcast are transmitted live and are available to view via the website for two years.
Top 3 External Webcasts Views	1,542 1,279 863	Council 8 Feb 21 Council 25 May 21 O&S 7 Jan 21
Employee Briefings	900+	Virtual and Hybrid Employee Briefings webcast and recorded for subsequent viewing also achieve high live and archive viewing figure for staff unable to attend live events or wishing to review at a later date.

- In the same period Corporate Communications issued 220 News Releases also published as News Items to the website.

Digital Inclusion Network

- There is a strong appetite amongst partners and voluntary organisations through our District to adopt a collaborative approach to digital inclusion. With our new Team Manager on board the working group will be meeting early in the New Year to progress this work. The key aim will be to ensure all residents are aware of where and how they can get help with digital skills to support them throughout all aspects of their lives. The working group will meet on a regular basis to share learnings and review progress.
- We are also meeting with Voluntary Action Epping Forest for a progress update on the Smart Homes Initiative and Uttlesford Voluntary Services regarding the digital shared platform to understand how we can better link up with these initiatives.

3 Car Parking

- The Car Parking Team are continuing to monitor current income levels against pre-pandemic income levels and income levels remain on average 75% of pre-pandemic income figures since restrictions have been lifted. Short stay car parks income levels are recovering well whereas long stay commuter car parks income levels remain affected as people are predominantly working from home.
- The annual North Essex Parking Partnership Traffic Regulation Order Application decision report was presented at the JCP meeting on 28 October 2021. The Epping Forest District on-street traffic regulation order schemes were all approved and are listed as follows:

Name of Scheme	Type of Restriction
Ormond Rise, Buckhurst Hill	Resident permit area/s
The Elms, Ongar	Waiting restriction/s
Brooklyn Avenue/Priory Road, Loughton	Waiting restriction/s
Lower Queens Road/Alfred Road/Cascade Road, Buckhurst Hill	Resident permit area/s
New Nazeing & associated roads, Nazeing	Waiting restriction/s
Mayflower Way, Ongar	Waiting restriction/s
Ravensmere, Epping	Resident Permit area
Baldwins Hill, Loughton	Resident permit area/s

The Drive, Loughton	Waiting restriction/s
St Nicholas Place & Borders Lane, Loughton	Waiting restriction/s
Badburgham Court/Ninefields, Waltham Abbey	Waiting restriction/s
The Lindens, Loughton	Waiting restriction/s

More information on Traffic Regulation Orders and the list of TRO schemes can be found on the North Essex Parking Partnership website www1.parkingpartnership.org.

- InstaVolt and EFDC are partnering to install rapid chargers at Oakwood Hill East by end of December/early January 2022. Planning determination date for the project is 13th December and works on site will begin thereafter. Lease negotiations between EFDC and InstaVolt are being finalised.
- The Off-Street Car Parks Tariff Review Recommendation report was presented to Stronger Place Select Committee on 4th November 2021 and the recommendations will be taken to the Cabinet at its meeting on 6th December 2021.

4 ICT

Service Management

- The daily influx of tickets continues, although overall numbers do appear to be reducing slightly. The team continue make sure all work is covered by tickets to provide visibility of workload and ensure resilience of service.
- As in indicator of workload the team typically has about 180 open tickets at any one time. These are managed in line with the SLA for requests and incidents and breaching tickets are discussed in the daily stand up. We are expecting this number to rise as the team is currently under resourced and has one vacancy.
- The team manager is currently recruiting into the vacant first line role, which has historically been hard to fill. Once this is complete, it is expected this will help address the current increase in open tickets.
- The changes in the service desk, to now have 2 second line support roles has improved the fix rate by the service desk and reduced the number of tickets being passed to the other ICT teams.
- Current feedback scores.

	Customer service	Technical Skill	Ticket Handling	Time taken
Very Satisfied	82.61%	91.30%	82.61%	82.61%
Satisfied	18.18%	9.09%	18.18%	18.18%

Projects

- The project governance process is in full flow and an increasing number of projects require ICT input. Where there are bottle necks, such as with Granicus forms, priority lists are agreed with business areas, or , if funding is available, external resource is used to assist.
- There are several large business projects in flight, such as digital planning, housing and efinancials upgrade. These are consuming large amounts of the teams time, and in some cases external resource will be used to provide the additional support required.
- There are a significant number of infrastructure projects in flight. This is to modernise the current environment and get things ready for the move to Azure.
- The continued flexible working model is putting the team under increased pressure to provide support and services to a large number of locations, and individuals. Projects are being explored to help simplify this, such as improving the remote management of software, and the use of auto-pilot services for building laptops.

Strategy

- The ICT strategy paper is complete and covers the work the team need to focus on to deliver against the council's objectives. This is being used now to plan out the projects that need to be done over the next few years. The move to Software as a Service for many business applications, and Microsoft Azure cloud, for those services left, are key to this.

Accommodation Project

- The accommodation project has now formally closed. The ICT team are now supporting the technical elements of the implementation, supported by third parties for elements such as the AV and booking system.

ICT Team

- Christine Ferrigi has returning from maternity leave and will resume her role as Service Manager for Business Support and ICT. Maryvonne Hassall will continue to provide support.
- Changes have been made to the service desk team to modify 2 roles to provide second line support (rather than just first line). This is expected to reduce the number of tickets needing to be passed on to third line teams. It is also expected to assist the mobile team by providing alternative resources. The new team members will take a while to get fully up to speed as they learn the EFDC systems and processes.

- The 'shift left' principle is being used across the whole team to try to get the work to the right person in the team and resolve issues at the earliest (and cheapest) occasion.
- A vacancy has opened up in the business application team, and this is being filled temporarily with contract resource while the team manager decides what best skills the team now need to be filled.
- A vacancy is also open currently in the infrastructure team, and this too will be filled in the short term with temporary resource while the changing skill sets of the team are clarified.

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Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 16 December 2021
Subject: Environmental and Technical Services Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Councillor N Avey

Recommending:

That the report of the Environmental and Technical Services Portfolio Holder be noted.

COVID-19 – Response of Contracts and Technical Services: All services continue to perform well during the Covid-19 period. Office based staff are continuing to work remotely by using Microsoft TEAMS or ZOOM. Those who need to come to office for operational reasons are taking precautions to avoid the risk of infection.

Waste Management:

- Seasonal Leafing Programme

The seasonal leafing programme has now started and will continue for the next 6 weeks. If members find excessive leaves on the ground, please let us know at wastemanagement@eppingforestdc.gov.uk.

- WEEE (Waste of Electrical and Electronic Equipment)

The WEEE (Waste of Electrical and Electronic Equipment) wheeled bin for flats has been extended and we are monitoring the effect and the tonnage.

- Resource Issues

The Waste Contract continues to face resourcing issues and challenges due to both a shortage in drivers and road sweepers/loaders. Recruitment is very difficult, and drivers are leaving Biffa each week. The situation is not helped by other companies/industries offering higher rates of pay. Officers continue to liaise closely with Biffa and work to resolve the issues and ensure there is no detrimental impact upon service delivery.

- Environment Bill

Parliament passed the Environment Bill on 10th November 2021, meaning the legislation is now UK law.

Defra explained that the Environment Act will help the “transition to a more circular economy, incentivising people to recycle more, encouraging businesses to create sustainable packaging, making household recycling easier and stopping the export of polluting plastic waste to developing countries”.

These changes will be driven by new legally binding environmental targets, and enforced by a new, independent Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) which will hold government and public bodies to account on their environmental obligations.

The Environment Act will give ministers the power to introduce a range of waste reforms such as extended producer responsibility, consistent collections and a deposit return scheme.

Defra is currently working on consultation responses, which are due out early next year. EFDC Officers will continue to keep up to date with any new proposals and legislation and keep members informed.

Leisure Management:

Leisure centre usage trends are progressing well in a more promising and positive outlook. EFDC management fees are reviewed on a monthly basis and are currently calculated by an open book examination of Places Leisure operating transactions and financial records. Revenue from the leisure centres is steadily increasing due to leisure centre usage trends, however, September and October expenditure figures have increased because of energy price increases and is being monitored closely.

Planning Permission has been granted for the Bakers Lane redevelopment project. Bakers Lane works will commence once Cottis Lane construction works is completed.

Environmental Protection and Land Drainage:

Following heavy rainfall events in July and August the team have provided input to assist the Essex County Council Flood Team in completing their Section 19 Flood investigations to determine the mechanisms of flooding. The reports are currently in draft format for areas such as Roydon.

Private water supply sampling is a Statutory Duty EFDC undertake. Charging for this service has now begun to bring the council in line with most other authorities. The charging regime is being phased in over the next year with reduced analysis costs and free risk assessments for year one.

The two larger contracts that the team manage have been re-tendered and awarded. These include the Annual Watercourse Maintenance Contract for ditch works, flood response and maintenance of the Council Flood Storage Areas. The second contract is the management of the Council house legacy Sewage Treatment Plants on behalf of Housing as the plants are still owned and serve former and current Council houses.

Highway Rangers:

The rangers continue to work on reported issues from both Essex County Council and those reported by Members and residents. Recent jobs completed include historic gates replaced in Sun Street Waltham Abbey and the renovation and full replacement of seven benches. The team have been working with the ASB Team and have been removing graffiti on council property, pavements as well as fly posting and banners on highway railings that are installed without permission.

Quite a number of reports that are made to the team are rejected as they are works that the rangers cannot work on such as defective streetlights, potholes or private hedges which remain the responsibility of Essex Highways. <https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/environment/highway-rangers-service/>

Grounds Maintenance:

This season's mowing operations are now coming to an end, although the mild autumn has meant the grass cutting teams have continued to work well into November this year. The mowing machinery will now receive its essential winter maintenance to ensure it is ready for the coming spring when the cutting cycle commences once again.

The grounds teams will be moving on to their extensive winter-works programme, which includes bed maintenance, hedge trimming and shrub & rose pruning. The nursery team have completed the replanting of the many seasonal bedding displays located across the district. The winter flowering pansies and spring flowering bulbs will provide a welcome splash of colour to our towns and villages over the coming months.

The grounds staff were pleased to attend a meeting with Loughton Town Council and receive recognition for its contribution in helping them achieve the Certificate of Merit Class 1 award

presented by the Essex Playing Fields Association for maintaining the Roding Valley Recreation Ground “to the highest standards”.

Assistance has been provided to the Countrycare and Land Drainage services with the autumn cutting of the Councils various floodplains. These valuable nature reserves include Thornhill, Thornwood, Bobbingworth and Church Lane in North Weald. Much of the grass at these sites is cut and collected to provide extensive flood water storage should the need arise, whilst some areas of vegetation are deliberately left for wildlife habitat and to encourage greater biodiversity

Fleet Operations:

Fleet ops have been very busy in November, the numbers of public MOTS being booked has increased to 90% of capacity. increasing the workshop capacity, that is bringing in vital income to EFDC as well as income from servicing and repairs for internal and external customers.

Recruitment under way to replace our 3rd year vehicle apprentice, Leona has now left EFDC and has found full time employment at a local Loughton based garage business.

A new vehicle ramp and tyre equipment are currently being installed in the vehicle workshops, this will support the growth of vehicle servicing for external companies and assist in reducing expenditure with external tie companies.

12 New electric vehicles have now been delivered and will enter service within the next two weeks.

A new safer greener driving training programme has now been rolled out and 12 EFDC staff have now completed the training.

Countryside and Landscape

20 people came to a Mad About Moths event at Bobbingworth Nature Reserve on the evening of 24th September 2021. The evening was a great success and included a well-received Bat Walk around the reserve.

An article written by Countrycare highlighting the importance of smaller wetland sites to winter migrating waders, using Thornwood Common LNR as an example, was published in the annual Wetland Bird Survey newsletter, WeBS News and received really good feedback.

We have recruited some new volunteers who are settling in well to our Thursday group. Countrycare has put on volunteer days at all but one site in 2021, which is a testament to the team’s drive and determination to manage these sites.

As a result of a successful funding application Countrycare have received approximately £47,000 from the Nature ECC COVID Safe Tourism and Public Spaces Fund. This funding is being used to create an 833m path around Bobbingworth Nature Reserve to complete a circular path of the site. At Roughtalley’s Wood Local Nature Reserve the funding is being used to replace a boundary fence that has been badly damaged by antisocial behaviour.

Linder’s Field Local Nature Reserve is currently having enhancement works funded by Qualis to accommodate a population of Slow-Worms which are being translocated from a Qualis site in Loughton. The works include hibernacula, which is needed to increase the carrying capacity of the reserve following a previous translocation of Slow-worms and Grass Snakes.

Countrycare delivered a talk at the Epping Forest Youth Council Climate Change Conference in the Civic Offices on 12th November 2021, which explained the impact of climate change on wildlife and the important role certain habitats have in tackling climate change such as carbon sinks and wildlife refuges.

Tree Team

The team continue to respond to enquiries throughout the district, from Members, Councillors, Essex County council, Housing and members of the public.

The team has now implemented a new tree management system, which is still in the testing phase, and being used to undertake Housing tree surveys, with regards to zoning trees in influencing distances to buildings, and for health and safety in areas of high occupation.

With this in mind, the Tree team will now endeavour to inspect all of Epping Forest district council's tree stock, in Housing, Parks and Openspaces, and where possible, will manage the trees more proactively, in an attempt to reduce insurance claims and unexpected tree failures, and reactive callouts.

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 30 November 2021

Subject: Finance, Qualis Client & Economic Development Portfolio Holder

Portfolio Holder: Councillor J Philip

Recommending:

That the report of the Finance, Qualis Client and Economic Development Portfolio Holder be noted.

Covid Economic Development Programme & Business Support Grants:

Welcome Back Fund:

The Economic Development team are striving to utilise EU Funding by the end of March 2022. The Welcome Back Fund supports temporary programs to encourage the recovery of town centres following relaxation on Covid lockdown restrictions. Projects currently being pursued include:

- In November, the team purchased a footfall monitoring toolkit by 'Huq' which will enable the council to better understand the performance of our high streets past and present.
- For Christmas, a radio advertisement and hanging banners will be launched across the district encouraging local residents and visitors to buy local and spend in 'Epping Forest'.
- Work is being conducted around distributing planters in Waltham Abbey and Buckhurst Hill to improve the appearance of town centres.
- The team are looking into purchasing a parklet for Waltham Abbey which will help improve the attractiveness of the high street. More information on parklets can be found here: <https://www.meristemdesign.co.uk/parklets>

Economic Resilience Fund:

With top-up funding accessed through the Additional Restrictions Grant scheme, the economic development team are also supporting other programmes to help develop the local economy.

- In partnership with 'Loyal Free,' the council on the 8th October launched a free app which showcases vital area information for locals and visitors including exclusive deals and loyalty schemes, fun local events and interesting trails. Currently, there are over 50 businesses using the app with around 200 residents taking advantage of offers.
- Click it Local an e-commerce app supported by the council has 30 local businesses signed up to this delivery support scheme. More information on Click It local and the businesses signed up can be found here: <https://www.clickitlocal.co.uk/epping-forest/>

- The council will be commissioning resident/shopper and business surveys to build a greater understanding of current views on Epping Forest as a shopping destination and issues facing local businesses.
- The council will be supporting subsidised membership of the FSB (Federation of Small Businesses) for local businesses in the district enabling them to access the full range of support packages from the Federation.
- Discussions are underway with the Epping Forest Brass band on a programme of events pre-Christmas to support footfall on the highstreets.
- In partnership with 'Best Growth Hub,' the economic development team will be sponsoring a series of events across the district to provide support to local businesses.
- This fund is also being used to help support additional Christmas lights in town centres that have requested it.

Business E-Newsletter/Database:

The Economic Development Team have released the November edition of the 'Business Matters' e-newsletter with topics focusing on, the newly created radio advertising campaign for the District's high streets across the Christmas period, an update from the 'Loyal Free' app and Click It Local, the upcoming ECC Highstreet Business Summit, EFDC's climate change consultation and the EFDC sponsored Business Breakfast event at New City College's Epping campus.

Several new contacts have been added to the business contact database to enhance the overall viewership of the e-newsletter.

Attracting Inward Investment:

The council has commissioned a new website "Invest Epping Forest", to encourage inward investment to the District. The new website features information on the District offer, location, connections, and other important information for investors. The site will be launched shortly.

General Economic Briefing:

Council Officers continue to review available economic indicators assessing the health of the local economy now Covid restrictions have been relaxed. These focus on key areas such as unemployment, furlough and SEISS (Self-employment income support scheme). The unemployment count has been steadily falling. It has fallen from 3,680 in July 2021 to 3,565 in August 2021 and 3,380 in September 2021. The highest unemployment count since the pandemic began last year was in August 2020. Unemployment that month reached 4,985.

The latest figures on furlough are provisional but state that 3,700 local people or (6% of the total working population) in Epping Forest are furloughed. These statistics are up to the end of September 2021. This is down on figures up to the end of August, wherein 4300 local people or (7% of the total working population) in Epping Forest were furloughed. For the fifth SEISS grant as of November 2021, 44% of eligible individuals (9500) claimed the support. So, 4,200 claims were made.

Visitor Economy:

The performance and value report for tourism in the Epping Forest District for 2020 has been released and shows the impact of the pandemic on the district's visitor and hospitality economy. The headline figures are a decrease in overall value from £242,151,200 in 2019 to £112,652,720, a fall of 53%. The number of day visitors fell by 45% and the number of jobs related to tourism in our district by 31%. The figures are in line with, although slightly better

than, those for Essex. They also compare favourably with the position for Britain as a whole, which saw a financial drop of 63% and visitor number drop of 73%.

The loss of the important inbound market was somewhat softened by the increase in staycations although demand outstripped supply in the traditional holiday destinations. This presented opportunities for areas not traditionally considered holiday destinations to attract tourists and benefit economically. Travellers looking for new experiences and less populous rural retreats explored areas in East Anglia, including our district, and Norfolk appeared in the UK destination top ten for the first time. As the pandemic shows itself to be likely to impact foreign travel for much longer than many anticipated, staycations appear to be growing and already UK holiday destinations for 2020 are filling up offering increasing economic opportunity for the fledgling destinations of the future. The tourism website continues to be the go-to place for local event information not generally available elsewhere online. The site has had an unprecedented week with 9,000 page views recently where people were looking for bonfire events. The same impact is currently being felt for Christmas Markets in our towns and villages and other local festive events.

Essex + Herts Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ):

The primary focus for the DIZ for the last month has been the development of a bid submission to the DCMS Digital Connectivity Infrastructure Accelerator (DCIA) programme. This was submitted in mid-November with an outcome expected by the end of the year, including the award of a grant of £500k. If successful, the bid will lead to a project that will develop a digital mapping platform for public sector assets in order to simplify the process for use of these assets by telecoms operators to host communications and network equipment. As well as promoting the effective use of public sector assets it should also help to accelerate the enhancement of mobile connectivity networks across the DIZ area for local residents and businesses. The bid was supported by all seven DIZ local authority partners and required a consortium to be formed with a telecoms provider, digital platform and data quality partners. Health, Highways and Higher Education partners also expressed support for, and interest in involvement in, any pilot project that emerges.

The monthly DIZ Advisory Board meetings have continued online in recent months with presentations from Anglia Ruskin University, CGI and the project team for the DIZ Local Full Fibre network project. The November meeting also saw the presentation of a Certificate of Excellence to the DIZ from iESE (Improvement and Efficiency Social Enterprise) by Dr Andrew Larner iESE Chief Executive. The certificate was awarded in response to the DIZ submission to the Public Sector Transformation Awards 2021 and recognised "...the exemplary standard of the work demonstrated by your submission in the difficult climate of the past year".

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Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 16 December 2021
Subject: Finance and Economic Development Portfolio Holder
Portfolio Holder: Councillor J Philip

Recommending:

That the report of the Finance, Qualis Client and Economic Development Portfolio Holder be noted.

Finance

The work of the Finance team is heavily focused at this time on the development of the budget for 2022/23 and the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

The Cabinet agreed their draft budget and MTFP proposals for 2022/23 on 6th December 2021. The paper can be found on the Committee System. The next step in the process is for the Stronger Council Select Committee to consider the Cabinet's draft proposals at their meeting on 18th January. As I have previously said, this is, and continues to be, a very challenging year.

Financial pressures, caused largely by COVID-19, have created both cost pressures and reduced income streams. Added to this, higher inflationary factors resulting from supply issues also create strain on service budgets. Then there is the challenge of achieving historic income targets in services still affected by Covid. Combined, these factors amount to a real and significant gap between the Council's predicted income and expenditure.

The budget is very much draft at this stage as there are still a number of important factors which aren't known, (e.g. the Government Grant settlement), or which may develop over the coming few months (e.g. inflationary pressures) and so the final budget presented to Cabinet is likely to be revised in order to take account of the latest information, together with reflecting the views of Scrutiny.

Closing this gap is the largest financial issue facing the council at this moment. All potential options that protect key council services are being explored but as I have previously reported, the challenge is both structural and large and is therefore likely to result in some difficult choices for Cabinet and Council.

The revision downwards of General Fund Balances, as a result of the Audit for 2019/20, together with other potential calls on reserves further reduce the options available to the Council.

As I reported to the last meeting of Council, the Audit of the Council's financial accounts for 2020/21 was not completed by the 30th September 2021 deadline. We continue to work with Council External Auditors (Deloitte), but it is becoming clear that they have resource issues which will mean an extended delay in their conclusion of the Audit. Our officers continue to press upon them our desire to conclude the Audit at the earliest possible opportunity so that this work doesn't impact on closing and budget setting.

Qualis

The financial performance of Qualis is being regularly reported to the Council. Qualis has just completed its second full trading year and the Council awaits its full trading results. It is not expected that these will deviate far from the position reported in Quarter 3 and a report will be presented to Cabinet in January.

