



NOTICE OF COUNCIL MEETING

You are hereby summoned to a meeting of the EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL to be held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING at 7.00 pm on Tuesday, 5 April 2022 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 / Jackie 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 Chamber and using the lower public seating area, 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 members of the public do not wish to have their image captured they should sit in the upper council chamber public gallery area or otherwise indicate to the Chairman before the start of the meeting.

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).

If you are seated in the lower public seating area 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 move to the upper public gallery.”

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To be announced at the meeting.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To declare interests in any item on the agenda.

4. ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Chairman’s Announcements

5. 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.

(1) Public Question from Mr M Searle

I would like to bring to the attention of the Council that an unknown number of manholes situated on public land in Waltham Abbey are not being inspected or maintained by anyone.

Thames Water, Essex County Council (Highways) and Epping Forest District Council have all stated that it is not their responsibility to inspect and maintain these manholes.

This is a real problem because a number are damaged and hazardous and have been for some time. It's insufficient for the council to say action will be taken once it's made aware of a problem, because by then somebody may have already been injured, as demonstrated when a grandmother out walking her dogs suffered severe leg injuries after falling down one of these neglected and defective manholes.

Councillor Steve Heather, who was contacted last July regarding this matter, stated, after receiving photographic and video evidence of damaged manholes, that "this is a very serious ongoing problem" and "they are death traps in waiting".

Somebody needs to take responsibility because I'm sure nobody disagrees that the health and safety of everyone in Waltham Abbey is paramount and that some system of inspection and maintenance should be in place to prevent further accidents occurring.

Will the council please be proactive rather than reactive and endeavour to find a solution to this very serious issue?

6. 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.

7. REPORTS FROM THE LEADER & MEMBERS OF THE CABINET (Pages 7 - 40)

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).

8. 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.

9. 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**10. ANTI FRAUD AND CORRUPTION STRATEGY (Pages 41 - 72)**

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

11. CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP REPORT (Pages 73 - 80)

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

12. 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.

13. 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.

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 05 April 2022
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

RideLondon

CCW are implementing a comprehensive Activation Plan to maximise the health and wellbeing benefits of the forthcoming RideLondon weekend. Activities on offer include an expanded Cycling 4 Health programme across the district, Bikeability sessions for local children, family and women-only bike rides and bike maintenance workshops.

In partnership with Active Essex, local schools will receive Activation Packs to encourage pupils to get involved in the cycling festival itself and Places Leisure are facilitating competitions, challenges and cycling themed activities in the district's Leisure Centres.

Community Engagement staff are working in partnership with Epping and Ongar Town Councils and Community Champions to organise fan-zones over the weekend itself. Plans involve stalls, music, arts & crafts and fun activities to create a real buzz. Community groups are being encouraged to get involved.

Event organisers, London Marathon Events, will shortly open its London Marathon Charitable Trust to local Third Sector organisations in Epping Forest which inspire activity. During the event's time in Surrey (2013 to 2019), nearly £5 million was granted to a wide range of organisations in the local community.

RideLondon will take place on 28th and 29th May. Full details of the routes are available via the LME website at www.ridelondon.co.uk

Limes Farm Community Engagement

A Community Café established by CCW in The Limes Centre in Chigwell is now being fully managed by local residents. Regular guest speakers and partner organisations drop into the café including, most recently, the Whipps Cross Hospital regeneration consultation team.

Working with community, 500 trees have been planted on the estate, including a special Jubilee tree as part of the Queen's Green Canopy initiative.

The £8,966 funding secured via the BBC has been fully utilised; a community football programme has commenced in partnership with Colebrook Royals FC and support will be given to build capacity and sustainability through offering training and qualifications to local volunteers. Work on the rainbow path leading to the play area is underway and the Community Association will utilise the remainder of the funding on Jubilee celebrations for residents.

Children`s activities in the Civic Offices

During February Half Term CCW delivered children`s workshops in the café space at the Civic Offices. All sessions were fully sold out with 180 children participating over the week. The team received excellent feedback and many compliments about the venue.

Youth Council elections

34 candidates stood in the recent Epping Forest Youth Council elections. CCW staff worked with local secondary schools to ensure the elections ran smoothly and fully replicated the adult voting experience. The count was held in the Civic Offices on 18 March and the election results were formally announced by the Chairman on 22 March.

A tour of the Houses of Parliament has been organised for retiring Youth Councillors by the MP`s office. This had previously been put on hold during lockdown. The new EFYC cohort will visit at a later date as part of their induction.

Youth Activities Map and River Stort clean-up day in Roydon

The online Epping Forest Youth Activities map has been updated and now shows information on 64 groups and activities for young people to join. Following the recent Youth Conference, which was themed around climate action, the refreshed map now also includes 17 nature reserves.

Also in response to the Youth Conference and the Blue and Green Strategy, Youth Councillors will work alongside the River and Canal Trust and Canalability to clean up a part of the river in Roydon. The day will be sponsored by the Jack Petchey Foundation.

Funding success for Epping Forest District Museum

The Museum has been successful in securing £120K from Arts Council England for the ‘Greater in Spirit, Larger in Outlook’ Project. The project will look at the ethnographic collection at the Museum to better understand and interpret the story around its origins, the Buxton family of Warlies and the interpretation of these items in the Museum. The project funding will include the recruitment of staff to specifically support the project, co-curation projects with source communities, engagement work and activities, training and support for Museum staff. As part of this project the Museum will create an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan to ensure the Museum and collections are open and welcome to all, as well as participating in national campaigns such as Black History Month.

An additional £1,200 has been secured from SHARE Museums East to look at the environmental impact of the building to support the Council`s wider initiatives and action plan around this topic.

Since opening on 29th January, the ‘Georgie Meadows: Stitched Drawings’ exhibition has attracted over 1000 visitors to the Museum. A new contactless donation point has been established to enable visitors to support exhibitions in an easy, accessible way.

The Museum education service continues to be in high demand with schools. In person sessions at the Museum have been taking place every Thursday as well as sessions in schools and virtual delivery. The past 12 months has seen over 7000 pupils engage with the education programme.

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 5 April 2022
Subject: Corporate Services Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Darshan 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 – consultation ends on 11 March 2022
- Housing Asset and Property Team - service review - consultation commences 15 March 2022

People Strategy 2020 – 2022

Attracting, On-Boarding and Retaining Talent

- iTrent have redesigned the Employee Self Service (ESS) module and this is now available (as of 28th February). The new design includes summary cards on the main dashboard for quick access to information such as payslips, new organisational chart view, improved response to size of device being used and includes improved accessibility ensuring it is compliant with the latest web content accessibility guidelines.
- Our exit interview questionnaire has been launched, the Register of Interests questionnaire has been delayed, the new launch date will align with the launch of the Onboarding portal (original date was the 1st October).

Developing our skills and behaviours

- Our eLearning system Litmos continues to be built. In addition to previous Subject Matter Experts mentioned we are now working with Council Tax & Benefits, and Community, Health and Wellbeing for volunteers, to explore how the system can be used for these specific group's learning needs. A report went to the last Stronger Council Select Committee recommending the use of Litmos for members learning and development needs (to be managed by the Member Contact team).
- Skill Pills - A new series of Skill Pills is being run for all employees between June – Dec 2022. These are 60–90 minute sessions accessible by all employees. They will cover a variety of topics to support digital skills development.

- The 21/22 Leadership Programme comes to an end in April 22, there will be a full evaluation via the Litmos LMS. This insight will be used to plan the next phase of management and leadership development for all managers/ leaders.
- Great success to report with our Apprentices; EFDC have had the first apprentice to achieve a Level 4 IRRV in Council Tax/ Benefits. This apprentice came to EFDC 6 years ago as a 16-year-old straight from school. Also, one of our construction apprentices, who was taken on straight from college has now (9 years later) been successfully appointed as Operations Manager at Qualis.

Engagement and Wellbeing project

- A new Mental Health First Aid training cohort will start in April 2022. On completion this will bring the total of MHFA's at EFDC to over 90 (far exceeding the 60 recommended by MHFA England). There was a Menopause Mentors workshop in February where 30 MHFAs learnt information and skills to support those going through Menopause.
- Perkbox sign up is currently 91% of the organisation, we have a total of 554 activated employees logged into the site to access the fantastic employee benefits and tools with over 7617 perk redemptions so far. The free monthly treat is the most popular downloaded perk with 877 redemptions followed by Tesco's 518 and M&S 285 redemptions.
- Our third Workbuzz survey opened on 1st March 2022, employees can tell us what's working well and make suggestions for improvements. Managers have now been sent data from the December 2021 survey which include engagement dashboards which will filter through to 'you said - we did' engagement for the future. We encourage our employees to complete the surveys and be an important part of organisational change at EFDC. We also encourage managers to check out their dashboards and raise awareness of the surveys in team meetings and 1-1's with employees.

Our Ways of Working (OWOW) – Creating Our Tomorrow

- The People Team are continuing to improve our Employee Engagement and Wellbeing, including a new 'Creating Our Tomorrow' survey for May 2022.