Report to the Council

Committee: Council

Date: 16 December 2021

Subject: Finance, Qualis Client and Economic Development (Asset Management)

Portfolio Holder: Councillor J Philip

Recommending:

That the report of the Asset Management services Portfolio Holder be noted.

Epping Forest Shopping Park: A week ago the Council was advised of a serious breach of Health & Safety protocol concerning the roofing subcontractors, who were found to be working at height without wearing the required safety harnesses. The site was immediately shut down and that team was dismissed. The site shall remain closed until a new subcontractor is appointed by the main contractor, McLoughlin & Harvey, and subject to the Council approving its Health & Safety protocol and method statement for completion of the works.

Phase 1 is underway and is scheduled for completion by the end of November (now subject to delay as above), so as not to clash with the traders' run-in to Christmas; Phase 2 will be completed in early Spring 2022 once weather conditions allow external work to be safely completed.

Brooker Road Industrial Estate Waltham Abbey

I am pleased to report that 100 Brooker Road, a cleared site of approx. 1.15 acres, has been let to Sainsbury's Supermarkets for vehicle parking. The Tenant has taken a new 9 year FRI Lease at a commencing rental of £145,000pa, subject to annual uplifts geared to RPI. There is a Tenant only break option in the Lease, operable at the expiry of the 5th year of the term.

168c Brooker Road has completed at a rent of £35k per annum rising to £45k over the next 4 years. Combined with the letting in place on the first floor this asset will initially earn £75k rising to £85k over the same period.

Tertiary Retail Units

17 Market Square is now under offer at asking price £14k per annum for use as a nail bar. Other uses were considered however these either conflicted with existing uses on the parade or prospective tenants were not able to offer the same security for the Council.

15 Market Square - Recently completed for use as a convenience store at a rent of £15,000 pa. This is a £3000 uplift from the former tenant pa.

220 High Road, Loughton – Have recently agreed terms with a franchisee of a bubble-tea operator, with over 40 stores. 10-year lease at £31,000 p.a. (previous rent was £27,250 p.a.)
46 Pyrles Lane – Previously agreed terms with South Indian food take-away but Tenant has not performed in respect of obtaining planning permission for extract system, so re-marketed and now proceeding with Café/Bistro Juice bar. Terms agreed for new 5-year lease (no breaks) at £13,250.00 p.a. (Previous rent £9,108 p.a.).

The Broadway, Debden, Loughton

I am pleased to report that all 68 units on The Broadway are now fully let.

70 The Broadway (vets) has submitted a break notice to end their lease on 24 December 2021. Marketing property already and have 6 viewings. Awaiting offers.

Civic Offices 2nd floor

I am pleased to report that the lease completed on Friday 3rd December.

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 16 December 2021
Subject: Housing Services Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Councillor H Whitbread

Recommending:

That the report of the Housing and Property Services Portfolio Holder be noted.

Executive Summary

The following report provides an update on progress in the following areas:

Housing Strategy

The Public Consultation opened on Monday 15th November 2021 for two of the Big 4 Housing Reviews

- The draft Allocations Scheme 2022-2027; and
- The draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022 – 2027

The week began with publishing both draft documents on the Housing Consultation page of the EFDC website.

This was followed by two very well attended and extremely successful professional stakeholder workshops on Wednesday 17th November 2021 to consider the in principal proposals.

The morning session focussed on The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and all who attended - including representatives from statutory services, housing related organisations, community and voluntary groups - were keen to be actively involved with the strategy and the associated delivery plan.

The afternoon session concentrated on the Allocations Scheme. Staff and partners were able to draw on their professional knowledge and experience to debate the benefits and mitigate risks associated with each of the recommended changes.

The discussions were captured and will be evaluated along with the outcome of the other planned events with Members of the Council, Town and Parish Councillors, resident groups and the online consultation which closes on 17 December 2021.

Dates for your Diary

Audience	Strategy/Scheme/Policy	Date	Time	Location
Members	Allocations Scheme (draft)	29 November 2021	7pm-8:30pm	Zoom
Town and Parish Cllrs	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (draft) & Allocations Scheme (draft)	2 December 2021	7pm-8:30pm	Zoom
Members	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy (draft)	14 December 2021	7pm-8:30pm	Zoom
Portfolio Holder	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy & Allocations Scheme (outcome of consultation)	11 January 2022	3pm – 4:30pm	Microsoft Teams
Members	Overarching Housing Strategy	19 January 2022	7pm – 8:30pm	TBC
Portfolio Holder	Overarching Housing Strategy (outcome of consultation)	8 February 2022	TBC	Microsoft Teams
Members	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy & Allocations Policy (pre-scrutiny)	10 February 2022	7pm-8:30pm	TBC
Members	Overarching Housing Strategy (pre scrutiny)	22 February 2022	7pm-8:30pm	TBC

Homelessness

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)

With the cold weather creeping in, we are carefully triggering our Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) in order to ensure that those rough sleeping, or at risk of, aren't doing so in dangerously low temperatures. Due to ongoing Covid-19 restrictions, there won't be many night shelters operating this year and therefore, our winter provision will be either within our own Council stock (most likely the pods at Norway House) or in the event that our own stock is full or is inappropriate for some reason, bed & breakfast, albeit we are not anticipating high numbers given the sustained work we have been doing over the last 18 months preventing and relieving rough sleeping across the District. We continue to work in collaboration with CHSS to verify and engage any new identified rough sleeping.

Additional Homelessness Prevention Grant

The Government recently announced an additional £65m Homelessness Prevention Grant (HPG) to local authorities and EFDC's allocation from this is £117,000, which can be used to fund interventions to prevent evictions and homelessness due to loss of a tenancy.

We are currently mapping out exactly how we intend to ensure this funding is made available readily to those that need it and the priority will be to upstream our prevention activity by identifying tenants with arrears at the earliest opportunity, negotiations with landlords and tenants and promoting contact with our service as early as possible.

Norway House (Temporary Accommodation)

Our Christmas plans are well underway at Norway House! The residents have the following festive events to look forward to:

2nd December, 4:30pm – Santa will be visiting our Christmas Grotto at Norway House, to meet all the children and hand out some treats. There will also be refreshments and Christmas music in the Dining Room until approx. 6pm. This event has been funded by Kelsey Taverner's fantastic fundraising efforts, via her Just Giving page.

7th December – All children will receive a brand-new Christmas jumper, in time for Christmas Jumper day. This has been kindly funded by St Mary's Church.

12th December – All families have been given tickets to the Robin Hood panto at the Harlow Playhouse, courtesy of Epping Upper Clacton Rugby Club. We will also be providing sweets to take along to the panto, which have been funded by the Befrienders Club at Voluntary Action Epping Forest.

14th December, 4pm – We will be visited again by Santa, this time driving through the grounds of Norway House on his sleigh. This event has been planned by Epping Rotary Club. We will also be providing food and hot chocolate for all attendees.

16th December – All residents will be receiving a Christmas food hamper, which has been kindly donated by Epping Forest Food Bank. Our Housing Apprentices will be handing these hampers out.

21st December – All children at Norway House will receive a Christmas present to the value of £25, funded by Epping Upper Clacton Rugby Club. Our Apprentices have already wrapped these presents and will be handing these out for us and spreading some Christmas cheer!

Our Senior Officer Sarah Smith has been working tirelessly to make this all happen for our residents.

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Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 1 6 December 2021
Subject: Planning and Sustainability Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Nigel Bedford

Recommending:

That the report of the Planning and Sustainability Portfolio Holder be noted.

1. Local Plan progress update

Following the hearing sessions for the Independent Examination of the Local Plan, the Inspector released her Advice on 2 August 2019. Within her advice the Inspector set out a number of actions which needed to be addressed in the form of Main Modifications (MMs) to the Local Plan.

The MMs consultation commenced on 15th July 2021 and closed at 5pm on 23rd September 2021.

A total of 900 representations were received on the Main Modifications and the supporting documents. The Inspectors have received copies of all the representations submitted in response to the consultation on the proposed Main Modifications to the Local Plan together with summary reports which help navigate through the documentation and collate representations by Main Modification. The representations and the summary reports are available on the EFDC website.

Once the Inspectors have considered the representations, they will be able to give an update on the next steps in the examination.

The Inspectors will determine whether the Local Plan is 'sound' and produce a written report outlining their final recommendations. Following receipt of the Inspectors' report and providing it is determined the Plan is 'sound', it will be considered by the Council and can be adopted if it makes the Main Modifications recommended.

North Weald Airfield draft Strategic Masterplan Framework was endorsed by Cabinet on 8th November for public consultation. The consultants Soundings will run and manage the public consultation on behalf of the Council. This will be held between Wednesday 8th December 2021 and Sundays 30th January 2022. There are three drop in sessions planned (both virtual and in person) on 11th, 15th and 19th January with consultation material available online from 8th December. The Council is also meeting and engaging with North Weald Parish Council. Statutory consultees such as ECC Highways will also be consulted on the details of the masterplan framework. Following the close of the consultation, the Masterplan will be reviewed and subject to any amendments, referred back to Cabinet for its endorsement.

2 Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood Planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and deliver the sustainable development they need. Local Planning Authorities are required to facilitate Neighbourhood Planning and constructively engage with communities throughout the process.

Ongar Parish Council has submitted the Ongar Neighbourhood Plan to Epping Forest District Council. The Planning Policy Team has checked that the submitted Neighbourhood Plan has followed the proper legal process and that the legal requirements for consultation and publicity have been followed. The Council commenced a 6 week consultation (known as a Regulation 16 consultation) on the Ongar Neighbourhood Plan between Thursday 11 November 2021 and 4pm on Thursday 23 December 2021. Following the consultation period, the Neighbourhood Plan will be submitted for examination.

The Planning Policy Team are also working with the Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE) to deliver support to Town and Parish Councils in producing Neighbourhood plan and also Design Statements. RCCE takes on the role of enabler and facilitator, ensuring that local residents genuinely lead the decision making process.

3 Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT)

A Stage 1 Governance report setting out new arrangements for the governance of the Garden Town is being prepared following ongoing discussions with the Task and Finish group of Lead Members and Officers, with a view to go to HGGT partner authorities' Cabinets and Executives in January/ February 2022.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the Rolling Infrastructure Fund (RIF) is recommended to be agreed by Cabinet in December, alongside agreement to set up and operate the RIF 'in principle' subject to further detailed work on appropriate governance and operational arrangements. It has been agreed to govern the RIF initially in accordance with the approved MoU, as required by Homes England as a condition of the £171m Housing Infrastructure Grant funding.

The HGGT Transport Strategy was approved by the Garden Town Board in October and is now going through the process of endorsement by the HGGT partner authorities in order for it to have material planning weight. The report on the Transport Strategy will be going to EFDC Cabinet in January 2022, having been reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2021, with a recommendation for endorsement.

A Capacity Fund Bid is being prepared by the HGGT team, with the expectation that Homes England will announce the Capacity Fund Bid Round for 2021-22 by December.

4 Development Management

Planning Applications

The Special Area of Conservation (SAC) backlog consisted of about 260 planning applications where decisions had not been issued, which were split into three separate tranches to reflect the agreed sequence for release in the approved protocol of the Interim Air Pollution Mitigation Strategy (APMS). The agreed sequence was firstly, cases that had been previously reported to Planning Committees, secondly the Local Plan allocated/designated sites and thirdly, all remaining applications in date order of their validation.

To date, 110 planning permissions have been successfully released equating to 157 dwellings (which includes dwellings for nursery workers). 14 applications have been withdrawn and 5 have been refused planning permission. Where delays in releasing decisions have and/or continue to occur is largely attributed to the following factors:

1. Officer review of cases (now complete);
2. Having to regularly explain the process to applicant's agents, despite clear and consistent messaging from the Project Officer and updating on releasing decisions on the Council website;
3. Incorrectly completed S106 Agreements or requested information being returned by Applicants/Agents;
4. Some of the third tranche cases require planning committee's determination before progressing S106s and decisions (50 in total). Additional planning committee meetings will be required to those timetabled and it is planned that this process will be completed in April 2022.

The Authority is now working with an external legal service provider to ensure sufficient resources are available to secure the expedited signing and completion of legal obligations.

Planning Enforcement

The Planning Enforcement Team continues to secure successful prosecutions in instances where transgressors do not comply with the requirements of Enforcement Notices.

Most recent successes are:

- A transgressor was convicted and fined £30,800 (and £6,477 awarded in costs) for failure to remove a hard standing at a property in Ripley View, Loughton. The transgressor was previously fined £22,000 (reduced on appeal). The offending development has now been removed.
- The Enforcement Team has recently secured guilty pleas for failure to cease unauthorised changes of use in breach of Planning Enforcement Notices at Sarnia and Providence Nurseries in Avey Lane, Waltham Abbey. Sentencing and Proceeds of Crime confiscation proceedings will take place in January 2022 and members will be updated on the matter at the appropriate time.
- Enforcement action was taken against an unauthorised traveller encampment and associated operational development at the Old Foresters site in Theydon Bois during October 2021. Preparations have also been made to obtain a court injunction due to continued failure by the land owner to remedy the breach in planning controls. Whilst the Planning Enforcement has been appealed, information obtained on 24 November 2021 indicated the site had been vacated. The Enforcement Team will be working with relevant services and agencies to address the operational development in the Green Belt and to secure clearance of the site of any detritus and rubbish.

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Report to the Council

Committee: Local Government Council Size and Boundary Ward Review
Portfolio Holder Advisory Group

Date: 16 December 2021

Subject: LGBCE Review

Portfolio Holder: Leader

Recommending:

1. That the report of the Leader be noted; and
2. That the Council resolves whether to continue with elections by “thirds” or whether to commence public consultation on moving to a 4 yearly “all out” election cycle.

1. **Background and Introduction**

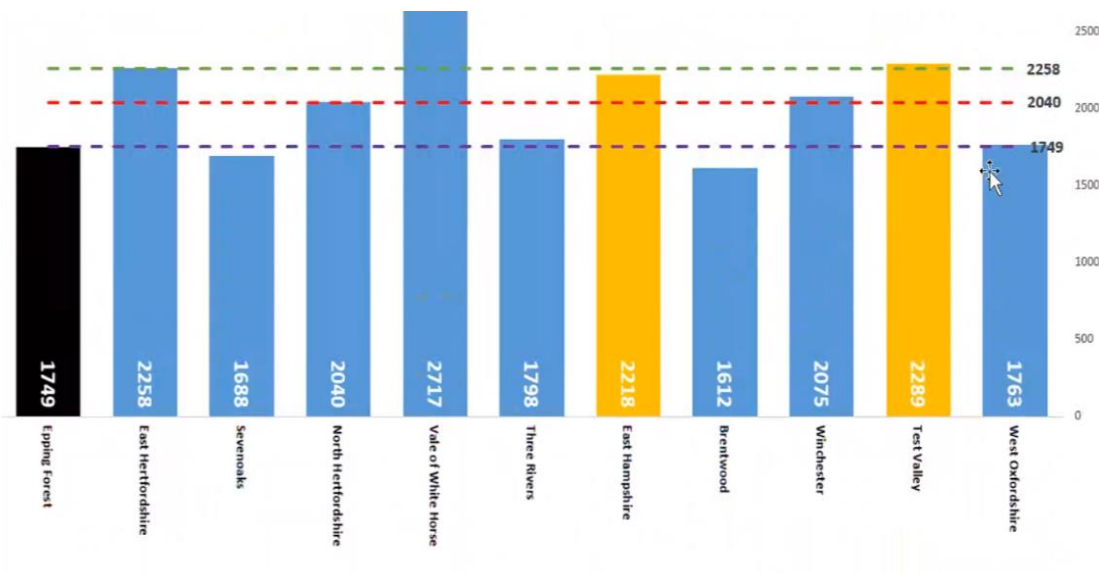
The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) carries out electoral reviews of all local authorities. The usual review cycle is 12 to 16 years, or the equivalent of 3 to 4 electoral cycles. Epping Forest District Council was last reviewed in 1998 and is therefore overdue. The LGBCE approached the Council in July and its review of Epping Forest has now commenced together with 5 other Essex Districts.

The LGBCE review will propose new electoral arrangements for the Council and will recommend

- the total number of councillors that should be elected to the authority in the future (Council size), and
- the boundaries, ward names and number of councillors to represent each ward (warding pattern).
-

The LGBCE will first look at and complete its review of Council size before it then looks separately at the Councils warding pattern.

The LGBCE has indicated that the current number of councillors at 58 is high when looking at the number of electors per Councillor. A number in the region of about 39 to 50 would better match the CIPFA nearest neighbour comparator Councils for Epping Forest.



2. Portfolio Holder Advisory Group (PHAG)

A PHAG was established to carry out initial investigations and preparatory work to enable the Council's response to the LGBCE review and to make recommendations where required to the Council. The **Terms of Reference** of the PHAG are:

- (a) To establish and be responsible for the timeline and progression of the Electoral Review for Epping Forest within the prescribed timeframe set out by the LGBCE.
- (b) To consider and make recommendations to the Council on the first stage which includes:
 - (i) The future election cycle following the all-out elections in 2024.
 - (ii) The proposed number of councillors from 2024; and
 - (iii) The submission of the Council Size and future governance arrangements to the LGBCE.
- (c) To ensure that information regarding the Electoral Review is communicated to members and they are aware of the consequences.
- (d) Any other relevant issue arising councillors to be elected to the Council from the Advisory Group's work.
- (e) That the Group can amend their Term of Reference, if required.

The PHAG has had meetings on 4 November and 24 November. Minutes of these meetings are available on the intranet.

The PHAG has noted that the Councils initial task is prepare and submit to the LGBCE a paper on **Council Size**, that is the number councillors to be elected to the Council in the future. This is **to be submitted to the LGBCE by 8 March 2022**

The LGBCE will make its judgement on Council size by considering three broad areas

- They will look at the governance arrangements of the Council and how it takes decisions across the broad range of its responsibilities.
- The commission will look at the Council scrutiny functions relating to its own decision-making and the Council's responsibilities to outside bodies.

- The commission will also consider the representational role of councillors in the local community and how they engage with people, conduct casework, and represent the Council on local partner organisations.

The LGBCE aims to ensure that the Council has the right number of councillors to take decisions and manage the business of the Council in an effective way now and in the future.

3. Electoral Cycle

The Council's present electoral system is electing 'by thirds' - where elections are held for a third of all Council seats each year for three successive years out of four.

Following the completion of the LGBCE review the Council will have an all out Election for its councillors in May 2024. It is therefore appropriate for the Council to consider whether following the May 2024 election it wishes to continue with all out elections every 4 years thereafter or whether to revert in subsequent years to an electoral cycle of thirds. If the Council takes no action, then elections at Epping Forest District Council will remain 'by thirds'.

This decision has major implications for the shape and size of all Epping Forest District electoral wards to be implemented following the review as, so it is brought to members attention in this report.

There are many factors that will need to be considered in deciding whether the Council should elect in thirds or have all out elections every four years. Not least of these is that the **LGBCE has said that for an authority electing in thirds the LGBCE will be looking for a uniform pattern of 3 member wards across the district.**

The below extract in italics is taken from the LGBCE guidance on warding arrangements (I have emphasised parts in bold): -

*"The Commission has to abide by certain rules when deciding how many councillors should represent a ward and, in particular, we have a responsibility to ensure that patterns of wards reflect the electoral cycle of the local authority. **The law states that where a Council hold elections in three years out of every four where a third of councillors are elected at each election ('by thirds'), we should seek to deliver a pattern of three-member wards across a district. This means that every voter will have an equal opportunity to influence the make up of the Council at each election.** Similarly, if a district Council elects half its councillors every other year ('by halves'), we should seek to deliver a pattern of two-member wards across the district.*

If you live in a district which elects by thirds, you should bear in mind that the Commission will seek to propose three-member wards in your area. We will only move away from such a pattern where a three-member ward would significantly undermine our other obligations under the law, namely: to deliver electoral equality, reflect community interests and identities and promote effective and convenient local government. The rules we must follow are

summarised in **Figure Two** below.

Where a Council holds whole-council elections every four years (this includes all county Councils and London boroughs), the Commission can propose any pattern of wards or divisions that it believes best meets its statutory criteria. This is usually a mixture of single-, two- and three-member wards or divisions."

Figure Two: councillors per ward depending on electoral cycle

Electoral cycle of Council	Pattern of wards sought by Commission	Types of authority affected
<i>By thirds</i>	<i>Three-member</i>	<i>Some district and metropolitan borough Councils</i>
<i>By halves</i>	<i>Two-member</i>	<i>Some district Councils</i>
<i>Whole-Council elections</i>	<i>Any pattern of single-, two- and three-member wards or divisions</i>	<i>All county Councils, London borough and some district Councils</i>

The Council currently holds elections in thirds and whilst a LGBCE review will trigger an all-out election once it is implemented in 2024, the base expectation is that it will return to elections in thirds thereafter.

The Council has the right to change its electoral arrangements if it wishes, but this is not part of the review by the LGBCE.

4. Implications of Electing by Thirds versus All Out Elections

If the Council elects in thirds, then the LGBCE will be looking to agree a number of councillors which is divisible by 3. The law requires that where a Council has elections in 3 years out of every 4 the LGBCE should seek to deliver a pattern of three member wards across a District. This means that every voter will have an equal opportunity to influence the makeup of the Council at each election. This can only be achieved if the total number of councillors is divisible by 3.

If the Council continues to elect in thirds, then the warding pattern across the whole District is likely to be 3 member wards of broadly equal electorate size. Currently the Council has a mix of 1, 2 and 3 member wards. This would represent a significant change from current arrangements and will alter the size and make-up of ward boundaries.

The District's current warding mix of 1, 2 and 3 member wards allow for flexibility between the more dense urban wards and the sparse rural areas of the district. Under the 3-member ward structure rural communities would be aggregated together until an average electorate size was achieved. In the most sparsely populated locations this

is likely to result in a very wide geographical area being added together to achieve the average number.

The table below provides an indication of elector to councillor ratios and the potential size of 3 member wards, using current elector numbers.

Number of Councillors	Electors per Councillor	Ward Size (3 Member Wards)
58	1,779	5,336
57	1,810	5,429
54	1,910	5,731
51	2,023	6,068
48	2,149	6,447
45	2,292	6,877
42	2,456	7,368

Some wards may be so large that they conflict with the LGBCE's other obligation of reflecting 'community interests and identities' and there is limited scope for the Commission to move away from 3 member wards in these instances. When pressed on this point in relation to the Epping Forest District Council review, they indicated that having anything other than 3 member wards was only likely to be the case in exceptional circumstances. If members are minded to retain elections by thirds there is no guarantee that the LGBCE will see the large, newly created, rural wards as exceptional.

Only if the Council chooses to switch to all out elections every 4 years can the Council retain a mixed warding pattern. The Council will need to carefully consider this as part of the review process and its decision will alter both the total number of councillors and the ward boundaries.

5. The Number of Elected Members and its Impact on Electoral Wards

In any scenario the warding pattern of the District will need to be re-arranged as a result of this review, but some outcomes have greater impacts than others.

The LGBCE has already identified a number of wards where the ratio of electors to members varies from the average by more than their permitted tolerance. (appendix 1) Therefore, some change to warding arrangements is inevitable to normalise this.

The decision on whether the Council continues to elect by thirds or moves to all out elections has potentially profound implications to warding arrangements as discussed in previous paragraphs.

The third consideration is any change to the number of councillors (the Council's size).

Even if the Council moves to a system of All Out elections, any reduction in the number of members will still mean that the ward boundaries have to be expanded to increase the ratio of electors to each councillor. The extent to which numbers decrease will determine how fundamentally boundaries need to be reviewed. By retaining election by thirds, the warding pattern will already need to be fundamentally reviewed to create the requirement of 3 members wards. By reducing the number of councillors this will have the impact of making the boundaries of the newly created 3 member wards even wider.

Finally, the projected changes to the number of electors, associated with housing growth and other factors, will also alter the distribution of electors and ratio of electorate to each member and will need to be carefully reflected if another LGBCE review is to be avoided ahead of its usual cycle.

6. Other Factors

There are also a number of other factors to consider in deciding on the Council's electoral cycle. A decision on the future electoral cycle is seen as an important preliminary step in deciding on Council size. Some of the advantages of moving to whole Council elections and advantages of retaining elections in thirds are set out below. The list is not exhaustive, and others can be added:

Advantages of moving to whole Council elections:

- Certainty when a Council has a four-year mandate, allowing a strategic approach to policy and decision making to be adopted
- Avoids a hiatus during election campaigning and 'purdah'
- Reduced costs
- Increased voter turnout
- Avoids voter fatigue caused by multiple elections

Advantages of keeping elections 'by thirds' include:

- Ensures a regular return of new Members
- Allows judgment of a Council annually rather than every four years, providing more immediate political accountability
- Encourages people to develop a regular habit of voting
- Enables elections staff to retain a practical up to date knowledge of running district elections

There is also the issue of local elections being impacted by the national political landscape. In elections on a 4 yearly cycle the number of occasions that national elections can impact local elections are reduced to 1 in 4 rather than 3 in 4. Conversely it is arguable that the impact of the national political landscape in an election year may be felt for 4 years in the local Council if electing on a 4-year cycle.

7. Elections up to 2024 and thereafter

There will be all out elections in 2024. In order to bring the new warding pattern into being, there will be consequences for all members and all elections held before that date. Any member elected in May 2022 will only serve a two-year term and those elected in May 2023 will only serve a single year term before being required to seek re-election in 2024.

The future cycle of elections for 2024 and thereafter will depend on whether the Council

decides to move to 4 year all out elections. If they do move to a 4 year cycle, the election in 2024 will be for all elected councillors to serve a 4 year term with the next elections thereafter being in 2028.

Should the Council decide to continue to elect by thirds, following all out elections in 2024, in the 2024 election a third of councillors will be elected for a two year term, another third for a three year term, and the final third for a four year term to 2028. This is decided by which councillors finish first, second and third in each ward. The Councillor that finishes third will get a two-year term and so on. The fallow year will stay the same (2025).

This retirement schedule will be set out in the Electoral Changes Order following publication of final recommendations.

8. Decision making process

Should the Council be minded to proceed with moving to 4 year all out elections, the process for doing so is set out in legislation. It will be necessary to carry out **public consultation**, and thereafter a decision to alter the Council's current electoral cycle of thirds would require a **Special Council** meeting and a **two-thirds majority**.

The window for carrying out this exercise will be short and would require a clear signal from the Council that there is appetite to change.

9. Recommendation

It is **recommended** that

Either

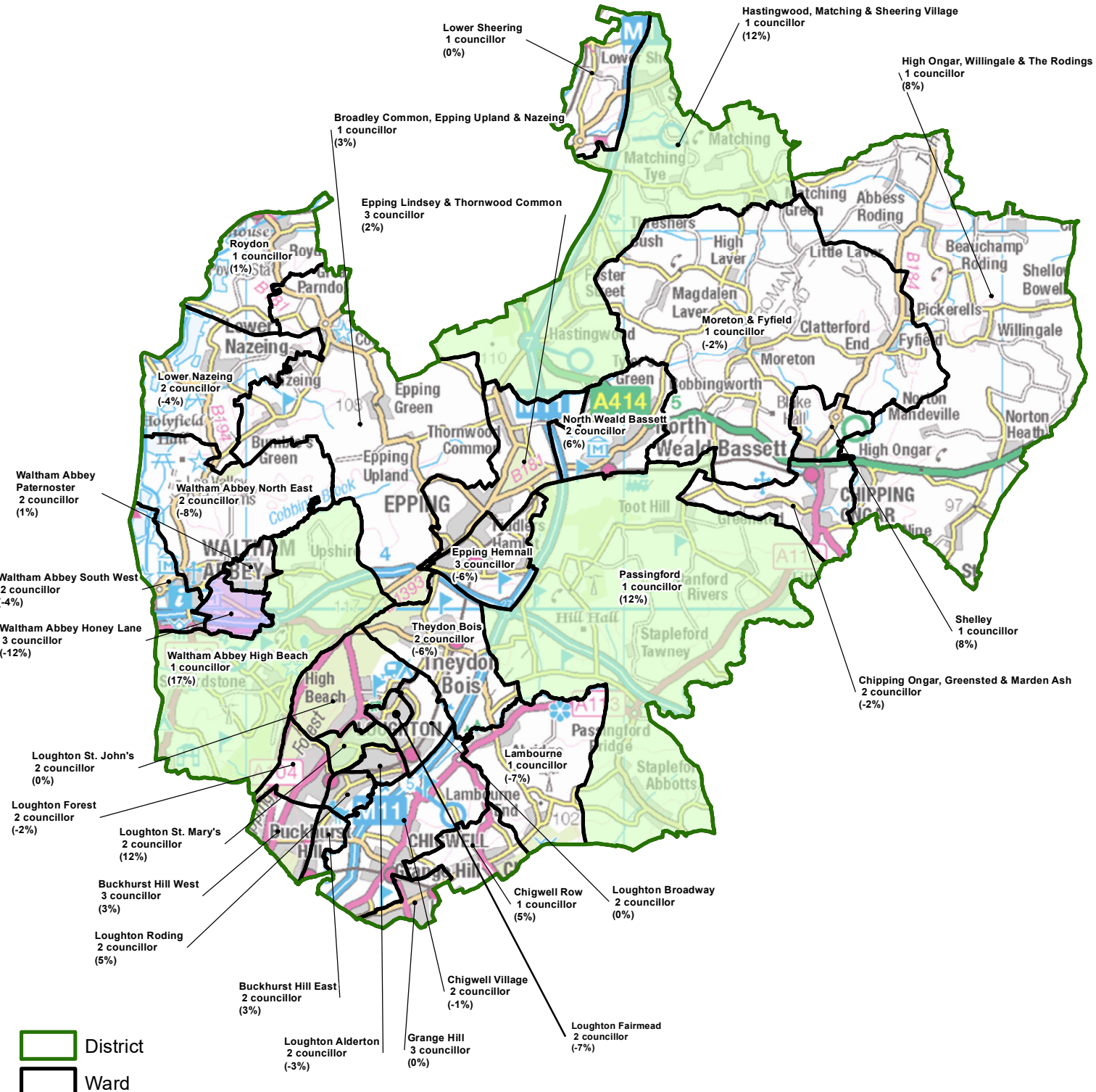
the Council resolves to progress to public consultation with the intention of moving to a 4 yearly all out election cycle from 2024 onwards

Or

the Council recognises that the LGBCE review is likely to result in a pattern of 3 member wards across and resolves to continue with elections in thirds accordingly.

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Epping Forest District Council: Existing wards by variance
Based on December 2020 ONS electoral data



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Report to the Council

Committee: Council

Date: 16th December 2021

Subject: Treasury Management Outturn Report 2020/21

Chair of Audit & Governance – Councillor I Hadley

**Portfolio Holder: Finance, Qualis Client and Economic Development –
Councillor J Philip**

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) To note the Treasury Management Outturn Report for 2020/21 (*Appendix A*).

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Council's Audit and Governance Committee considered the Treasury Management Outturn Report 2020/21 at its meeting on 22nd November 2021 and Recommended it to Council for noting.
- 1.2. The Council's current Treasury Management Strategy was originally considered at a meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee on 28th January 2019 and was subsequently agreed by full Council on 21st February 2019; it was a three-year strategy covering the financial years 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22.
- 1.3. In accordance with CIPFA's Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice (the CIPFA Code) and generally accepted good practice, the Treasury Management Outturn Report for 2020/21 (presented in ***Appendix A***) sets out the Council's actual Treasury Management activity for 2020/21, including the year-end position contained in the Council's (draft) Statement of Accounts for 2020/21.
- 1.4. ***Appendix A*** begins by setting the external context for 2020/21 by exploring the Economic Background, Financial Markets and Credit Ratings; this includes a discussion on the fundamental impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic.
- 1.5. The Borrowing and Investment position for Epping Forest DC as at 31st March 2021 was as follows:
- 1.6. *Borrowing* – external borrowing rose by £37.2 million (from £224.5 million to £261.7 million) during the period April 2020 to March 2021; and
- 1.7. *Investments* – there was a reduction of £12.9 million (from £24.7 million to £11.8 million) during the same period.

1.8. CIPFA's Treasury Management Code covers all the financial assets of the Council, as well as other non-financial assets which the Council holds, primarily for financial return. The report therefore also considers the Council's Commercial Property Portfolio, which delivered Net Income of £6.798 million during 2020/21 and continues to be a key part of the Council's strategy to minimise Council Tax increases.

1.9. **Appendix A** concludes by considering compliance with the Council's adopted Treasury Management indicators. Full compliance was achieved with most indicators. However, the cash flows experienced during the early part of 2020/21 were completely un-precedented as the Government suddenly distributed huge emergency support funding for Covid-19 to billing authorities. This led to some unavoidable breaches of the Council's Investment Limits. Cash flows have subsequently stabilised with the Council holding total bank deposits of £2.7 million as at 31st March 2021.

2. Audit and Governance Committee Comments

2.1. The Audit and Governance Committee considered the report at its meeting on 22nd November 2021. Members asked questions about the maturity profile of debt, the reasons for the amount of borrowing taken by the Council, the amount of interest incurred on that borrowing, the Council's ability to refinance expiring debt and its lender relationship with Qualis. The Committee noted the report and made no comments that they wished Council to consider.

3. Resource Implications

3.1. There are a range of inherent financial risks associated with Treasury Management activity; not least the potential for loss of interest and/or deposits. The Council therefore engages the services of external Treasury Management advisors, Arlingclose Ltd.

3.2. Borrowing and Investment decisions are made in accordance with the Council's formally adopted Treasury Management Strategy. The Strategy includes several Risk Management features, including – for example – the overriding priority that security of deposit takes precedence over return on investment.

4. Legal and Governance Implications

4.1. The Local Government Act 2003 created a framework for the financing of capital investments in local authorities which came into operation from April 2004. Alongside this, the Prudential Code was developed by CIPFA as a professional Code of Practice to support local authority decision making in capital investment and financing. Local authorities are required by regulation to have regard to the Prudential Code.

5. Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications

5.1. None.

6. Consultation Undertaken

6.1. None

Background Papers

Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2019/20 (Audit and Governance Committee, 28th January 2019).

(MHCLG) Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments (3rd Edition). Issued under section 15(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 2003 and effective for financial years commencing on or after 1st April 2018.

Treasury Management Outturn Report 2020/21

Introduction

The Council has adopted CIPFA's *Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice* (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Council to approve Treasury Management semi-annual ("mid-year updates") and annual reports.

The Council's current Treasury Management Strategy was considered at a meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee on 28th January 2019 and was subsequently agreed by full Council on 21st February 2019; it was a three-year strategy covering the financial years 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22. The Council has borrowed and invested substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of risk remains central to the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.

The 2017 Prudential Code includes a requirement for local authorities to provide a Capital Strategy, a summary document approved by full Council covering capital expenditure and financing, treasury management and non-treasury investments. The Council's Capital Strategy (covering the 2020/21 financial year), complying with CIPFA's requirement, was approved by full Council on 21st February 2019.

External Context: Review of 2020/21

Economic Background: The coronavirus pandemic dominated 2020/21, leading to almost the entire World being in some form of lockdown during the year. The start of the financial year saw many central banks cutting interest rates as lockdowns caused economic activity to grind to a halt. The Bank of England cut the Bank Rate to 0.1% and the UK government provided a range of fiscal stimulus measures, the size of which has not been seen before in peacetime.

Some good news came in December 2020 as two COVID-19 vaccines were given approval by the UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). The UK vaccine rollout started in earnest; over 31 million people had received their first dose by 31st March.

A Brexit trade deal was agreed with only days to spare before the 11pm 31st December 2020 deadline having been agreed with the European Union on Christmas Eve.

The Bank of England (BoE) held the Bank Rate at 0.1% throughout the year but extended its Quantitative Easing programme by £150 billion to £895 billion at its November 2020 meeting. In its March 2021 interest rate announcement, the BoE noted that, while GDP would remain low in the near-term due to COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, the easing of these measures means growth is expected to recover strongly later in the year. Inflation is forecast to increase in the near-term and while the economic outlook has improved there are downside risks to the forecast, including from unemployment which is still predicted to rise when the furlough scheme is eventually withdrawn.

Government initiatives supported the economy and the Chancellor announced in the 2021 Budget a further extension to the furlough (Coronavirus Job Retention) scheme until September 2021. Access to support grants was also widened, enabling more self-employed people to be eligible for Government help. Since March 2020, the Government schemes have helped protect more than 11 million jobs.

Despite the furlough scheme, unemployment still rose. Labour market data showed that in the three months to January 2021 the unemployment rate was 5.0%, in contrast to 3.9% recorded for the same period 12 months ago. Wages rose 4.8% for total pay in nominal terms (4.2% for regular pay) and was up 3.9% in real terms (3.4% for regular pay). Unemployment is still expected to increase once the various government job support schemes come to an end.

Inflation has remained low over the 12-month period. Latest figures showed the annual headline rate of UK Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) fell to 0.4% year/year in February, below expectations (0.8%) and still well below the Bank of England's 2% target. The ONS' preferred measure of CPIH which includes owner-occupied housing was 0.7% year/year (1.0% expected).

After contracting sharply in Q2 (Apr-Jun) 2020 by 19.8% q/q, growth in Q3 and Q4 bounced back by 15.5% and 1.3% respectively. The easing of some lockdown measures in the last quarter of the calendar year enabled construction output to continue, albeit at a much slower pace than the 41.7% rise in the prior quarter. When released, figures for Q1 (Jan-Mar) 2021 are expected to show a decline given the national lockdown.

Financial Markets: Monetary and fiscal stimulus helped provide support for equity markets which rose over the period, with the Dow Jones beating its pre-crisis peak on the back of outperformance by a small number of technology stocks. The FTSE indices performed reasonably well during the period April to November, before being buoyed in December by both the vaccine approval and Brexit deal, which helped give a boost to both the more internationally focused FTSE 100 and the more UK-focused FTSE 250, however they remain lower than their pre-pandemic levels.

Ultra-low interest rates prevailed throughout most of the period, with yields generally falling between April and December 2020. From early in 2021 the improved economic outlook due to the new various stimulus packages (particularly in the US), together with the approval and successful rollout of vaccines, caused government bonds to sell off sharply on the back of expected higher inflation and increased uncertainty, pushing yields higher more quickly than had been anticipated.

The 5-year UK benchmark gilt yield began the financial year at 0.18% before declining to -0.03% at the end of 2020 and then rising strongly to 0.39% by the end of the financial year. Over the same period the 10-year gilt yield fell from 0.31% to 0.19% before rising to 0.84%. The 20-year declined slightly from 0.70% to 0.68% before increasing to 1.36%.

1-month, 3-month and 12-month SONIA bid rates averaged 0.01%, 0.10% and 0.23% respectively over the financial year.

Credit Review: After spiking in March 2020, credit default swap spreads declined over the remaining period of the year to broadly pre-pandemic levels. The gap in spreads between UK ringfenced and non-ringfenced entities remained, albeit Santander UK is still an outlier compared to the other ringfenced/retail banks. At the end of the period Santander UK was trading the highest at 57bps and Standard Chartered the lowest at 32bps. The other ringfenced banks were trading around 33 and 34bps while Nationwide Building Society was 43bps.

Credit rating actions to the period ending September 2020 have been covered in previous outturn reports. Subsequent credit developments include Moody's downgrading the UK sovereign rating to Aa3 with a stable outlook which then impacted several other UK institutions, banks and local government. In the last quarter of the financial year S&P upgraded Clydesdale Bank to A- and revised Barclay's outlook to stable (from negative) while Moody's downgraded HSBC's Baseline Credit Assessment to baa3 whilst affirming the long-term rating at A1.

The vaccine approval and subsequent rollout programme are both credit positive for the financial services sector in general, but there remains much uncertainty around the extent of the losses banks and building societies will suffer due to the economic slowdown which has resulted due to pandemic-related lockdowns and restrictions. The institutions and durations on the Council's counterparty list recommended by Treasury Management advisors Arlingclose remain under constant review, but at the end of the period no changes had been made to the names on the list or the recommended maximum duration of 35 days.

Local Context

On 31st March 2021, the Council had net borrowing of £251.231 million arising from its revenue and capital income and expenditure. The underlying need to borrow for capital purposes is measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), while usable reserves and working capital are the underlying resources available for investment. These factors are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Balance Sheet Summary

	31/03/21 Actual £m
General Fund CFR	143.938
HRA CFR	153.575
Total CFR	297.513
Less: Other Debt liabilities	0
Borrowing CFR	297.513
Less: External borrowing	-261.706
Internal borrowing:	35.807
Less: Usable reserves	-47.156
Less: Working capital	0.874
Net Investments	10.475

Lower official interest rates have reduced the cost of short-term, temporary loans and investment returns from cash assets that can be used in lieu of borrowing. The Council has pursued a strategy of keeping borrowing and investments below their underlying levels, sometimes known as internal borrowing, to reduce risk.

The Treasury Management position as at 31st March 2021 and the change during the financial year is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Treasury Management Summary

	31/03/20 Balance £m	Movement £m	31/03/21 Balance £m	31/03/21 Rate %
Long-term Borrowing	210.5	-11.5	199.0	2.77%
Short-term Borrowing	14.0	+48.7	62.7	0.11%
Total Borrowing	224.5	+37.2	261.7	
Long-Term Investments	0	0	0	N/A
Short-term Investments	0	0	0	N/A
Cash and Cash Equivalents	24.7	-12.9	11.8	0.01%
Total Investments	24.7	-12.9	11.8	
Net Borrowing	199.8		249.9	

The Council's cash flows during 2020/21 were unprecedented, primarily due to the Covid-19 pandemic, although things were beginning to settle down by September 2020. Thus:

- Long-Term Borrowing – the Council did not take out any further long-term borrowing in the year, with the decline in the balance of £11.5 million, representing the repayment of principal on existing loans (see following comment re temporary switch from long to short-term borrowing)
- Short-Term Borrowing – such borrowing – from other Local Authorities – increased significantly during the year. This has allowed the Council to benefit from the exceptionally low short-term interest rates on offer, although longer-term replacement borrowing will be actively considered in 2021/22 (in consultation with Arlingclose); and
- Cash and Cash Equivalents – following an unprecedented peak in cash holdings during April 2020 (especially due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic), cash balances gradually stabilised and returned to more normal levels during the second half of the period.

Borrowing Update

In November 2020 the PWLB published its response to the consultation on 'Future Lending Terms'. From 26th November the margin on PWLB loans above gilt yields was reduced from 1.8% to 0.8% providing that the borrowing authority can confirm that it is not planning to purchase 'investment assets primarily for yield' in the current or next two financial years. Authorities that are purchasing or intending to purchase investment assets primarily for yield will not be able to access the PWLB except to refinance existing loans or externalise internal borrowing. As part of the borrowing process authorities will now be required to submit more detailed capital expenditure plans with confirmation of the purpose of capital expenditure from the Section 151 Officer. The PWLB can now also restrict local authorities from borrowing in unusual or large amounts.

Acceptable use of PWLB borrowing includes service delivery, housing, regeneration, preventative action, refinancing and treasury management. Misuse of PWLB borrowing could result in the PWLB requesting that Authority unwinds problematic transactions, suspending access to the PWLB and repayment of loans with penalties.

Competitive market alternatives may be available for authorities with or without access to the PWLB. However, the financial strength of the individual authority and borrowing purpose will be scrutinised by commercial lenders.

The Council is not planning to purchase any investment assets primarily for yield within the next three years and so is able to take advantage of the reduction in the PWLB borrowing rate.

Municipal Bonds Agency (MBA): The MBA revised its standard loan terms and framework agreement. Guarantees for the debt of other borrowers are now proportional and limited and a requirement to make contribution loans in the event of a default by a borrower has been introduced. The agency has issued 5-year floating rate and 40-year fixed rate bonds in 2020, in both instances Lancashire County Council is the sole borrower and guarantor. A planned third bond issuance by Warrington Borough Council was withdrawn in early December after the reduction in PWLB borrowing rates.

If the Council considers future borrowing through the MBA, it will first ensure that it has thoroughly scrutinised the legal terms and conditions of the arrangement and is satisfied with them.

UK Infrastructure Bank: In his March 2021 Budget the Chancellor confirmed that a UK Infrastructure Bank will be set up with £4bn in lending earmarked for local authorities from the Summer of 2021. Loans will be available at gilt yield plus 0.60%, 0.20% lower than the PWLB certainty rate. A bidding process to access these loans is likely with a preference to projects likely to help the government meet its Net Zero emissions target. However other “high value and complex economic infrastructure projects” may also be considered.

Borrowing Strategy

At 31st March 2021 the Council held £261.7 million in loans (an increase of £37.2 million compared to the position as at 31st March 2020), as part of its strategy for funding the Capital Programme. Outstanding loans on 31st March 2021 are summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Borrowing Position

	31/03/20 Balance £m	Net Movement £m	31/03/21 Balance £m	31/03/21 Weighted Average Rate %	31/03/21 Weighted Average Maturity (Years/Days)
Public Works Loan Board	210.5	+28.2	238.7	2.77%	15.95 Years
Banks	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
Local authorities (long-term)	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
Local authorities (short-term)	14.0	+9.0	23.0	0.11%	83 Days
Total Borrowing	224.5	37.2	261.7		

The Council's chief objective when borrowing has been to strike an appropriately low risk balance between securing low interest costs and achieving cost certainty over the period for which funds are required, with flexibility to renegotiate loans should the Council's long-term plans change being a secondary objective.

With short-term interest rates remaining much lower than long-term rates, the Council considered it more cost effective in the short term to use internal resources or borrowed rolling temporary / short-term loans instead. The net movement in temporary / short-term loans is shown in Table 3 above.

Other Debt Activity

The Council did not raise any other capital finance during 2020/21.

Treasury Investment Activity

The Council holds invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held, and money borrowed in advance of need. During 2020/21, the Council's investment balances ranged between circa £1 million and £70 million; this was due to timing differences between income and expenditure. The investment position is shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Treasury Investment Position

	31/03/20 Balance £m	Net Movement £m	31/03/21 Balance £m	31/03/21 Income Return %	31/03/21 Weighted Average Maturity Days
Banks & building societies (unsecured)	24.7	-22.0	2.7	0.01	Instant Access
Government (incl. local authorities)	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
Money Market Funds	0	+9.1	9.1	0.01	Instant Access
Total Investments	24.7	-12.9	11.8		

Both the CIPFA Code and Government guidance requires local authorities to invest funds prudently, and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its treasury investments before seeking the optimum rate of return, or yield. The Council's objective when investing money is to strike an appropriate balance between risk and return, minimising the risk of incurring losses from defaults and the risk of receiving unsuitably low investment income.

Non-Treasury Investments

The definition of investments in CIPFA's revised Treasury Management Code now covers all the financial assets of the Council as well as other non-financial assets which the Council holds primarily for financial return. This is replicated in the Investment Guidance issued by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), in which the definition of investments is further broadened to also include all such assets held partially for financial return.

The Council also holds a significant commercial property portfolio on its Balance Sheet, which are summarised in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Commercial Property Investments

Category	31/03/21 Balance Sheet Value	Net Income 2021/22 (12 months April - March) ***
Shops*	£92.363m	£5.222m
Industrial Units	£35.996m	£1.563m
Other**	£18.946m	£0.013m
Total Value/Net Income	£147.305m	£6.798m

*Includes Public Houses and a Petrol Station

**Includes North Weald Airfield and Tennis Centre

***Excludes (year-end) recharges

The Council received total net income of £6.798 million from Commercial Property Investments in 2020/21 (£6.216 million in 2019/20), with the numbers reflecting the additional revenue generated by new Commercial Property acquisitions in December 2019 at Loughton High Road (Shops) and Brooker Road (Industrial Units).

The Committee should note that the numbers reflect the accrued position currently in the Council's books, which does not take account of the collectability of income. So far, there have been no write-offs due to the affects of the Covid-19 pandemic, with the Council's portfolio appearing reasonably resilient at this stage (e.g. anecdotally, demand from prospective tenants for void properties seems to be holding up). However, an increase in write-offs cannot be ruled out in the future given the current economic climate.

Compliance

The Strategic Director and Section 151 Officer reports that all Treasury Management activities undertaken during the financial year complied fully with the CIPFA Code of Practice. However – in 2020/21 – regarding the approved Treasury Management Strategy:

- Debt Limits – full compliance achieved
- Investment Limits – the £3.0 million limit on investing in any single organisation (except for the UK Government) was breached during the year, with the Council holding larger amounts of cash with NatWest, the Council’s main bankers. With a peak cash holding £70.5 million held in mid-April 2020, this was a completely unprecedented event, and due to a combination of the Council’s anticipated cash requirements in April 2020 and the unexpected receipt of a major funding allocation from central Government as part of the Covid-19 Business Support grant initiative; and
- Liquidity Indicator – the Council also briefly dropped below its £3.0 million Liquidity Indicator (“Minimum Available Cash Within 3 Months”) at the end of September 2020. This was corrected by short-term borrowing in October 2020 and was not breached again during the financial year.

Compliance with the Operational Boundary and Authorised Limit for external debt is demonstrated in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Debt Limits

	2020/21 Maximum	31/03/21 Actual	2020/21 Operational Boundary	2020/21 Authorised Limit	Complied? (Yes/No)
Borrowing	£261.7m	£261.7m	£280.0 million	£290.0 million	Yes
Finance Leases	0	0			
Total Debt	£261.7m	£261.7m			

Since the Operational Boundary is a management tool for in-year monitoring it is not significant if it is breached on occasions due to variations in cash flow; this is not counted as a compliance failure. Total debt did not breach the Operational Boundary during the year.

Table 8: Investment Limits

	2020/21 Maximum	31/03/21 Actual	2020/21 Limit	Complied? (Yes/No)
Any single organisation, except the UK Government	£70.5m	£2.7m	£4.0m each*	No
UK Government (including local authorities)	0	0	Unlimited	Yes
Any group of organisations under the same ownership	0	0	£3.0m per group	Yes
Any group of pooled funds under the same management	0	0	£5.0m per manager	Yes
Negotiable instruments held in a broker's nominee account	0	0	£2.0m per broker	Yes
Foreign countries	0	0	£3.0m per country	Yes
Registered providers and registered social landlords	0	0	£3.0m in total	Yes
Unsecured investments with building societies	0	0	£2.0m in total	Yes
Loans to unrated corporates	0	0	£2.0m in total	Yes
Money Market Funds (MMF)	0	£9.1m	£30.0m in total*	Yes (subject to comments below)
Real Estate Investment Trusts	0	0	£5.0m in total	Yes

Note - excludes Qualis loans

*The Investment Limits quoted in Table 8 have been amended in two places compared to the originally adopted Treasury Management Strategy. At its meeting on 29th October 2020, full Council resolved to:

- Increase the amount that the Council can invest in any single organisation, except the UK Government, from £3.0 million to £4.0 million; and

- Increase the MMF limit to £10 million *per fund*, with a maximum limit of 3 funds to be invested in at any one time. If operational requirements require the use of more funds, the S151 officer can authorise this in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development, provided this is reported to the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee, and a report is submitted to the next available meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee.

Table 8 shows that, during 2020/21 (and as reported to Audit and Governance Committee on 9th December 2020), the Investment Limit in any single organisation (except the UK Government) was breached – with peak investment occurring on 15th April 2020 – when a cash balance of £70.5 million was held with NatWest, the Council’s main bankers.

Exceptionally high cash balances were experienced by a vast majority of local authorities during April 2020 as the Government distributed emergency support funding for Covid-19; as a consequence, there were no opportunities at the time to temporarily invest surplus cash with other local authorities (as everyone was looking to lend, rather than borrow). In addition, Epping Forest District Council was very quick to distribute Business Support Grants to local businesses, which meant that very high cash balances were needed to cover rapidly outgoing commitments.

Treasury Management Indicators

The Council measures and manages its exposures to Treasury Management risks using the following indicators.

Security: The Council has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to credit risk by monitoring the value-weighted average of its investment portfolio. This is calculated by applying a score to each investment (AAA=1, AA+=2, etc.) and taking the arithmetic average, weighted by the size of each investment. Unrated investments are assigned a score based on their perceived risk.

	31/03/21 Actual	2020/21 Target	Complied?
Portfolio average credit rating	A	A-	Yes

Liquidity: The Council has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to liquidity risk by monitoring the amount of cash available to meet unexpected payments within a rolling three-month period, without additional borrowing.

	31/03/21 Actual	2020/21 Target	Complied?
Total cash available within 3 months	£12.4 million	£3.0 million	Yes

At no time during 2020/21 (or subsequently at the time of preparing this report), did the Council go overdrawn at the Bank.

Interest Rate Exposures: This indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to interest rate risk. The upper limits on the one-year revenue impact of a 1% rise or fall in interests was:

Interest rate risk indicator	31/03/21 Actual	2020/201 Limit	Complied?
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>rise</u> in interest rates (Borrowing)	£318,000	£318,000	Yes
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>fall</u> in interest rates (Investments)	£11,800	£100,000	Yes

The impact of a change in interest rates is calculated on the assumption that maturing loans and investments will be replaced at current rates. The table shows that Interest Rate Exposure on Borrowing and Investments were within limits. Interest Rate Exposure on Borrowing is an especially important measure, with net variable rate exposure of £306,200 (£318,000 minus £11,800) focused on Borrowing.

Maturity Structure of Borrowing: This indicator is set to control the Authority's exposure to refinancing risk. The upper and lower limits on the maturity structure of all borrowing were:

	31/03/21 Actual	Upper Limit	Lower Limit	Complied?
Under 12 months	16%	100%	0%	Yes
12 months and within 24 months	0%	100%	0%	Yes
24 months and within 5 years	0%	100%	0%	Yes
5 years and within 10 years	13%	100%	0%	Yes
10 years and within 15 years	0%	100%	0%	Yes
15 years and within 20 years	50%	100%	0%	Yes
20 years and within 25 years	14%	100%	0%	Yes
25 years and above	7%	100%	0%	Yes

Time periods start on the first day of each financial year. The maturity date of borrowing is the earliest date on which the lender can demand repayment.

Principal Sums Invested for Periods Longer than a year: The purpose of this indicator is to control the Council's exposure to the risk of incurring losses by seeking early repayment of its investments. The limits on the long-term principal sum invested to final maturities beyond the period end were:

	2020/21
Actual principal invested beyond year end	£0
Limit on principal invested beyond year end	£1.0 million
Complied?	Yes

Other

CIPFA consultations: In February 2021 CIPFA launched two consultations on changes to its Prudential Code and Treasury Management Code of Practice. These follow the Public Accounts Committee's recommendation that the prudential framework should be further tightened following continued borrowing by some councils for investment purposes. These are principles-based consultations and will be followed by more specific proposals later in the year.

In the Prudential Code the key area being addressed is the statement that "local authorities must not borrow more than or in advance of their needs purely in order to profit from the investment of the extra sums borrowed". Other proposed changes include the sustainability of capital expenditure in accordance with corporate objectives i.e. recognising climate, diversity and innovation, commercial investment being proportionate to budgets, expanding the capital strategy section on commercial activities, replacing the "gross debt and the CFR" with the liability benchmark as a graphical prudential indicator.

Proposed changes to the Treasury Management Code include requiring job specifications and "knowledge and skills" schedules for Treasury Management roles to be included in the Treasury Management Practices (TMP) document and formally reviewed, a specific Treasury Management Committee for MiFID II professional clients and a new TMP 13 on Environmental, Social and Governance Risk Management.

IFRS 16: CIPFA/LASAAC has proposed delaying the implementation of the new IFRS 16 Leases accounting standard for a further year to 2021/22.

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Report to the Council

Committee: Council

Date: 16th December 2021

Subject: Treasury Management Mid-Year Update 2021/22

Chairman of Audit & Governance: Councillor I Hadley

Portfolio Holder: Finance, Qualis Client and Economic Development –
Councillor J Philip

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) To note the Treasury Management Mid-Year Update 2021/22 (*Appendix A*)

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Council's Audit and Governance Committee considered the Treasury Management Mid-Year Update 2021/22 at its meeting on 22nd November 2021 and Recommended it to Council for noting.
- 1.2. The Council's Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22 was originally considered at a meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee on 22nd March 2021 and was subsequently agreed by full Council.
- 1.3. In accordance with CIPFA's *Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice* (the CIPFA Code) and generally accepted good practice, the Treasury Management Mid-Year Update for 2021/22 (presented in **Appendix A**) sets out the Council's actual Treasury Management activity for the first six months of 2021/22 (i.e. April to September 2021).
- 1.4. **Appendix A** begins by setting the external context for first half of 2021/22 by exploring the Economic Background, Financial Markets and Credit Ratings; this includes a discussion on the fundamental impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic.
- 1.5. The Borrowing and Investment position for Epping Forest District Council as at 30th September 2021 shows the following:
- 1.6. *Borrowing* – external borrowing rose by £9.1 million (from £261.7 million to £270.8 million) during the period April to September 2021; and
- 1.7. *Investments* – there was an increase of £7.3 million (from £11.8 million to £19.1 million) during the same period.
- 1.8. The CIPFA Code also covers all the financial assets of the Council, as well as other non-financial assets which the Council holds, primarily for financial return. This report therefore also considers the Council's Commercial Property

Portfolio, which delivered Net Income of £3.313 million during the first six months of 2021/22 and continues to be a key part of the Council's strategy to minimise Council Tax increases.

- 1.9. **Appendix A** concludes by considering compliance with the Council's adopted Treasury Management indicators. Full compliance was achieved with all indicators.
- 1.10. Members should further note the Cabinet decision (12th July 2021, Item 8, Decision 2) to extend the loan facility to Qualis – by £35.0 million – for the purposes 'pump priming' new regeneration opportunities. At the time of preparing this report, Qualis has yet to draw down any of the available facility. The facility will be reflected in updated Borrowing Indicators as part of the draft Capital Strategy to be presented to Audit and Governance Committee in January 2022.

2. Audit and Governance Committee Comments

- 2.1. The Audit and Governance Committee considered the report at its meeting on 22nd November 2021. The Committee noted the report and made no comments that they wished Council to consider.

3. Resource Implications

- 3.1. There are a range of inherent financial risks associated with Treasury Management activity; not least the potential for loss of interest and/or deposits. The Council therefore engages the services of external Treasury Management advisors, Arlingclose Ltd.
- 3.2. Borrowing and Investment decisions are made in accordance with the Council's formally adopted Treasury Management Strategy. The Strategy includes several Risk Management features, including – for example – the overriding priority that security of deposit takes precedence over return on investment.

4. Legal and Governance Implications

- 4.1. The Local Government Act 2003 created a framework for the financing of capital investments in local authorities which came into operation from April 2004. Alongside this, the Prudential Code was developed by CIPFA as a professional Code of Practice to support local authority decision making in capital investment and financing. Local authorities are required by regulation to have regard to the Prudential Code.

5. Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications

- 5.1. None.

6. Consultation Undertaken

- 6.1. None

Background Papers

Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2019/20 (Audit and Governance Committee, 28th January 2019).

(MHCLG) Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments (3rd Edition). Issued under section 15(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 2003 and effective for financial years commencing on or after 1st April 2018.

Treasury Management Mid-Year Update 2021/22

Introduction

The Council has adopted CIPFA's *Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice* (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Council to approve Treasury Management semi-annual ("mid-year updates") and annual reports.

The Council's current Treasury Management Strategy (including Investment Strategy) was considered at a meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee on 22nd March 2021 and was subsequently agreed by full Council. The Council has borrowed and invested substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of risk remains central to the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.

The 2017 Prudential Code includes a requirement for local authorities to provide a Capital Strategy, a summary document approved by full Council covering capital expenditure and financing, treasury management and non-treasury investments. The Council's updated Capital Strategy 2021/22 to 2025/26, complying with CIPFA's requirement, was considered by the Audit and Governance Committee on 22nd March 2021, and has also been subsequently adopted by full Council.

External Context: April to September 2021

Economic Background: The economic recovery from the Coronavirus pandemic continued to dominate the first half of the financial year. By the end of the period, over 48 million people in the UK had received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, and almost 45 million their second dose.

The Bank of England (BoE) held the Bank Rate at 0.1% throughout the period and maintained its Quantitative Easing programme at £895 billion, unchanged since the November 2020 meeting. The BoE announced in September 2021 that it now expected the UK economy to grow more slowly than previously predicted and there were concerns of building inflationary pressure.

Government initiatives continued to support the economy during the first 6 months of 2021/22 but came to an end on 30th September 2021, with businesses required to either take back the 1.6 million workers on the furlough scheme or make them redundant.

Labour market data in the three months to July 2021 shows that unemployment fell to 4.6%. The employment rate increased, and economic activity rates decreased, suggesting an improving labour market picture.

CPI inflation rose to 3.2% in August 2021, exceeding expectations of 2.9%. The BoE now expects inflation to exceed 4% by the end of the calendar year owing largely to developments in energy and goods prices.

Financial Markets: Monetary and fiscal stimulus together with rising economic growth and the ongoing vaccine rollout programmes continued to support equity markets over most of the period, albeit with a bumpy ride towards the end. The FTSE 100 saw modest gains over the period and remains below its pre-crisis peak.

Inflation worries continued during the period. Declines in bond yields in the first quarter of the financial year suggested that bond markets were expecting general price increases to be less severe, or more transient, that was previously thought. However, an increase in gas prices in the UK and EU, supply shortages and a dearth of HGV drivers has caused problems for a range of industries and, in some instance, led to higher prices.

Credit Review: Over the period Fitch and Moody's upwardly revised to stable the outlook on several UK banks and building societies, recognising their improved capital positions compared to last year and better economic growth prospects in the UK.

The successful vaccine rollout programme is credit positive for the financial services sector in general and the improved economic outlook has meant some institutions have been able to reduce provisions for bad loans. While there is still uncertainty around the full extent of the losses banks and building societies will suffer due to the pandemic-related economic slowdown, the sector is in a generally better position now compared to earlier this year and 2020.

Arlingclose has recently completed a full review of its credit advice on unsecured deposits. The outcome included the addition of NatWest Markets plc to the Counterparty List together with the removal of the suspension of Handelsbanken plc. In addition, the maximum duration for all recommended counterparties was extended to 100 days.

The institutions and durations on counterparties recommended by Arlingclose remain under constant review.

Local Context

On 31st March 2021, the Council had net borrowing of £251.231 million arising from its revenue and capital income and expenditure. The underlying need to borrow for capital purposes is measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), while usable reserves and working capital are the underlying resources available for investment. These factors are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Balance Sheet Summary

	31/03/21 Actual £m
General Fund CFR	143.938
HRA CFR	153.575
Total CFR	297.513
Less: Other Debt liabilities	0
Borrowing CFR	297.513
Less: External borrowing	-261.706
Internal borrowing:	35.807
Less: Usable reserves	-47.156
Less: Working capital	0.874
Net Investments	10.475

Lower official interest rates have reduced the cost of short-term, temporary loans and investment returns from cash assets that can be used in lieu of borrowing. The Council has pursued a strategy of keeping borrowing and investments below their underlying levels, sometimes known as internal borrowing, to reduce risk.

The Treasury Management position as at 30th September 2021 and the change during the first six months of the financial year is shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Treasury Management Summary

	31/03/21 Balance £m	Movement £m	30/09/21 Balance £m	30/09/21 Rate %
Long-term Borrowing	199.0	0	199.0	1.60%
Short-term Borrowing	62.7	+9.1	71.8	0.13%
Total Borrowing	261.7	+9.1	270.8	
Long-Term Investments	0	0	0	N/A
Short-term Investments	0	0	0	N/A
Cash and Cash Equivalents	11.8	+7.3	19.1	0.01%
Total Investments	11.8	+7.3	19.1	
Net Borrowing	249.9	+1.8	251.7	

The Council's cash flows during April to September 2021 settled down relative to the unprecedented volatility experienced in 2020/21, although the Council's continued administration of Government Covid-19 grant schemes kept both cash inflows and outflows well above pre-pandemic ('normal') levels. Thus:

- Long-Term Borrowing – no further long-term loans were taken out during the period April to September 2021, with the principal outstanding on PWLB maturity loans of £199.0 million remaining unchanged
- Short-Term Borrowing – borrowing from other local authorities increased by £9.1 million as the opportunity was taken to secure historically low interest rates on short-term borrowing; and
- Cash and Cash Equivalents – following an unprecedented peak in cash holdings during 2020/21 (especially due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic), cash balances have stabilised and have returned to more normal levels so far in 2021/22.

Borrowing Update

Local authorities can borrow from the PWLB provided they can confirm they are not planning to purchase 'investment assets primarily for yield' in the current or next two financial years, with confirmation of the purpose of capital expenditure from the Section 151 Officer. Authorities that are purchasing or intending to purchase investment assets primarily for yield will not be able to access the PWLB except to refinance existing loans or externalise internal borrowing.

Acceptable use of PWLB borrowing includes Service Delivery, Housing, Regeneration, Preventative Action, Refinancing and Treasury Management.

Competitive market alternatives may be available for authorities with or without access to the PWLB. However, the financial strength of the individual authority and borrowing purpose will be scrutinised by commercial lenders. Further changes to the CIPFA Prudential Code – expected in December 2021 – are likely to prohibit borrowing for the primary purpose of commercial return even where the source of borrowing is not the PWLB.

The Council is not planning to purchase any investment assets primarily for yield within the next three years and so is able fully access the PWLB.

Borrowing Strategy

At 30th September 2021 the Council held £270.7 million in loans (an increase of £9.0 million compared to the position as at 31st March 2021), as part of its strategy for funding the Capital Programme. Outstanding loans on 30th September 2021 are summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Borrowing Position

	31/03/21 Balance £m	Net Movement £m	30/09/21 Balance £m	30/09/21 Weighted Average Rate %	30/09/21 Weighted Average Maturity (Years/Days)
Public Works Loan Board	199.0	0	199.0	1.60%	15.40 Years
Banks	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
Local authorities (long-term)	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
Local authorities (short-term)	62.7	+9.1	71.8	0.13%	124.85 Days
Total Borrowing	261.7	9.1	270.8		

The Council's chief objective when borrowing has been to strike an appropriately low risk balance between securing low interest costs and achieving cost certainty over the period for which funds are required, with flexibility to renegotiate loans should the Council's long-term plans change being a secondary objective.

With short-term interest rates remaining much lower than long-term rates, the Council considered it more cost effective in the short term to use internal resources or borrowed rolling temporary / short-term loans instead. The net movement in temporary / short-term loans is shown in Table 3 above.

Other Debt Activity

The Council did not raise any other capital finance in the first six months of 2021/22.

Treasury Investment Activity

The Council holds invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held, and money borrowed in advance of need. During the first six months of 2021/22, as is normal, the Council's investment balances varied due to timing differences between income and expenditure. The investment position is shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Treasury Investment Position

	31/03/21 Balance £m	Net Movement £m	30/09/21 Balance £m	30/09/21 Income Return %	30/09/21 Weighted Average Maturity Days
Banks & Building Societies (unsecured)	2.7	-0.7	2.0	0.01	Instant Access
Government (incl. local authorities)	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
Money Market Funds	9.1	8.0	17.1	0.01	Instant Access
Total Investments	11.8	7.3	19.1		

Both the CIPFA Code and Government guidance requires local authorities to invest funds prudently, and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its treasury investments before seeking the optimum rate of return, or yield. The Council's objective when investing money is to strike an appropriate balance between risk and return, minimising the risk of incurring losses from defaults and the risk of receiving unsuitably low investment income.

Non-Treasury Investments

The definition of investments in CIPFA's Treasury Management Code covers all the financial assets of the Council as well as other non-financial assets which the Council holds primarily for financial return. This is replicated in the Investment Guidance issued by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), in which the definition of investments is further broadened to also include all such assets held partially for financial return.

The Council also holds a significant commercial property portfolio on its Balance Sheet, which are summarised in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Commercial Property Investments

Category	31/03/21 Balance Sheet Value	Net Income 2021/22 (6 months April - September) *** Estimated
Shops*	£92.363m	£2.557m
Industrial Units	£35.996m	£0.632m
Other**	£18.946m	£0.124m
Total Value/Net Income	£147.305m	£3.313m

*Includes Public Houses and a Petrol Station

**Includes North Weald Airfield and Tennis Centre

***Excludes (year-end) recharges

The Council received total net income of £3.313 million from Commercial Property Investments in the first 6 months of 2021/22.

The Committee should note that the numbers reflect the accrued position currently in the Council's books, which does not take account of the collectability of income. So far, there have been no write-offs due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with the Council's portfolio appearing reasonably resilient at this stage (e.g. anecdotally, demand from prospective tenants for void properties seems to be holding up). However, an increase in write-offs cannot be ruled out in the future given continued volatility in some business sectors such as retail.

Compliance

The Strategic Director and Section 151 Officer reports that all Treasury Management activities undertaken during the first six months of the year complied fully with the CIPFA Code of Practice. Compliance with the approved Treasury Management Strategy was as follows:

- Investment Limits – full compliance achieved
- Security – full compliance achieved
- Liquidity – full compliance achieved
- Interest Rate Exposure – full compliance achieved
- Maturity Structure – full compliance achieved
- Long-Term Investments – full compliance achieved.

Table 8: Investment Limits

Sector	Time Limit	Counterparty Limit	Sector limit	30/09/21 Actual	Complied? (Yes/No)
The UK Government	50 years	Unlimited	N/A	£0	Yes
Local authorities & other government entities	25 years	£10.0 million	Unlimited	£7.0 million	Yes
Banks (unsecured)*	13 months	£5.0 million	£20.0 million	£2.0 million	Yes
Building Societies* (unsecured)	13 months	£2.0 million	£2.0 million	£0	Yes
Registered Providers* (unsecured)	5 years	£3.0 million	£3.0 million	£0	Yes
Money Market Funds*	N/A	£10.0 million	Maximum of 3 Funds (£10m each)	£17.0 million	Yes

*** Minimum Credit Rating**

Treasury investments in the sectors marked with an asterisk will only be made with entities whose lowest published long-term credit rating is no lower than A-. Where available, the credit rating relevant to the specific investment or class of investment is used, otherwise the counterparty credit rating is used. However, investment decisions are never made solely based on credit ratings, and all other relevant factors including external advice will be taken account of.

Treasury Management Indicators

The Council measures and manages its exposures to Treasury Management risks using the following indicators.

Security: The Council has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to credit risk by monitoring the value-weighted average of its investment portfolio. This is calculated by applying a score to each investment (AAA=1, AA+=2, etc.) and taking the arithmetic average, weighted by the size of each investment. Unrated investments are assigned a score based on their perceived risk.

	30/09/21 Actual	2021/22 Target	Complied?
Portfolio average credit rating	A	A-	Yes

Liquidity: The Council has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to liquidity risk by monitoring the amount of cash available to meet unexpected payments within a rolling three-month period, without additional borrowing.

	30/09/21 Actual	2021/22 Target	Complied?
Total cash available within 3 months	£19.1 million	£3.0 million	Yes

Interest Rate Exposures: This indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to interest rate risk. The upper limits on the one-year revenue impact of a 1% rise or fall in interests was:

Interest rate risk indicator	30/09/21 Actual	2021/22 Limit	Complied?
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>rise</u> in interest rates (Borrowing)	£318,000	£318,000	Yes
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>fall</u> in interest rates (Investments)	£19,000	£120,000	Yes

The impact of a change in interest rates is calculated on the assumption that maturing loans and investments will be replaced at current rates. The table shows that Interest Rate Exposure on Borrowing and Investments were within limits. Interest Rate Exposure on Borrowing is an especially important measure, with net variable rate exposure of £299,000 (£318,000 minus £19,000) focused on Borrowing.

Maturity Structure of Borrowing: This indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to refinancing risk. The upper and lower limits on the maturity structure of all borrowing were:

	30/09/21 Actual	Upper Limit	Lower Limit	Complied?
Under 12 months	16%	50%	0%	Yes
12 months and within 24 months	0%	50%	0%	Yes
24 months and within 5 years	0%	50%	0%	Yes
5 years and within 10 years	13%	50%	0%	Yes
10 years and within 15 years	0%	50%	0%	Yes
15 years and within 20 years	50%	50%	0%	Yes
20 years and within 25 years	14%	50%	0%	Yes
25 years and above	7%	50%	0%	Yes

Time periods start on the first day of each financial year. The maturity date of borrowing is the earliest date on which the lender can demand repayment.

Principal Sums Invested for Periods Longer than a year: The purpose of this indicator is to control the Council's exposure to the risk of incurring losses by seeking early repayment of its investments. The limits on the long-term principal sum invested to final maturities beyond the period end were:

	2021/22 (April – Sept)
Actual principal invested beyond year end	£0
Limit on principal invested beyond year end	£15.0 million
Complied?	Yes

Other

IFRS 16: CIPFA/LASAAC has proposed delaying the implementation of the new IFRS 16 Leases accounting standard for a further year to 2021/22.

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Report to the Council

Committee: Council
Date: 16th December 2021
Subject: Appointment of External Auditor

Chair of Audit and Governance: Councillor I Hadley

Portfolio Holder: Finance, Qualis Client and Economic Development –
Councillor J Philip

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the Council continues to participate in the national procurement process led by Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) for the appointment of external auditors.**
- (2) Subject to the recommendation above (1), delegated authority be granted to the Section 151 officer to formally give notice of the Council's intention to opt into the PSAA procurement agreement**

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. At its meeting on 22nd November 2021 the Audit and Governance Committee considered the options for appointing an Auditor when the current contract comes up for renewal on 1st April 2023 and Recommended that Council continues to opt into Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA) arrangement.
- 1.2. The current auditor appointment arrangements of opting into the national auditor appointment arrangements established by PSAA were agreed by full Council in December 2016 and cover the 5 years up to and including the audit of the 2022/23 accounts. The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 requires authorities to either opt into the appointing person regime, led by PSAA or to establish an auditor panel and conduct their own procurement exercise.
- 1.3. The external auditor for the audit of accounts for 2023/24 should be appointed before the end of December 2022. To comply with the Local Audit (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015 full Council must make the decision. The close of the opt in period is 11 March 2022.
- 1.4. Whilst there has been some considerable issues with the delivery of audits under the contracts negotiated by PSAA in 2016 it is considered likely that a sector wide procurement conducted by PSAA will still produce better outcomes for the Council than any procurement undertaken ourselves or with a limited number of partners. Use of the PSAA will also be less resource intensive than establishing an auditor panel and

conducting our own procurement. Local procurement would draw in the same limited supply of auditor resource as the PSAA's national procurement

- 1.5. One of the specific functions of the Audit and Governance Committee, as set out in the Constitution, is to be responsible for the appointment of the Council's external auditors and ensure it is in line with the requirements of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.
- 1.6. However, Regulation 19 of the Local Audit (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015 requires that a decision to opt in must be made by Full Council (authority meeting as a whole).

2. Detailed Report

- 2.1. Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA) is a company limited by guarantee without share capital. The company is owned by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), itself wholly owned by the Local Government Association (LGA). The LGA is a national membership body for local authorities which works on behalf of members to support, promote and improve local government. PSAA began operations on 1 April 2015 when the then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government delegated to PSAA on a transitional basis a number of statutory functions following the closure of the Audit Commission. These responsibilities included appointing auditors and setting audit fees for bodies subject to audit under the provisions of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. Whilst most of these transitional responsibilities have come to an end, PSAA is still responsible for a small residual number of audits under these arrangements.
- 2.2. In June 2016, the Secretary of State specified the company as an appointing person under the provisions of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014. This means that for audits of accounts from 2018/19 PSAA appoints an auditor to eligible principal authorities (councils, local police bodies, fire authorities and other local government bodies) that have chosen to opt into the national auditor appointment scheme developed by the company. The scheme formally commenced in April 2018. The duration of the first appointing period was set at five years and therefore runs until 31 March 2023. The second appointing period will commence on 1 April 2023.
- 2.3. PSAA is responsible for:
 - appointing auditors to local public bodies, including councils, police and crime commissioners, chief constables, fire and rescue authorities and other relevant principal local government bodies;
 - setting scales of fees, and charging fees, for the audit of accounts of relevant bodies;
 - overseeing the delivery by its appointed auditors of consistent, high-quality and effective external audit services to opted-in bodies; and
 - ensuring effective management of contracts with audit firms for the delivery of external audit services to opted-in bodies
- 2.4. At 31 March 2020, 478 of the 487 eligible bodies (98%) had opted into PSAA's national auditor appointment arrangements including all principal authorities created since 1 April 2018. Bodies remain in the scheme for the specified appointing period. The current appointing period covers audits of the accounts for the five financial years 2018/19 to 2022/23. In May 2021, the Government confirmed that PSAA would continue as the appointing body for local audit, in charge of procurement and contract management for local government auditors.

- 2.5. The PSAA formally invited all eligible bodies including councils to opt into the national auditor appointment scheme from April 2023, the close of the opt in period is 11 March 2022.
- 2.6. The PSAA provide an FAQ on why accepting the national opt-in invitation is the best option and the main advantages are copied below:
- transparent and independent auditor appointment via a third party;
 - the best opportunity to secure the appointment of a qualified, registered auditor;
 - on-going management of any independence issues which may arise;
 - access to a specialist PSAA team with significant experience of working within the context of the relevant regulations to appoint auditors, managing contracts with audit firms, and setting and determining audit fees;
 - a value for money offer based on minimising PSAA costs and distribution of any surpluses to scheme members
 - collective efficiency savings for the sector through undertaking one major procurement as opposed to a multiplicity of smaller procurements;
 - avoids the necessity for local bodies to establish an auditor panel and undertake an auditor procurement, enabling time and resources to be deployed on other pressing priorities;
 - updates from PSAA to Section 151 officers and Audit Committee Chairs on a range of local audit related matters to inform and support effective auditor-audited body relationships; and
 - concerted efforts to work with other stakeholders to develop a more sustainable local audit market.
 - Assure timely auditor appointments
- 2.7. The delivery of audit contracts negotiated by the PSAA have been beset with issue over the past two years. Some of the blame for this has been levelled at the PSAA for forcing down prices too low meaning that the big audit firms were unable to properly resource delivery. In practice the issues are more complex, and the firms entered these contracts being clear on the expectations upon them, having worked with the sector over many years.
- 2.8. The current issues are now many fold and include a limited supply of auditors, increased requirement by the Government and the overseeing accountancy bodies on the application of auditing standards to be applied and increased complexity associated with ever expanding council activities and due to Covid.
- 2.9. For the 2020/21 accounts, more than 90% of audits were not delivered on time.
- 2.10. The LGA and PSAA are acutely aware of these issues and have worked with the Accountancy firms and local authorities to remedy these issues, but with partial success. Inevitably the cost of audits will rise under the forthcoming procurement process, and probably necessarily so, to address some of the issues that have emerged since the last procurement process was undertaken.
- 2.11. It is likely that the number of councils using the PSAA process will reduce this time around, but it is expected that the majority will still choose to follow this procurement route.
- 2.12. Whilst PSAA has drawn criticism they have high visibility of the issues and it is believed that they are still best placed to undertake the negotiation on behalf of the sector.

3. Audit and Governance Committee Comments

- 3.1. The Audit and Governance Committee considered the report at its meeting on 22nd November 2021. The Committee asked as to the size of savings delivered through the PSAA approach last time around and whether these were higher than would have been achieved through a standalone procurement. Having received the answer the Committee was content with recommending to Council that it continues to use the PSAA approach.

4. Resource Implications

- 4.1. If PSAA is not used additional resource may be needed to establish an auditor panel and conduct our own procurement. Until either procurement exercise is completed it is not possible to state what additional resource may be required for audit fees for 2022/23, although it is anticipated that any increase will be minimised through using PSAA.

5. Legal and Governance Implications

- 5.1. The process as set out above and the recommendation should ensure compliance with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

6. Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications

- 6.1. None.

7. Consultation Undertaken

- 7.1. None

Background Papers

PSAA Prospectus

PSAA – Appointing Person – Frequently Asked Questions

Audit & Governance Committee 28 November 2016 Appointment of External Auditors

<https://eppingforestintranet.moderngov.co.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=57999>

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 16 December 2021
Subject: Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2021/22
Portfolio Holder: Customer & Partnerships, Councillor S Kane

Recommending:

That Cabinet recommend that Council note that the Local Council Tax Support scheme for 2021/22 will continue unchanged for 2022/23.

1. The Local Council Tax Support Scheme (LCTS) replaced Council Tax Benefit in 2013. Each local authority must review its scheme annually. The Government brought in regulations to ensure that pensioners continue to receive the same level of assistance as they would have done if the Council Tax Benefit scheme was still in place. The Council can therefore only make amendments to the scheme for people of working age. The Council has approved the general principle that the Local Council Tax Support scheme should be cost neutral. In legislative terms the scheme needs to be approved by 11th March each year so for 2022/23 approval needs to be made at Full Council in December 2021.

2. As there are no proposed changes to the 2021/22 scheme there is no legal requirement to consult residents of the district.

3. Currently, the total expenditure on LCTS is £6,550,145, which is made up of £3,431,798 for elderly recipients and £3,118,347 for working age recipients. This is £74,351 up on last year's expenditure (1.1%) with a decrease of £105,962 for elderly recipients and an increase of £180,313 for working age claimants. The total number of recipients of LCTS is 6,202 comprising 2,783 elderly recipients and 3,419 working age. This compares with a total number of claimants at 31st March 2021 of 6,270. Although numbers have decreased, which may look contradictory in terms of an increase in expenditure on the scheme, this is not the case when factoring in the increase in Council Tax in 2021/22. The overall expenditure on the scheme will continue to be monitored over the year as the principle is that it is self-funding. This will also form part of the review for the 2023/24 scheme.

Resource Implications:

LCTS scheme for 2022/23:

4. From 2014/15 the funding has been rolled into the Council's overall funding position made up of Revenue Support Grant and locally retained Business Rates. The actual amount of funding for LCTS is therefore not identifiable within the settlement figures, although the overall package continues to be reduced each year. The LCTS scheme is designed to ensure, as far as possible, stability and

sustainability in the Council's finances. It should be noted that LCTS is not a form of benefit and it is treated as a discount within the Council Tax calculations. This means that the Council's Taxbase is reduced (as is the Taxbase for all other preceptors) and that a large proportion of the lost Council Tax income is covered by Government funding.

Exceptional Hardship Fund:

5. For the last five years there has been a small hardship fund to assist households which have been experiencing exceptional hardship. It is anticipated that the current year's budget for this fund will be adequate. The County, Fire and Police are all contributing towards this fund and they have agreed that they will continue with those contributions for current year 2021/22.

Conclusion

6. We recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 16 December 2021
Subject: Pay Policy Statement
Portfolio Holder: Corporate Services, Councillor D Sunger

Recommending:

That the Cabinet recommends the Pay Policy Statement to Council.

1. Section 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Council to produce a Pay Policy Statement for each financial year setting out details of its remuneration policy. Specifically, it should include the Council's approach to its highest and lowest paid employees.
2. It draws on the Review of Fair Pay in the Public Sector (Will Hutton 2011) and concerns over low pay.
3. The Council's Pay Policy Statement was first published on the Council's website in March 2012. This is updated on an annual basis.
4. The matters which must be included in the statutory Pay Policy Statement are as follows;
 - The Council's policy on the level and elements of remuneration for each chief officer;
 - The Council's policy on the remuneration of its lowest paid employee (together with its definition of 'lowest paid employees' and its reasons for adopting that definition);
 - The Council's policy on the relationship between the remuneration of its chief officers and other officers;
 - The Council's policy on specific aspects of chief officers' remuneration: remuneration on recruitment, increases and additions to remuneration, use of performance-related pay and bonuses, termination payments and transparency.
5. The Act defines remuneration in broad terms and guidance suggests that it is to include not just pay but also charges, fees, allowances, benefits in kind, increases in/enhancements of pension entitlements and termination payments.
6. The draft Pay Policy Statement for 2022/2023 sets out the Council's current practices and policies and is attached at Appendix 1. The amendments are highlighted.
7. Changes to the various policies and guidelines will continue to be agreed in accordance with current practices.

Conclusion

8. We recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2022/23

Introduction

Epping Forest District Council is located adjacent to three outer London boroughs and on the Central Line into the City of London. Residents have easy access to major motorway routes as both the M11 and M25 run through the district. There is a high incidence of commuting from the district which impacts on the local labour market and levels of pay, particularly for jobs that require skills that are in relatively short supply.

There are some long standing recruitment difficulties and retention issues in key skill areas and the Council is making every effort to manage skill shortages with apprenticeships, including higher level apprenticeships, introducing a new recruitment strategy and streamlined processes, working with Public Practice to encourage planners, designers working in the private sector to work in the public sector.

The situation is not static and is capable of changing very rapidly, but the Council continually considers steps regarding pay and allowances that are designed to assist with recruitment and retention.

This Statement reflects the Council's current pay, pension and leave policies and strategies which will be amended over time to deal with changing circumstances. These documents play an important role in attracting and retaining the best people to the Council.

All decisions on pay and reward for Chief Officers will comply with the Council's current Pay Policy Statement.

Legislation

Section 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011 requires English and Welsh Councils to produce a Pay Policy Statement for 2012/2013 and for each financial year thereafter.

The Council's Pay Policy Statement;

- Must be approved formally by the Council;
- Must be approved each year;
- May be amended during the course of the financial year; and
- Must be published on the Council's website.

The Pay Policy Statement must include;

- The level and elements of remuneration for each of the Chief Officers;
- The remuneration of its lowest paid employees (together with its definition of 'lowest paid employees' and the Council's reasons for adopting that definition);
- The relationship between the remuneration of its Chief Officers and other Officers; and
- Other aspects of Chief Officers' remuneration; remuneration on recruitment, increases and additions to remuneration, use of performance-related pay and bonuses, termination payments and transparency.

Remuneration is defined widely, to include not just pay but also charges, fees, allowances, benefits in kind, increases/enhancements of pension entitlements and termination payments.

All salaries and calculations are based on full time equivalent (fte).

Publication of the Pay Policy Statement

The Policy has been made available on the Council's website.

Effect of this Policy Statement

Nothing in this Policy Statement enables unilateral changes to employee's terms and conditions. Changes to terms and conditions of employment must follow consultation and negotiation with individuals and recognised trade unions as set out in other agreements and in line with legislation. At the time of approving of this Statement by full Council, a consultation process to change pay and allowances arrangements is ongoing.

Pay Arrangements

During 2018/19 negotiations took place with the recognised trade unions to move pay away from National Conditions to local arrangements.

The outcome of these negotiations resulted in a Collective Agreement and local pay arrangements were implemented with effect from 1 October 2019. The local pay scales can be found at Appendix 1 (pay is at 1 April 2020). At this point, Inner Fringe London Allowance was incorporated into salary scales, and no longer forms part of separate pay bargaining.

Grades no longer contain incremental points, and employees are paid at a spot salary within the grade range. Incremental progression, therefore, no longer applies but progression within grade can be applied in accordance with pay policy. Placement within the respective Grade Zones is also in accordance with pay policy.

Grades for roles will continue to be determined by the NJC Job Evaluation Scheme implemented through our Job Family Framework.

Pay Awards

For the future, Epping Forest salary ranges will be benchmarked against the Public & Not for Profit Market, and NJC pay awards will no longer apply, although the Council has agreed that annual pay awards will be no less than the NJC Award.

The Council will consider pay awards annually, and any award agreed will be applied at 1 April.

Remuneration of Chief Officers

The Council will not agree any pay arrangement which does not reflect the correct employment and/or tax/NI status of a Chief Officer or employee.

It will be the responsibility of Council to agree the initial salaries for Chief Officers following external advice/evaluation/benchmarking. At Epping, Chief Officers are determined as the Chief Executive, Strategic Directors and Chief Operating Officer.

Chief Executive

The Chief Executive is paid a spot salary of £146,000 which includes compensation for all other allowances that might normally apply (i.e. evening meeting payments). The Chief Executive may also benefit from a performance payment of up to £5,000 (non-consolidated) if targets and objectives, set by the Leader of the Council and Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny and Committee, together with an independent facilitator, are met. ~~For future years, any performance payment will be unconsolidated unless a further review of base salary is undertaken.~~

The Chief Executive is also the Council's Head of Paid Service and the Returning Officer (for which additional fees are paid).

Strategic Directors

In January 2020, Cabinet agreed a new organisation structure which permanently established 2 Strategic Director roles and a role of Chief Operating Officer, all at a spot salary of £116,725 together with the opportunity of flexibility of benefits. **One Strategic Director is currently seconded to Qualis.**

Termination Payments

On ceasing to be employed by the Council, individuals will only receive compensation:

- in circumstances that are relevant (e.g. redundancy), and
- in accordance with our published Pension Policy on how we exercise the various employer discretions provided by the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), and/or that complies with the specific term(s) of a compromise agreement.

All employees with contracts of 3 months or more are automatically enrolled into the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), which is administered by Essex County Council. Payments on grounds of Redundancy are covered by the Council's Redundancy and Efficiency Payments Policy.

All employees are treated in the same way with regard to the calculation of severance payments in situations of redundancy.

Statutory Roles

The statutory roles of Monitoring Officer and 'Section 151' Officer will be carried out by the Head of Legal and the Strategic Director. These positions do not need to be held by Chief Officers. The Monitoring Officer role will receive an additional £5,000 supplement for these statutory responsibilities. The 'Section 151' Officer has this in their base salary.

Definition of Lowest Paid Employees

For the purpose of this Policy Statement, employees on grade A are defined as our lowest-paid employees.

At 1 April 2021, the fte annual value of the minimum of the Growth Zone of Grade A was £19,021.

The exceptions to the lowest grade are Apprentices who are paid £160 per week. When apprentices move into year 2 of their placement, they receive the minimum wage for their age.

Pay Multiples

The Hutton Review raised concerns about multiples in the order of 20 or higher between the lowest and the highest paid employees in local authorities. However the Interim Report noted that the most top to bottom pay multiples in the public sector are in the region of 8:1 to 12:1. The Council is therefore content that having due regard for the level of responsibilities and personal accountability between the lowest and highest paid roles, the current multiple of 7.6 seems to be both justifiable and equitable.

The council does not set the remuneration of any individual or group of posts by reference to a multiple. However, as suggested by the Hutton Review the Council will monitor multiples over time to ensure they are appropriate and fair and will explain significant changes in pay multiples. The multiples are as following;

Role	2021/2022	
	Multiple	Salary
Chief Executive compared to lowest salary	x 7.6	£146,000
Strategic Directors compared to lowest salary	x 6.1	£116,725
Average salary compared to Chief Executive	x 3.9	£36,883
Average salary compared to lowest salary	x 1.9	£36,883

- The average salary is based on fte and has not been pro-rata'd for part-time employees
- The lowest fte salary in the Council is £19,021 in 2021/2022

Other Payments

Market Supplements may be paid in accordance with the Council's Policy for Payment of Market Supplements (although where necessary to secure or retain the employment of essential staff, other means may be applied to achieve the same outcome).

Honorarium or ex-gratia payments will be paid in accordance with our Additional Payments Policy.

The Council does not currently apply performance related pay or bonuses (except for in the case of the Chief Executive), but this may change generally at a future date, and may be applied as part of a personal contract of employment if required to secure the employment

and retention of essential employees. Under local pay arrangements, the Council may consider the award of a Council wide or Team bonus at any point paid, on the basis of agreed targets/outputs. Such bonus will take the form of an unconsolidated payment and will not affect substantive pay.

These policies are applied consistently to all employees.

APPENDIX 1

Grade	Growth Zone £	Salary for Role £	Exception Zone £
A	19021 – 19430	19530	19630 – 19694
B	19794 – 20291	20391	20491 – 20809
C	20909 – 22011	22111	22211 – 22636
D	22736 – 24801	24901	25101 – 25986
E	26086 – 28737	28837	28937 – 30046
F	30146 – 32883	32983	33083 – 33903
G	34003 – 37863	37963	38063 – 38978
H	39078 – 42974	43074	43174 - 44154
I	44254 - 48188	48288	48388 - 50955
J	51055 - 55176	55276	55376 - 58263
K	58363 - 62085	62185	62285 - 63945

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 16 December 2021
Subject: Calendar of Meetings 2022/23
Portfolio Holder: Customer & Partnerships, Councillor S Kane

Recommending:

That Cabinet recommends the Council adopt the Calendar of Meetings for 2022/23.

1. The Council considers the calendar of meetings each year. The calendar has been developed over time to meet the changing needs of the authority and again no fundamental changes have been proposed.

2. This year, the focus has been to ensure that the correct report lines are created to allow the relevant committees to become informed, to scrutinise and make valuable contribution to the decisions of Council. Emphasis has been made in relation to the financial framework and the scrutiny of the Medium-Term Financial Plan which includes the Budget Strategy and Capital programmes. Democratic Services have consulted the various departments to ensure that their requirements for reporting have been considered.

3. Friday evenings have continued to be kept free of meetings, and any encroachment into August has been kept to a bare minimum due to holidays. However, the Regulatory Committees have always continued to meet throughout August in the past and this practice has been continued.

The Executive

3. The Cabinet is scheduled to meet 9 times throughout 2022/23 and the Cabinet Sub-Committees have been scheduled for four times a year.

Overview & Scrutiny

4. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is scheduled to meet 6 times throughout 2022/23, with the first of these meetings to confirm the membership and Chairmen of each Select Committee.

5. The Select Committees have again been scheduled to meet 4 times a year with the addition of two extra meetings for Stronger Council and one for Stronger Communities. The purpose of these extra meetings is to allow for timely Quarterly Performance reporting, financial scrutiny and for an entire meeting to be dedicated to the District Police Commander and related reports.

Planning

6. The Area Planning Sub-Committees continue to meet on a four-weekly cycle with DDMC meetings meeting on an 8-weekly cycle.

7. The week of the Annual Council meeting has again been kept free of Planning meetings. However, Planning meetings have been arranged for the other weeks in May between the Election and the Annual Council meeting, to prevent any detrimental impact upon the Planning Performance Indicators.

Licensing

8. Licensing Sub-Committee meetings have remained on the first Tuesday morning of each month and additional meetings have been provisionally set aside due to an increase of applications in previously years.

9. There have been no evening meetings for Licensing in 2021/22 and this continues although a Premises Review could be held in the evening if the Chairman of the Licensing Committee felt that it would be in the public interest to do so. All members of the Licensing Committee continue to meet twice a year to consider policy and procedural matters.

Miscellaneous Committees

10. Both the Youth Council and the Local Highways Panel have not been included in this schedule as it is felt that they are meetings which sit outside the Council Calendar. The Youth Council have their own programme, and although the Local Highways Panel involves both the County and District Councillors, they are not organised by the District Council.

11. The Appointments Panel has been scheduled for Tuesday 17 May a week before the Annual Council and following the Local Elections on 5 May 2022.

12. The Local Councils Liaison Committee will again meet twice in the year.

13. In addition, there are various Portfolio Holder Advisory Group and Partnership Boards which will be organised outside of the formal calendar process as well.

Conclusion

14. The Council is requested to consider the draft Calendar of Council meetings for 2022/23, as attached at Appendix 1, and whether any further changes are required.

We recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.

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Report to the Council

Committee: Constitution Working Group

Chairman: Councillor S Rackham

Date: 16 December 2021

1. **Review of Article 4 The Full Council Terms of Reference sub-paragraph 1(c)**
 - (1) **Recommending that the following amendments to Article 4, 1(c) be made as detailed in Appendix 2; and**
 - (2) **That pursuant to Recommendation (1) above, the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make necessary revisions to the Council's Constitution.**
- 1.1 This review has occurred as a result of questions from members on a Constitution training course in May 2021 on whether the plans and strategies listed in sub-paragraph 1(c) of Article 4 needed to be updated.
- 1.2 The plans, policies and strategies make up the Council's strategy framework and have been agreed by Full Council. However, some strategies may not necessarily need to go to Council as it depends on their degree of influence, and it may be sufficient for some to go to a scrutiny committee and then to Cabinet.
- 1.3 The Working Group makes the following recommendations to each plan / strategy listed in Appendix 1 below. Additionally, two name changes are also proposed for Council to consider.
- 1.4 The agreement of the recommendations set out above will require the following revisions to the Constitution, as below. The plans / strategies to keep are shown in 'bold', while those to be removed are shown as 'strikethroughs'.
 - Article 4 – The Full Council – Terms of Reference, sub-paragraph 1(c).
- 1.5 We recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.

<u>Plan / Strategy</u>	<u>Date Last Agreed</u>	<u>Term of Plan / Strategy</u>	<u>Recommendations by Constitution Working Group on 23-Nov-21</u>
Asset Management Plan (Strategy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asset Management Strategy agreed by Cabinet 13 June 2019. 	N/A	REMOVE – to go to Stronger Council SC then to Cabinet.
Capital Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommended to Council by AGC 22-Mar-21. On agenda for Council meeting 28-Oct-21 	5 years	KEEP – to go to Audit & Governance Committee then to Council.
Community Plan / Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interim Council & Community Plan considered by FPM Cabinet Committee 23-Jan-20 (updates on achievements with the Corporate Plan) Sustainable Community Strategy agreed by Council 14-Dec-10 	1 year 21 years	REMOVE.
Corporate Plan	21 December 2017	5 years	KEEP – to go to Council.
Crime & Disorder Reduction Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reported to the Stronger Communities Select Committee on 30-Mar-21 known as the Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership Plan 	1 year	KEEP – to go to Stronger Communities SC then to Council.
Leisure & Cultural Strategy	16-Dec-14	10 years	REMOVE – to go to scrutiny select committee(s) then to Cabinet. PFH should ensure title of strategy adequately reflects what is in the strategy.
Local Plan, plus plans / strategies which comprise the Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Process ongoing and not yet complete Submission Version of the Local Plan 2017 agreed by Council 14-Dec-17 Draft Local Plan agreed by Council 18-Oct-16 for consultation. 	2033	KEEP – to go to Council.
Economic Development Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consulted on in 2019 and submitted to Stronger Place Select Committee, but no evidence of it being adopted by Council. 	-	REMOVE – to go to scrutiny committee then to Cabinet.
Housing Investment Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was agreed as part of the detailed Directorate budgets up to 2016. Superseded by 'New House Builds' in the HRA and the Council Housebuilding Programme agreed by Cabinet. Still agreed as part of the budget proposals each year: 25-Feb-21 	1 year	KEEP – to go to Audit & Governance Committee, then Cabinet and then to Council. Recommendation to change name to "30-year Housing Revenue Business Plan".

Local Transport Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No direct evidence of adoption by Full Council recently but might now be superseded by the Transport policies in the Local Plan. 	-	REMOVE.
Social Inclusion Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No direct evidence of adoption by Full Council recently. References to it in the Annual (Good) Governance Statement up to 2008. 	-	REMOVE.
Statutory Statement of Accounts	25 February 2020	2018/19	REMOVED – to go to Audit & Governance Committee <i>(incorporated in Constitution update of 12 Nov 21).</i>

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ARTICLE 4 – THE FULL COUNCIL

Terms of Reference

1. The Council, and only the Council, will exercise the following functions:
 - (a) Adoption of and changes to the Constitution;
 - (b) Approval of, adoption of and revisions to the policy framework and the budget. (The budget includes the allocation of financial resources to different services and projects, proposed contingency funds, setting the Council Tax and decisions relating to the control of the Council's borrowing requirement, the control of its capital expenditure and the setting of virement limits);
 - (c) Adoption of the following:
 - ~~Asset Management Plan~~
 - Capital Strategy**
 - ~~Community Plan/Strategy~~
 - Corporate Plan**
 - Crime and Disorder Reduction Strategy or Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership Plan**
 - ~~Leisure and Cultural Strategy~~
 - Local Plan and plans and strategies which comprise the Plan**
 - ~~Economic Development Strategy~~
 - Housing Investment Programme or 30-year Housing Revenue Business Plan**
 - ~~Local Transport Plan~~
 - ~~Social Inclusion Strategy~~

Other plans which it decides, as a matter of local choice, should be the responsibility of the Council to adopt or are otherwise required by statute.
 - (d) Approval of any application to the Secretary of State in respect of any Housing Land transfer, which includes but is not limited to, the approval or adoption of applications (whether in draft form or not) to the Secretary of State for approval of a programme of disposal of 500 or more properties to a person under the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993 or to dispose of land used for residential purposes where approval is required under Sections 32 or 43 of the Housing Act 1985;
 - (e) Adoption of the Council's Code of Conduct;
 - (f) Subject to the urgency procedure, contained in the Access to Information Procedure Rules in Part 4 of the Constitution, making decisions about any matter in the discharge of an executive function which is covered by the policy framework or the budget where the decision maker is minded to make it in a manner which would be contrary to the policy framework or contrary to/or not wholly in accordance with the budget;
 - (g) Election/Appointment of the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Council;
 - (h) Appointing the Leader of the Council;

- (i) Appointments to Committees and Sub-Committees (including Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen) by recommendation of the Appointments Panel (if required) except those relating to Executive functions which are the responsibility of the Leader of Council and those delegated to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- (j) Agreeing and amending the terms of reference for Committees, except those relating to Executive functions which are the responsibility of the Executive and those delegated to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- (k) Appointing representatives to outside bodies except those relating to executive functions which are the responsibility of the Leader of Council;
- (l) Adopting an allowances scheme under Article 2 as set out in Part 6 of this Constitution and setting the allowances of the Chairman and Vice Chairman of Council;
- (m) Confirming the appointment or dismissal of the Head of Paid Service;
- (n) Agreeing proposals for redundancy of Chief Executive, Directors, Monitoring Officer, Deputy Monitoring Officer and Chief Financial Officer;
- (o) Making, amending, revoking, re-enacting or adopting bylaws and promoting or opposing the making of local legislation or personal Bills;
- (p) All local choice functions set out in Part 3 of this Constitution which the Council decides should be undertaken by itself rather than the executive;
- (q) Approval of or changes to the scheme of Council delegation set out in Part 3 of this Constitution; and
- (r) The appointment of Honorary Aldermen and Alderwomen under the procedure agreed by the Council on 20 December 2018.
- (s) The appointment of Member Champions under the procedure agreed by the Council on 30 July 2019.
- (t) All matters that fall to the Council as set out in the Council procedure rules in Part 4 of this Constitution.

Council Meetings

2. There are three types of Council meeting:

(a) The annual meeting

The annual meeting will take place within 21 days of the retirement of the outgoing councillors, no later than June each year.

The annual meeting will:

- (i) elect a person to preside if the Chairman of the Council is not present;
- (ii) elect the Chairman of the Council;
- (iii) appoint the Vice-Chairman of the Council;

- (iv) approve the minutes of the last meeting;
- (v) receive any announcements from the Chairman of the Council;
- (vi) elect the Leader of the Council;
- (vii) be notified by the Leader of the Council of appointments to the Cabinet, on the establishment of Cabinet Committees and memberships, delegation of Executive responsibilities to Cabinet members and officers and appointments to outside organisations carrying out executive functions;
- (viii) Receive a report from the Appointments Panel and determine those appointments that are the responsibility of the Council, including the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of Committees, Panels and Groups, and appointments to outside bodies;
- (ix) agree the scheme of delegation of functions which are not the responsibility of the Leader of Council;
- (x) approve a programme of ordinary meetings of the Council for the year;
- (xi) consider any business set out in the notice convening the meeting;

(b) Ordinary meetings

Ordinary meetings of the Council will take place in accordance with a programme decided at the Council's annual meeting. Ordinary meetings will:

- (i) elect a person to preside if the Chairman and Vice-Chairman are not present;
- (ii) approve the Minutes of the last meeting;
- (iii) receive any declarations of interest from members;
- (iv) receive any announcements from the Chairman of the Council, the Leader of the Council and members of the Executive;
- (v) receive questions from and provide answers to the public and members of the Council in relation to matters which in the opinion of the person presiding at the meeting are relevant to the business of the meeting in the following order:
 1. Public Questions
 2. Questions under Notice by Councillors
 3. Questions by Councillors to the Leader of Council, Cabinet members and the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on written reports and on questions without notice on other matters in accordance with rules set out in the rules for questions set out in the Rules in Part 4 of this Constitution.
- (vi) receive reports from the Leader of the Council on the appointment of a Deputy Leader, the Cabinet, Cabinet Committees, Responsibilities of Cabinet members, appointments to outside organisations which are the responsibility of the Executive and delegation of Cabinet functions to officers;

- (vii) receive a report from the Leader of the Council on any delegation of executive functions to Joint Committees and local Committees;
- (viii) receive written reports from the Leader of the Council, the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and each of the Portfolio Holders and receive questions and answers on any of those reports or any matters falling within their area of responsibility;
- (ix) receive reports about and receive questions and answers on the business of joint arrangements and external organisations;
- (x) consider motions;
- (xi) consider any other business specified in the summons to the meeting, including consideration of proposals from the executive in relation to the Council's budget and policy framework and reports of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees for debate, including annual reports for both Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Executive on their activities in April of each Council year;
- (xii) any matter of public concern allocated to any ordinary Council meeting for the purpose of debate;
- (xiii) deal with any items of business deemed by the Chairman as urgent business in accordance with Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972.
- (xiv) debate and respond to petitions where the number of signatures meets or exceeds the trigger level contained in the Council's petitions scheme

(c) Extraordinary meetings.

An extraordinary meeting of the Council shall transact the business set out in the agenda but shall exclude motions and questions. Single Issue Council meetings will be an extraordinary meeting.

Responsibility for Functions

3. The Council will keep up to date the tables in Part 3 of this Constitution setting out the responsibilities for the Council's functions which are not the responsibility of the Executive.

Report to Council

Date of meeting: 16 December 2021

Chairman: Councillor M Sartin

Democratic Services Officer: V Messenger (01992 564243)



Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny progress report for November be noted.**

Report:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 18 November 2021

1. The Chairman, Councillor M Sartin, advised members that a call-in of Housing Services Portfolio Holder Decision PFH-004-2021/22 by Councillor C C Pond and four other councillors had led to an informal meeting being held on 1 November 2021, which had been productive. A follow-up meeting on 6 December 2021 would be reporting back on alternative tree planting sites.
2. The Committee reviewed the FY21/22 quarter 2 Corporate Performance Reporting but only for projects at red or amber status (exceptions). The KPI data now showed comparisons to the previous quarter. Performance project officers were relooking at the KPI data in its entirety to understand the processes behind them and would share any information on this at a future meeting. Members queried the Waltham Abbey Community and Cultural Hub, Green Infrastructure Strategy, number of families in bed and breakfast accommodation for 6 weeks+, the new waste collection leaflet, the rent arrears KPI, if there would be a KPI for electric vehicle charging points, the percentage of workforce by ethnicity and staff sickness absence.
3. Members received a short presentation as I Braddick (HGGT Lead) introduced the report outlining the reasons and ambitions crucial to the endorsement of the HGGT Transport Strategy. It had been developed to meet the ambitions for sustainable movement set out within the HGGT vision, against the backdrop of the challenges of future travel demand linked to planned growth as set out in the Council's emerging Local Plan. The Council had declared a climate emergency in 2019. With transport now the largest contributor to UK greenhouse gas emissions, the HGGT transport strategy supported the highest commitment across the Garden Town Authorities to become carbon-neutral by 2030. Key to this was making it easier to choose to travel sustainably, by providing reliable and high quality sustainable and active travel routes, and by creating connected communities and safe, enjoyable streets that offered local facilities and travel options for everyday activities. Members scrutinised the transport strategy, as I Braddick and N Polaine (HGGT Director) answered their questions, and it will be going before Cabinet on 25 January 2022.
4. Members had the opportunity to review the Executive's current programme of Key Decisions of 1 November 2021 when it was noted that the Local Plan Inspector has still to reply to the Council and the new trees policy has yet to go to Cabinet.
5. The Committee reviewed its own work programme. The Princess Alexandra Hospital Trust representatives, Michael Meredith and Jill Hogan, have accepted the invite to attend an extra Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 7 December 2021 at 19.00. The Committee will also be reviewing the Council's Market Policy.
6. The select committee chairmen also updated the Committee on recent business transacted at meetings and the current status of their respective work programmes. It was agreed that the next joint meeting should discuss the alignment of the select committees' Terms of Reference with the Council's corporate aims, as detailed in the Cabinet's forward plan.

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Report to the Council

Committee: **Audit & Governance**
Date: **16 December 2021**
Subject: **Anti-Fraud & Corruption Strategy**
Chairman: **Councillor I Hadley**

Recommending:

That the Anti-Fraud & Corruption Strategy be approved.

The Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy has been revised and is attached at Appendix A. The changes, shown in bold and underlined, are minor in nature and intended to strengthen the overall framework.

The Audit and Governance Committee reviewed and referred the revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy to the Council for approval at its meeting on 22 November 2021.

We recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.

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APPENDIX A

Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy

(Including Anti-Money Laundering Policy)

November 2021



Epping Forest District Council

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Epping Forest District Council



Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy

Section 1 – Purpose of the Strategy

Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) is committed to high legal, ethical and moral standards, and the proper accountability of public funds.

The Council will not tolerate fraud and corruption in the administration of its responsibilities, whether from inside or outside the Council.

The Council's expectation of propriety and accountability is that Members and staff at all levels will lead by example in ensuring adherence to legal requirements, rules, procedures and practices.

The Council also expects that individuals and organisations with which it comes into contact will act towards the Council with integrity.

The purpose of this Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy is to support the Council's 2018-23 Corporate Plan by protecting the public purse as every pound lost through fraud cannot be spent on Council services. In particular, this strategy:

- Sets out the aims and long-term vision of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption framework
- Outlines the Council's approach to Anti-Fraud and Corruption
- Outlines the expected outcomes along with how the Council intends to achieve and monitor these

Section 2 – Key Objectives

The key objectives of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption framework are to:

- protect the Council's resources and assets, ensuring they are used as intended;
- maintain a culture where fraud or corruption is not tolerated; and
- ensure staff and Members demonstrate the highest standards of honesty and integrity at all times.

This Strategy also supports the national Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally Strategy 2020 which advocates turning strategy into action by councils considering their counter fraud response and performance against each of the six 'C' themes:

- **Culture** – creating a culture where countering fraud and abuse is an accepted part of the Authority’s normal business model and where fraud and corruption are unacceptable in line with the Council’s Values & Behaviours
- **Capability** - Assessing the full range of fraud risks and ensuring that the range of anti-fraud measures deployed is appropriate and proportionate to those risks.
- **Capacity** – deploying the correct level of resources to deal with the level of fraud risk including the maintaining of a Corporate Fraud Investigation Team staffed by fully accredited investigators and ensuring that these resources are monitored by those charged with the Council’s governance.
- **Competence** – having the right skills and standards throughout the Council’s services which are commensurate with the full range of counter fraud and corruption activity
- **Communications** – raising awareness internally and externally, deterring fraudsters, sharing information and celebrating successes
- **Collaboration** – working together across internal and external boundaries, with colleagues, with other local authorities, and with other agencies; sharing resources, skills and learning, good practice, innovation and information.

Section 3 – Definitions

In law, fraud is deliberate deception to secure unfair or unlawful gain, or to deprive a victim of a legal right. The purpose of fraud may be monetary gain or other benefits, such as obtaining a home or a job with the Council by way of false statement

Corruption is a form of dishonest or unethical conduct by a person entrusted with a position of authority, often to acquire personal benefit. Corruption may include many activities including bribery which can be defined as the offering, giving, soliciting or acceptance of an inducement or reward which may influence the action of any person”.

Both can be encompassed by the term “economic crime”, which refers to a broad category of activity involving money, finance or assets, the purpose of which is to unlawfully obtain a profit or advantage for the perpetrator or cause loss to others.

Section 4 – Strategic Response

The principles of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy are focussed on the following four pillars of activity (as taken from the aforementioned 2020 Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally Strategy). These are:

- Govern
- Acknowledge
- Prevent
- Pursue
- These principles are supported by one overarching pillar which is Protect.

Govern	Acknowledge	Prevent	Pursue
Having a holistic approach to tackling fraud is part of good governance	Acknowledge and understanding fraud and corruption risks	Preventing and detecting more fraud and corruption	Being stronger in punishing fraud and corruption/recovering losses
Having robust arrangements and executive support to ensure anti-fraud, bribery and corruption measures are embedded throughout the organisation.	<p>Assessing and understanding fraud and corruption risks</p> <p>Committing the right support and resources to tackling fraud and corruption</p> <p>Maintaining and demonstrating a robust anti-fraud and corruption response</p> <p>Communicating the risks to those charged with governance</p>	<p>Making better use of information and technology</p> <p>Enhancing fraud and corruption controls and processes</p> <p>Developing a more effective anti-fraud and corruption culture</p> <p>Communicating its activities and processes</p>	<p>Prioritising fraud recovery and the use of civil sanctions</p> <p>Developing capability and capacity to punish corruption and fraudsters</p> <p>Collaborating with fellow practitioners across geographical and sectoral boundaries</p> <p>Learning lessons and closing the gaps</p>

Govern	Acknowledge	Prevent	Pursue
Some specific examples for Epping Forest District Council			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Fraud Team that reports into the Corporate Governance Group and the Audit and Governance Committee • Counter Fraud activities and monitoring included in the Audit Committee's Terms of Reference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk management process • Fraud /corruption proofing policy and processes • Fraud and corruption awareness and training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistleblowing policy • Strong internal control culture • Staff and supplier vetting • Participation in the National Fraud Initiative and the Pan-Essex Council Tax matching campaign • Staff and Member Code of Conduct and Declarations of Interest • Information security and IT policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fraud response plan • Appropriate levels of powers, application of sanctions and prosecutions • Collaboration and where practicable, joint investigations / prosecutions with other Authority fraud teams

Protect
<p>Recognising the harm that fraud and corruption can cause both in the Authority and the community. Protecting itself and its' residents from fraud.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting against serious and organised crime, protecting individuals from becoming victims of crime and protecting against the harm that fraud can do to the community. • For Epping Forest District Council, this will also cover protecting public funds, protecting the Council from fraud and cybercrime and also protecting itself from future frauds.

Section 5 – Key Fraud and Corruption Risks

It is important that the Council recognises and manages the risks relating to fraud and corruption in order to prevent them from occurring. Furthermore, it is imperative that these risks are routinely considered as part of the Council's overall approach to risk management. In order to understand the nature of these risks, the following have been identified as key issues that are relevant to EFDC:

- Social Housing Tenancy Fraud – this includes risks such as fraudulent housing applications, mutual exchanges, illegal subletting etc.
- The Right to Buy scheme – fraudulent applications and suspected money laundering
- Money Laundering – Exposure to suspect transactions
- Council Tax – fraudulently claimed discounts (including Local Council Tax Support), refund scams
- Non-Domestic Rates – fraudulent applications for exemptions, unlisted properties
- Grants (including Disabled Facilities Grants) – false eligibility and applications, diverted funds, works not carried out.
- Insurance Fraud – suspected false claims particularly those relating to personal injury
- Planning Fraud – risk of manipulation, collusion, potential conflicts of interest, bribery etc.
- No recourse to public funds – fraudulent eligibility for Council services such as Social Housing
- Payroll Fraud – false and “ghost” employees, overtime and mileage claims, expenses.
- Internal Frauds – such as fund diversion, accepting bribes, stealing monies and / or Council property, social housing misallocations for personal gain, working elsewhere whilst off sick, abuse of position such as misuse of assets / resources.
- **HR related fraud – such as false information on job applications, bogus qualifications / references, failing to declare previous convictions etc.**
- Procurement Fraud – tendering issues, split contracts, double invoicing
- Cyber Crime / Fraud – frauds such as false applications for services, fund diversion.
- Commission of Services: including joint commissioning, joint ventures, commercial services, third sector partnerships – conflicts of interest, collusion etc.

It is important to note that the above represents the key fraud risk areas and examples of each. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

As with the culture, the concept of fraud prevention applies to the organisation from top to bottom.

The United Kingdom Anti-Corruption Strategy 2017-22 sets out a long-term framework for tackling corruption. For local government, including Epping Forest District Council, this sets out the following goals which have been considered as part of this strategy:

- Greater procurement transparency, enabling better identification and mitigation of corruption risks.

- Strengthened awareness and capability within contracting authorities leading to a stronger awareness of corruption risks and more capability to detect and deter illegality.

Section 6 – The Council’s Approach to combatting Fraud & Corruption.

The prevention and detection of fraud and corruption and the protection of the public purse is everyone’s responsibility and this should permeate throughout the authority at every level. The key components in achieving this are:

Being Proactive

- Actively strengthening the anti-fraud culture to increase resilience to fraud
- Preventing fraud through the implementation of appropriate and robust internal controls including robust procurement and cyber security measures
- Increasing fraud and corruption awareness of Council officers, Members, Contractors and residents
- Deterring fraud attempts by publicising the actions the Council takes against corruption and fraudsters

Reactive Responses

- Detecting fraud and corruption through data and intelligence analysis
- Implementing effective whistleblowing arrangements
- Robustly investigating fraud and corruption referrals
- Applying sanctions, both civil and criminal
- Seeking redress, including the recovery of assets and money utilising all methods available.

The Role of the Corporate Fraud Team

The Corporate Fraud Team role is in both the prevention and investigation of instances of suspected fraud against the Council. Fraud awareness training is given to officers within the Council to assist in ensuring that any cases referred to the team contain good quality information to assist with the investigation. All investigations are carried out in accordance with the respective legislation.

In cases where the offence is deliberate and serious enough to warrant prosecution, consideration will be given to the Council’s **own policies as well as The Code for Crown Prosecutors** ~~fraud prosecution / sanction policy~~. If deemed appropriate legal proceedings will be undertaken in conjunction with Legal Services and / or other bodies such as the Police. Utilising the provisions of Section 222 of The Local

Government Act 1972, the Corporate Fraud Team in conjunction with Legal Services are appropriately authorised to undertake criminal prosecutions.

The table below lists the suggested approach and expected outcomes against each of the four pillars of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy, which will be supported by a rolling action plan and annual Corporate Fraud Team Strategy:

Principle	Approach	Expected Outcome
Govern by having a holistic approach to tackling fraud	Oversight and performance monitored through the regular Corporate Fraud Team updates, Corporate Governance Group and the Audit and Governance Committee meetings	Delivery of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Plan that tackles both internal and external fraud
Acknowledging and understanding fraud and corruption risks	<p>Using the risk management process to assess current and future fraud and corruption risks</p> <p>Continued cultural change and increase in fraud and corruption awareness both internally and outside of the Council</p> <p>Annual fraud report through central collection of fraud data</p> <p>Improved sharing of fraud and corruption threats, information and intelligence both internally and externally</p>	<p>Increased reporting of cases</p> <p>Increased awareness of anti-fraud and corruption process and procedures throughout the Council</p> <p><u>Increasing ownership of the fraud risks in service areas</u></p>
Preventing and detecting more fraud and corruption	<p>Fraud and corruption proofing of policy and processes</p> <p>Better use of data and technology to prevent and detect fraud and corruption</p> <p>Assessment of the Council's internal controls framework to ensure it remains robust</p> <p>Supporting anti-fraud and corruption policies and procedures including whistleblowing and money laundering</p>	<p>Increased levels of anti-fraud and corruption awareness</p> <p>When fraud or corruption has occurred because of a breakdown in the Council's systems or procedures, the Section 151 Officer will ensure that the appropriate improvements in the control systems are implemented to prevent a recurrence.</p> <p>Any significant control issues are reported in the Annual Governance Statement along with actions taken to address</p>

Principle	Approach	Expected Outcome
		the issue.
Be stronger in punishing fraud and corruption and recovering losses	Maintain and further develop capacity and capability to investigate and prosecute fraud and corruption Consistent and effective response for dealing with fraud and corruption cases	Successful use of sanctions and/or prosecution Reduce the losses as a result of fraud or corruption and fully utilise available methods of loss recovery (e.g. POCA (Proceeds of Crimes Act))

Section 7 – Responsibility for implementing this strategy

Responsibility	Role
Chief Executive	Ultimately responsible for preventing and detecting theft, fraud and corruption and promoting an anti-fraud and corruption culture.
Members	As elected representatives, all Members of the Council have a duty to the public to maintain the highest standards of conduct and ethics, and to ensure the Council is open and transparent in all the decisions it makes. Members are required to adhere to the Council's constitution, which incorporates a Member Code of Conduct.
Standards Committee	Monitoring the operation of the Code of Conduct and to take remedial action when required.
Audit and Governance Committee	To satisfy itself there are adequate arrangements in place to manage risk (including that relating to fraud and corruption) effectively. To monitor Council policies on Anti-Fraud and Corruption and to receive periodic reports on fraud and corruption.
Corporate Governance Group	Develop, review and maintain the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Framework.
Senior Management Team	Ensuring all Staff follow this Strategy and any related policies and procedures, supported by the Council's Internal Audit, Corporate Fraud and Human Resources functions.
Section 151 Officer	Has a statutory responsibility under the Local Government Act 1972 for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs. Where irregularities, fraud or corruption are suspected the S151 Officer should be informed. On being informed of an alleged irregularity, fraud or corruption the S151 Officer will determine the arrangements for investigating the matter in line with the Council's Fraud Response

Responsibility	Role
	Plan.
Monitoring Officer	Under the Local Government Act 1972 has the specific duty to ensure that the Council, its Officers, and its Elected Councillors, maintain the highest standards of conduct in all they do. They also advise the Council on the legality of their decisions.
Managers (all levels)	Responsible for preventing and detecting fraud and corruption and ensuring they operate effective mechanisms in their area of control to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent theft, fraud and corruption thereby safeguarding the Council's assets and interests • Promote employee awareness <u>and take ownership of the fraud risks specific to their area(s)</u> • Assess the risk of fraud and corruption and take appropriate action • Take prompt action in line with the Fraud Response Plan where they suspect or are alerted to possible theft, fraud or corruption
All staff	All staff have a responsibility to prevent, detect and report on fraud and corruption or suspected cases.
Partners and Contractors	Required to comply with the Council's policies and procedures when undertaking work for and jointly with the Council
External Audit	Under the International Standard on Auditing 240, when conducting an audit External Audit are responsible for obtaining reasonable assurance that the financial statements taken as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error.
Internal Audit	Providing assurance on the effectiveness of systems and procedures to prevent and detect fraud and corruption (by undertaking audits). Supporting managers in minimising fraud and corruption related risk and are alert in all their work to risks and exposures that could allow fraud and corruption to take place.

Section 8 - Supporting Policies, Procedures and Processes

In addition to this document, the Council has a range of policies, procedures and processes in place to formalise arrangements for the prevention, detection and investigation of fraud and corruption. These include:

- Fraud Response Plan (Appendix 1 of this document)
- Anti-Bribery Policy (Appendix 2 of this document)

- Anti-Money Laundering Policy (Appendix 3 of this document)
- Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure (located on the Council's Intranet)
- Employee and Member Codes of Conduct (located on the Council's Intranet, Public facing website and published as part of the Constitution)
- Financial Regulations (located on the Council's Intranet and published as part of the Constitution)
- Procurement Rules located on the Council's Intranet and published as part of the Constitution)
- CIPFA Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally Strategy 2020:
<https://www.cifas.org.uk/insight/public-affairs-policy/fighting-fraud-corruption-local-authorities/FFCL-Strategy-2020>
- United Kingdom Anti Corruption Strategy 2017 – 2022:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/667221/6_3323_Anti-Corruption_Strategy_WEB.pdf

Section 9 - Policy Reporting, Review and Monitoring Performance

This Strategy can only be varied with the collective agreement of the Chief Executive, the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer.

It will be the responsibility of the Senior Management Team, via the Corporate Governance Group, to ensure there are adequate resources to support the action plan.

The Audit and Governance Committee will receive regular fraud updates to assist in their oversight of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and arrangements.

Appendix 1

Epping Forest District Council Fraud Response Plan

Introduction

The Fraud Response Plan defines the way in which the Council applies its various policies and procedures to suspected instances of theft, fraud corruption and bribery. It fits in with and is designed to be read in conjunction with the Council's Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy, Anti-Bribery Policy, Anti Money Laundering Policy and the Whistleblowing / Confidential Reporting Policy. The aim of this plan is to provide clear guidance for dealing with these issues, access to rapid relevant advice and a guide for managers on how to react and deal with suspicions of fraud, theft, corruption and bribery.

Additionally, it seeks to give a brief outline on how investigations will be progressed (although no detail will be given regarding investigation techniques etc.).

The Fraud Response Plan is designed to ensure timely and effective action in the event of suspected fraud by:

- Seeking to minimise the extent of the fraud by taking prompt action
- Preventing further losses where fraud had occurred.
- Maximising the recovery (or the chances of recovering) any financial losses
- Ensuring the accuracy and integrity of evidence for successful criminal prosecution and / or disciplinary action
- The early identification of any system weaknesses and the lessons to be learnt for preventing them in the future
- Maximising positive publicity where frauds are discovered and dealt with.
- Deterring others from any illegal / inappropriate conduct they may be committing or contemplating.

The Manager's Role in dealing with suspected fraud

First Response

Where managers suspect a fraud or involvement in a fraud is taking place, the first course of action must be to contact the Section 151 Officer, Chief Internal Auditor or the Corporate Fraud Manager who will ensure that the Section 151 Officer and the Chief Executive are informed.

Although, the Council no longer investigates Housing Benefit fraud, where a suspicion occurs of a staff member's involvement in a Housing Benefit (including Local Council Tax Support) fraud, the above steps should still be followed.

All other suspicions of benefit fraud (including Local Council Tax Support) must be reported to the Compliance Manager within the Revenue and Benefits Division. Suspicions can also be reported directly to The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) via their website (www.gov.uk/report-benefit-fraud) or by calling the National Benefit Fraud Hotline on 0800 854440 or by textphone on 0800 328 0512. It may be prudent to seek the advice of either The Corporate Fraud Manager or The Compliance Manager before contacting the DWP as Local Council Tax Support cannot be investigated by the DWP.

In usual circumstances, the suspicion will be passed to the Corporate Fraud Team to assess and undertake an investigation if appropriate. The Corporate Fraud Manager / Chief Internal Auditor will retain overall responsibility for the conduct of the investigation; however, it is probable that the matter will be allocated to a member of the Corporate Fraud Team to undertake any investigation. As part of the Internal Audit service, the Corporate Fraud Team will be independent of any service area under investigation and all of the officers comprising the Corporate Fraud Team are fully trained and accredited investigators each holding the qualification of Accredited Counter Fraud Officer / Specialist whilst the Corporate Fraud Manager also holds the qualification of Accredited Counter Fraud Manager.

There may be circumstances where it is appropriate for managers to undertake some preliminary enquiries to ascertain the validity of an allegation or irregularity (for example, to establish whether on the face of it, there is a case to be investigated), however, before embarking on such action, advice should always be sought from a member of the Corporate Fraud Team as such action may alert the fraudster and could result in the concealing or destroying of vital evidence or compromise the investigation and the collection of further evidence.

The investigating officer will liaise and work with The People Team at the earliest available opportunity on disciplinary matters such as suspending the staff member to enable further investigation and protect vital evidence.

Initial Enquiries

As stated above, the manager may make discreet initial enquiries in order to:

- Determine any facts that gave rise to the suspicion
- Examine any factors to determine whether there has been a genuine mistake made or whether an irregularity has occurred

Any actions and findings should be clearly recorded and documented ensuring that access is restricted (for example, not held on an "open" area of the computer network or in the case of paper notes, making sure they are securely locked away).

It is important that the suspected perpetrator is not interviewed at this stage nor any allegations / suspicions put to them. If in doubt at any point, the manager must seek the guidance of the Corporate Fraud Team or the Chief Internal Auditor.

Formal Investigation

If a formal investigation is required, it will be conducted by a qualified Corporate Fraud Investigator unless determined otherwise by the Section 151 Officer or Chief Executive. The nature of the investigation, lines of enquiry followed, and evidence obtained will vary depending on the irregularity being investigated and will, for the most part be fluid and reactive. Generally, however, the investigating officer will be seeking to gather evidence by way of interviews, the taking of written witness statements and the obtaining of evidence be it physical, documentary etc.

The investigating officer will consult and take advice from The People Team particularly on matters regarding employment law, policies and procedural matters. It is imperative however, that a clear distinction must be made in these circumstances between those advising the investigating officer and those advising the staff member.

Legal Services will be consulted as appropriate to advise or seek external advice in order to support any investigation.

Any investigation will be conducted with full compliance with The Criminal Procedures and Investigations Act 1996 which governs the conduct of a criminal investigation (such as obtaining and recording evidence etc.) as well as any other legislation that may apply such as The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE), The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA), The Human Rights Act 1998, The General Data Protection Regulation / Data Protection Act 2018 etc. (this list is meant as an example and is not exhaustive).

In general terms however, the following principles will apply to the investigation:

- Any investigation will be conducted promptly (subject to evidence gathering activities) with periodic updates given as appropriate to the Chief Internal Auditor / the relevant Service Director or the Section 151 Officer
- All actions and evidence will be recorded either by written or electronic means and stored securely with access given purely on a “need to know” basis.
- Enquiries and evidence gathering activities will be undertaken as discreetly as possible with sensitivities observed where appropriate.
- Confidentiality will be maintained throughout with information only shared where circumstances and the law allows.

Where it is considered appropriate, the investigation may involve the input of other agencies such as local authorities as well as other law enforcement agencies such as the Police and HM Revenue & Customs. Liaison and / or joint working will be conducted in accordance with established guidelines and protocols.

The investigating officer must not and will not accept any offer of repayment of monies or resignation at any stage during the investigation, however, any such offers will be noted and recorded on the investigation file and reported to the Chief Internal Auditor and responsible Service Director.

The Council has a right to suspend any employee involved pending the outcome of an investigation. Any such suspension, is, in the opinion of the Council, a neutral act and does not imply any guilt on behalf of the suspended employee. The suspension of an employee can, in some circumstances aid the speed in which an investigation can be conducted and serve to preserve vital evidence.

When suspects are not suspended, supervision of the employee will usually need to be increased and any manager should seek the advice of The People Team and ICT on how this can best be accomplished.

Actions following the completion of an investigation

Upon the completion of an investigation, the investigating officer will report their findings in the first instance to the Corporate Fraud Manager, Chief Internal Auditor and S151 Officer, who will in turn make the findings known to The People Team, relevant Service Director or the Chief Executive as appropriate.

In the case of any monetary losses, a report will be given to the Council's Insurance Officer.

Should any control weaknesses be identified, the Service Director and relevant manager will be informed, and remedies be actioned immediately. The Chief Internal Auditor / Internal Audit Service will be able to provide advice and support regarding effective control mechanisms.

Should there be disciplinary issues identified as part of the investigation, a full report will be made to The People Team who will work with the relevant Service Director and manager to decide what happens next. Should any course of action result in a disciplinary hearing, the investigating officer will (if required) make themselves available to give evidence at the hearing.

Although some organisations delay the bringing of any disciplinary action pending the outcome of any criminal prosecution, the Council will seek to deal with any disciplinary matters using the appropriate processes.

Should it be the case that criminal action presents itself as an option, this decision will be fully explored and subject to the Council's Fraud Prosecution Policy. Should fraud be proven, the Council will make every effort to recover any monetary losses. The method of doing so may vary depending on the type of loss and relevant legislation, however all options will be explored including civil court proceedings and in the case of criminal prosecution, proceedings brought under The Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

Appendix 2

Anti-Bribery Policy

Objective of this policy

This policy provides a coherent and consistent framework to enable Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) Members and employees to understand and implement arrangements enabling compliance. In conjunction with related policies and key documents it will also enable Members and employees to identify and effectively report a potential breach.

We require that Members and all staff, including those permanently employed, temporary agency staff and contractors:

- act honestly and with integrity at all times and safeguard the organisation's resources for which they are responsible
- comply with the spirit, as well as the letter, of the laws and regulations of all jurisdictions in which the Council operates, in respect of the lawful and responsible conduct of activities.

Scope of this policy

This policy applies to all of the Council's activities. For partners, joint ventures, agents and suppliers, we will seek to promote the adoption of policies consistent with the principles set out in this policy.

Within the Council, the responsibility to control the risk of bribery occurring resides at all levels of the Council. It does not rest solely within assurance functions, but in all business units and corporate functions.

This policy covers all staff, including all levels and grades, those permanently employed, temporary agency staff, contractors, agents, elected Members, co-opted members of the public, volunteers and consultants.

The Council's commitment to action

The Council commits to:

- Setting out a clear anti-bribery policy and keeping it up to date
- Making all Members and employees aware of their responsibilities to adhere strictly to this policy at all times

- Raising awareness and where appropriate offer training so Members and employees can recognise and avoid the use of bribery by themselves and others
- Encouraging its Members and employees to be vigilant and to report any suspicions of bribery, providing them with suitable channels of communication and ensuring sensitive information is treated appropriately
- Rigorously investigating instances of alleged bribery and assisting police and other appropriate authorities in any resultant prosecution
- Taking firm and vigorous action against any individual(s) involved in bribery
- Provide information to Members and employees to report breaches and suspected breaches of this policy
- Include appropriate clauses in contracts to prevent bribery.

Facilitation payments

Facilitation payments are not tolerated and are illegal. Facilitation payments are unofficial payments made to public officials in order to secure or expedite actions.

Gifts and hospitality

This policy does not change the requirements of our gifts and hospitality policy. This makes it clear that:

Sample tokens of modest value (for example, pens, diaries or calendars) whether given personally, or received in the post, may be retained unless they could be regarded as an inducement or reward.

You should refuse the offer or invitation (or return the gift) unless your Service Director has advised you that it may be accepted or retained. This agreement needs to be documented.

Public contracts and failure to prevent bribery

One of the main changes introduced by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 is that a company will no longer face permanent debarment (referred to as an 'exclusion' in the 2015 Regulations) from bidding for public contracts following a corporate conviction for certain economic crimes. Instead, a company will face a period of debarment and will be able to recover eligibility to bid for public contracts if it has undergone a 'self-cleaning' process.

Member and Staff responsibilities

All Members and staff are required to avoid activity that breaches this policy. The prevention, detection and reporting of bribery and other forms of corruption are the responsibility of all those working for the Council or under its control.

Members and staff must:

- ensure that they read, understand and comply with this policy
- raise concerns as soon as possible if they believe or suspect that a conflict with this policy has occurred or may occur in the future.

Staff

As well as the possibility of civil action and criminal prosecution, staff who breach this policy may face disciplinary action, which could result in summary dismissal for gross misconduct. Dismissal can still be an outcome with or without civil action or criminal prosecution.

Members

The Member Code of Conduct requires that where a Member acts as a representative of the Council he or she must not use or attempt to use their position as a Member improperly to confer on or secure for them self or any other person, an advantage or disadvantage.

Allegations against a Member for breach will be routed through the Standards complaints process administered by the Monitoring Officer.

Raising a concern

This Council is committed to ensuring that all of us have a safe, reliable, and confidential way of reporting any suspicious activity. We want Members and each and every member of staff to know how they can raise concerns.

We all have a responsibility to help detect, prevent and report instances of bribery. If you have a concern regarding a suspected instance of bribery or corruption, please speak up – your information and assistance will help. The sooner you act, the sooner it can be resolved.

Preferably the disclosure will be made and resolved internally (e.g. to a Service Manager/Service Director or the Chief Internal Auditor). Secondly, where internal disclosure proves inappropriate, concerns can be raised with the External Auditor or relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations.

Concerns can be reported anonymously. In the event that an incident of bribery is reported, we will act as soon as possible to evaluate the situation. We have a clearly defined Anti Fraud and Corruption Strategy which sets out procedures for investigating fraud, misconduct and non-compliance issues and these will be followed in any investigation of this kind.

Members and staff who refuse to accept a bribe, or those who raise concerns can understandably be worried about the repercussions. The Council aims to encourage openness and will support anyone who raises a genuine concern in good faith under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

The Council is committed to ensuring nobody suffers detrimental treatment through refusing to take part in bribery, or because of reporting a concern in good faith.

Appendix 3

Anti-Money Laundering Policy

Introduction

The Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Transfer of Funds (Information on the Payer) Regulations 2017 (MLR 2017) came into force on 26 June 2017. They implement the EU's 4th Directive on Money Laundering. In doing so, they replace the Money Laundering Regulations 2007 (MLR 2007) and the Transfer of Funds (Information on the Payer) Regulations 2007 which were previously in force.

A key difference is that relevant persons are obliged to adopt a more risk-based approach towards anti-money laundering, in particular in how they conduct due diligence. Determining the appropriate level of due diligence requires analysis of risk factors based on the EU Directive and which are set out in MLR 2017.

Whilst Local Authorities are not directly covered by the requirements of the Money Laundering Regulations 2017, guidance from finance and legal professions, including the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA), indicates that public service organisations should comply with the underlying spirit of the legislation and regulations and put in place appropriate and proportionate anti-money laundering safeguards and reporting arrangements. Epping Forest District Council is committed to the highest possible standards of conduct and has, therefore, put in place appropriate and proportionate anti-money laundering safeguards and reporting arrangements.

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all employees and contractors, whether permanent or temporary, and Members of the Council.

Its aim is to enable employees and Members to respond to a concern they have in the course of their dealings for the Council. Individuals who have a concern relating to a matter outside work should contact the Police.

Definition of Money Laundering

The most common motive for crime is financial gain or to obtain valuable property. Whenever criminals do anything with that financial gain or criminal property, they 'launder' it. Money laundering offences are serious; they carry sentences of up to 14 years imprisonment, but criminals and their associates still commit them every day.

Money laundering is the process by which criminals try to hide the origin of the proceeds of their crimes, making it look as if those proceeds were acquired legitimately. In doing so, criminal property obtained unlawfully is turned into property or money that can be accessed via legitimate methods without arousing suspicion. In other words, 'laundering' is the process of turning 'dirty' money into 'clean' money.

Money laundering has three distinct phases. They are:

- Placement; the movement of criminally obtained money into the wider economy;
- Layering; undertaking transactions (perhaps bogus) to conceal the origin of the money; and
- Integration; making it look as if money has come from a legitimate source.

Two distinct offences affect employees, contractors and Members of the Council

- Failure to disclose one of the offences listed above, where there are reasonable grounds for knowledge or suspicion.
- Tipping off a person(s) who is or is suspected of being involved in money laundering in such a way as to reduce the likelihood of or prejudice an investigation.

Although the term 'money laundering' is generally used to describe the activities of organised crime, for most people it will involve a suspicion that someone they know, or know of, is benefiting financially from dishonest activities.

Successful money laundering means criminals can enjoy the fruits of their criminality and fund further criminal activity. Stopping money laundering disrupts organised crime by removing the life-blood of the 'business' and prevents low level criminals from moving up into major level crime.

Requirements of the Money Laundering Legislation

The main requirements of the legislation are:

- To appoint a money laundering reporting officer.
- Maintain client identification procedures known as know your customer (KYC) and know your business (KYB).
- Implement a procedure to enable the reporting of suspicions of money laundering.
- Maintain record keeping procedures.

The Money Laundering Reporting Officer (MLRO)

The Council must appoint an MLRO to act as the focal point within the organisation for money laundering matters. The MLRO is responsible for:

- receiving disclosures from other staff; and

- deciding whether disclosures should be passed on to National Crime Agency (NCA).

The MLRO must keep copies of all disclosures received by them, notes of action taken and copies of all correspondence with NCA and other agencies.

Identifying and disclosing suspicious transactions

Whilst the risk to the Council of contravening the legislation is low, it is extremely important that all are familiar with their legal responsibilities; serious criminal sanctions may be imposed for breaches of the legislation.

A key requirement is for every-one to promptly report any suspected money laundering activity to the Money Laundering Reporting officer (MLRO) Possible Signs of Money Laundering

It is not possible to give a definitive list of ways in which to spot money laundering but facts which tend to suggest that something "odd" is happening may be sufficient for a reasonable suspicion of money laundering to arise. The following are the types of risk factors which may, either alone or cumulatively with other factors suggest the possibility of money laundering activity:

- A new customer with no previous history with the Council;
- A secretive customer: for example, one who refuses to provide requested information without a reasonable explanation;
- Concerns about the honesty, integrity or identity of a customer;
- Illogical third-party transactions: for example, unnecessary routing or receipt of funds from third parties or through third party accounts;
- Involvement of an unconnected third party without logical reason or explanation;
- Payment of a substantial sum in cash;
- Overpayments by a customer
- Absence of an obvious legitimate source of the funds
- ; • Movement of funds to and from overseas;
- Where, without reasonable explanation, the size, nature and frequency of transactions or instructions is out of line with normal expectations;
- Cancellation or reversal of an earlier transaction.
- Cash transactions made that are significantly outside of normal expectations.

Epping Forest District Council will consider the threats to Council being used by money launderers and put systems in place to guard against them. Policies and procedures should be laid out clearly so that all relevant staff understand and have access to them.

The officer nominated to receive disclosures about money laundering activity within the Council is the Section 151 Officer Andrew Small. He can be contacted as follows:

Andrew Small - Section 151 Officer / Strategic Director
Civic Offices
Epping
Essex
CM16 4BZ

Email: asmall@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

In the absence of the MLRO, Christopher Hartgrove the deputy MLRO (also the deputy Section 151 Officer) should be contacted in their absence on Extension 2532 or by email at: chartgrove@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

All suspicions should be reported directly to the MLRO or his deputy using the relevant documentation, which can be found at Appendix Four of this document.

Client Identification Procedures

The Council has developed formal client identification procedures which must be followed when Council land or property is being sold. These procedures require individuals and if appropriate, companies to provide proof of identity and current address (KYC).

All verification documents are capable of being forged and can be bought over the internet. For this reason, industry guidance usually recommends face-to-face meetings with new clients. Excuses for non-attendance and excuses for missing documents should be explored and treated with some scepticism.

The Council must identify its customers and verify that identity on the basis of documents, data or information obtained from a reliable source. Where there is a beneficial owner who is not the customer then the Council must identify that person and verify the identity and where the beneficial owner is a trust or similar then the Council must understand the nature of the control structure of that trust. Finally, the Council must obtain information on the purpose and intended nature of the business relationship. The MLR 2017 introduces the need for the Council to consider both customer and geographical risk factors in deciding what due diligence is required.

If satisfactory evidence is not obtained at the outset of a matter, then the transaction must not be progressed, and a disclosure report must be submitted to the Money Laundering Reporting Officer.

The Council is also obliged to maintain ongoing monitoring of its business relationships which means it must scrutinise transactions throughout the course of the relationship to ensure that the transactions are consistent with the Council's knowledge of the customer and keep the information about the customer up to date.

Enhanced Customer Due Diligence and Ongoing Monitoring

In certain circumstances, it will be necessary to undertake what is known in the Regulations as Enhanced Customer Due Diligence. In summary, this will be necessary where:

- The customer has not been physically present for identification purposes; or
- In any other situation which by its nature can present a higher risk of money laundering or terrorist financing.

Where this applies, the Council will need to take adequate measures to compensate for the higher risk. For example, this will mean ensuring that the customer's identity is established by additional documents, data or information.

Similarly, where the Council is in an ongoing business relationship with a customer,

the Regulations impose a special obligation to carry out ongoing monitoring. This means that the Council must:

- scrutinise transactions undertaken throughout the course of the relationship to make sure that these transactions are consistent with the Council's knowledge of the customer and their business and risk profile
- keep documents, data or information obtained for the purpose of applying Customer Due Diligence measures up to date.

All personal data must be collected, kept or destroyed in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation and The Data Protection Act 2018.

In order for the Council to be as effective at combatting this type of crime as possible, the following measures should be implemented wherever possible:

- No payment to the Council should automatically be accepted in cash (including notes, coins or travellers cheques in any currency) if it exceeds £10,000. This can be a single transaction, or a group of related transactions. However, it is important to be vigilant when receiving any cash payment over £1,000. This does not, however, mean that cash transactions below this value will be valid and legal and should not arise any suspicion. Professional scepticism should remain at all times.
- Staff who collect cash payments are asked to provide the details of any cash transaction over £10,000 to the MLRO so that precautionary checks can be performed. It is best practice to insist on payment by cheque or electronically from a UK clearing bank.
- The Council, in the normal operation of its services, accept payments from individuals and organisations. If an employee has no reason to suspect or know that money laundering activity is taking/has taken place and if the money offered is less than £10,000 in cash as payment or part payment for goods/services offered by the Authority then there is no need to seek guidance from the MLRO. If a member of staff has reasonable grounds to suspect money laundering activities or proceeds of crime, or is simply suspicious, the matter should still be reported to the MLRO. If the money offered is £10,000 or more in cash, then payment must not be accepted until guidance has been received from the MLRO even if this means the person has to be asked to wait.
- Any officer involved in a transaction of this kind should ensure that the person provides satisfactory evidence of their identity personally, through passport/photo driving licence plus one other document providing evidence of current address in the form of a bank statement, credit card statement, mortgage or insurance details or a utility bill covering the previous 3 month period. Where the other party is a company, this can be done through company formation documents or business rate bill.

Reporting Procedure for Suspicions of Money Laundering

Where you know or suspect that money laundering activity is taking/has taken

place or become concerned that your involvement in a matter may amount to a prohibited act under the Act, you must disclose this as soon as practicable to the MLRO. The disclosure should be within “hours” of the information coming to your attention, not weeks or months later.

Your disclosure should be made to the MLRO using the disclosure report; the report must include as much detail as possible including

- Full details of the people involved
- Full details of the nature of their/your involvement.
- The types of money laundering activity involved
- The dates of such activities
- Whether the transactions have happened, are ongoing or are imminent;
- Where they took place;
- How they were undertaken;
- The (likely) amount of money/assets involved;
- Why, exactly, you are suspicious.

Along with any other available information to enable the MLRO to make a sound judgment as to whether there are reasonable grounds for knowledge or suspicion of money laundering and to enable him to prepare his report to the National Crime Agency (NCA), where appropriate. You should also enclose copies of any relevant supporting documentation.

Once you have reported the matter to the MLRO you must follow any directions he may give you. You must NOT make any further enquiries into the matter yourself: any necessary investigation will be undertaken by the NCA. Simply report your suspicions to the MLRO who will refer the matter on to the NCA if appropriate. All members of staff will be required to co-operate with the MLRO and the authorities during any subsequent money laundering investigation.

Similarly, at no time and under no circumstances should you voice any suspicions to the person(s) whom you suspect of money laundering, even if the NCA has given consent to a particular transaction proceeding, without the specific consent of the MLRO; otherwise you may commit a criminal offence of “tipping off”.

Do not, therefore, make any reference on a client file to a report having been made to the MLRO – should the client exercise their right to see the file, then such a note will obviously tip them off to the report having been made and may render you liable to prosecution. The MLRO will keep the appropriate records in a confidential manner.

Consideration of the disclosure by the Money Laundering Reporting Officer

Upon receipt of a disclosure report, the MLRO must note the date of receipt on his section of the report and acknowledge receipt of it. They should also advise you of the timescale within which he expects to respond to you.

The MLRO will consider the report and any other available internal information they

think relevant e.g.:

- reviewing other transaction patterns and volumes;
- the length of any business relationship involved;
- the number of any one-off transactions and linked one-off transactions;
- any identification evidence held;

And undertake such other reasonable inquiries they think appropriate in order to ensure that all available information is taken into account in deciding whether a report to the NCA is required (such enquiries being made in such a way as to avoid any appearance of tipping off those involved). The MLRO may also need to discuss the report with you.

Once the MLRO has evaluated the disclosure report and any other relevant information, he must make a timely determination as to whether:

- there is actual or suspected money laundering taking place; or
- there are reasonable grounds to know or suspect that is the case; and
- whether he needs to seek consent from the NCA for a particular transaction to proceed.

Where the MLRO does so conclude, then they must disclose the matter as soon as practicable to the NCA on their standard report form and in the prescribed manner, unless they have a reasonable excuse for non-disclosure to the NCA (for example, if you are a lawyer and you wish to claim legal professional privilege for not disclosing the information).

Where the MLRO suspects money laundering but has a reasonable excuse for non-disclosure, then they must note the report accordingly; they can then immediately give their consent for any ongoing or imminent transactions to proceed.

In cases where legal professional privilege may apply, the MLRO must seek independent legal advice or consult with an Accredited Financial Investigator to decide whether there is a reasonable excuse for not reporting the matter to the NCA.

All disclosure reports referred to the MLRO and reports made by him to the NCA must be retained by the MLRO in a confidential file kept for that purpose, for a minimum of five years.

The MLRO commits a criminal offence if they know or suspect, or has reasonable grounds to do so, through a disclosure being made to them, that another person is engaged in money laundering and they do not disclose this as soon as practicable to the NCA.

Training

Officers considered likely to be exposed to suspicious situations, will be made aware of these by their senior officer and provided with appropriate training.

Additionally, all employees and Members will be familiarised with the legal and regulatory requirements relating to money laundering and how they affect both the Council and themselves.

Notwithstanding the paragraphs above, it is the duty of officers and Members to report all suspicious transactions whether they have received their training or not.

Additional Information can be obtained from:

- <https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/what-we-do/crime-threats/money-laundering-and-illicit-finance>

Appendix 4

Money Laundering Reporting Form

CONFIDENTIAL

**Report to the Money Laundering Reporting Officer (MLRO)
Report of Suspected Money Laundering Activity**

To: Money Laundering Reporting Officer (Epping Forest District Council)

From:

Name of Staff Member Reporting Suspicion	
Job Title	
Service Area	
Telephone Number (inc. any extension)	
Email address	

Details of Suspected Activity

Name and address of ALL persons involved If a company / public body, please include details of the nature of their business	
Nature, value, timing of activity involved Please include full details (what, when, where and how)	Continue on a separate sheet if necessary
Please explain the nature of your suspicions regarding such activity in as much detail as possible.	

	Continue on a separate sheet if necessary
Has any form of investigation been undertaken? If, Yes, please explain what.	Continue on a separate sheet if necessary
Have you discussed your suspicions with any other person? If so, whom?	
Have you consulted any Regulatory / Supervisory Body (e.g. The Law Society)	

Please do not discuss the content of this report with anyone you believe to be involved in the suspected money laundering activity described above. To do so, may constitute the offence of “tipping off” which can carry, upon conviction a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment.

Signed..... Date.....

For Completion by MLRO (EFDC)

Date SAR Received	
Date SAR acknowledged	
Unique Case Reference Number	
Are there reasonable grounds to suspect money laundering activity?	
If Yes, confirm date of report made to NCA	
Is consent required from the NCA to any ongoing or imminent transactions which would otherwise be a prohibited act? If yes, please give full details.	
Date consent received from the NCA	
Date consent given to employee for the transaction to proceed.	
If there are reasonable grounds to suspect money laundering but you have not or do not intend to report the matter to the NCA, please set out the reasons for non-disclosure	

Date consent given by you to the employee for the transaction to proceed	

Signed..... Date.....

THIS REPORT TO BE RETAINED FOR A MINIMUM OF FIVE YEARS