Business Support

Local Land Charges (LLC), HMLR Project

- HMLR issued a delivery plan to EFDC on 21st February 2022, with an estimated go live date of December 2022. EFDC are yet to sign the plan off, as we are reviewing some of the individual milestone dates.
- Data correction work is continuing, with an estimated 14,000 records left to update. HMLR have taken responsibility for correcting around 9,000 of those records, as a supportive measure.
- EFDC and HMLR are meeting on 10th March to discuss EFDC signing off the delivery plan. Once signed off, EFDC will receive one third of the £75,000 transition payment. Given the volume of data corrections required in the proposed time frame, we will use some of that payment to fund additional hours across the team.
- HMLR will inform the MHCLG once this final phase of the project is in flight, this allows a 12-week grace period on the monitoring of our LLC search turnaround times, which are usually expected to be a maximum of a 10 day. Although we are given this grace period, we do need to balance the project with BAU, as we do not want there to be a detrimental impact on those purchasing properties within the district. The team will hold daily huddles to review the project progress as well as the LLC search turnaround times and move resource around as required.

Projects

Purchase cards

- We are due to pilot the new purchase cards and online portal with our current card holders, before rolling out to eligible Officers across the rest of the organisation.
- Once this solution is fully rolled out we will see a decrease in up to 60% of our orders that are dealt with via the manual purchase order and invoice process.

Print to Post

- The Council continues to migrate service areas over to the PSL print to post solution, with Legal and Parking next to migrate.
- A report is going to Cabinet in April recommending the direct award of the print to post contract to our current supplier.

Accommodation – Commercialisation of our bookable spaces

- We have an excellent opportunity to partner with IWG and Epping Regus (our tenant on the top floor of the Civic Offices) for the advertising and booking management of our Conference Suite at the Civic Offices.
- Regus is IWG's brand and they are the world's largest flexible workspace company, operating across 120 countries, in 3,500 locations, with over 7 million users. Some of their clients include Amazon, Apple and Disney.
- A Portfolio Holder (PFH) report with additional detail is being drafted for Cllr Philip as the PFH for Finance.

Soft Facilities Management

- The new Corporate Cleaning contract is in place for the Civic and Corporate estate and the team are working with the supplier to review the hours of cleaning required, with the view to decrease our current expenditure.

Storage and Archiving

- The North Weald archive store has now been emptied and the North Weald Airfield storage is due to be emptied over the next couple of weeks, which is the final phase of this project.

Multi-Functional Devices (MFD) replacement programme

- The original timeline of this project has been slightly delayed due to some resource changes within the Project Management Office; however, the Project Manager is working with Business Support to go out to the organisation to understand what our internal print requirements are. Once captured, we can carry out a review of which items need to be printed/which items can be managed electronically, then look into which of the printed items could migrate to our print to post solution, then see what we are left with internally to put into a tender briefing.

Corporate Health and Safety

- Risk Assessment training for managers is still on course for completion as planned. All guidance and templates are now uploaded to the Health and Safety intranet pages.

- Initial meetings and work have taken place as part of the Incident Management Team review. Unfortunately the first meeting was interrupted by a genuine emergency but further meetings are organised to accomplish the tasks.
- A draft Health and Safety Policy has been submitted for consideration.

Contingency Planning

- Safety Advisory Groups (SAGs) are taking place for events across the district the most resource intensive is the Ride London event in May. The Civic will be used as a local Command, Control & Communications venue for event organisers, Police and Ambulance as well as our own teams who are supporting the event with Community engagement activities. The Civic will be closed to all staff this weekend and Regus have been made aware, due to road closures access will be impossible by vehicle. This is all under control and managed well by an internal team including Health & Safety/ Contingency Planning.

Insurance

- The Council's Insurance Programme and Leaseholder Building Insurance went live on the procurement portal on 21 February 2022. We are in clarification questions period and all bids must be returned to the Council via the procurement portal by 8 April 2022. Evaluation will then take place and the successful bidder will be awarded on the 30 May 2022.
- A new Motor Risk Group has been established to review and update our policies and procedures.

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 05 April 2021
Subject: Customer and Partnerships Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Sam Kane

Recommending:

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

In my update to you this Council I would like to focus on the recent work of the Revenues and Benefits team whose work often goes unseen supporting thousands of our residents and businesses with their bills and benefit claims. The team has also continued to provide multiple Covid-related support packages to residents and businesses, all within existing resources. I would like to thank the team for their efforts this year in delivering on these challenges.

At the last Council meeting the Council's budget and Council Tax amounts were set. Work then transfers to the Revenues and Benefit teams to update the ICT systems and then produce the necessary Council Tax bills, along with Business Rates bills and Local Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit notifications for the coming year. As Members will appreciate this is a technical exercise that requires extensive logistical planning and delivery in a matter of a few weeks. I am pleased to inform Members that the exercise was again delivered on time and I have laid out below the numbers involved:

Council Tax debit raised 2022/23	£114,435,092
Council Tax bills posted	53,009
Council Tax e-bills	6,320
Business Rates debit raised 2022/23	£34,607,153
Business Rates bills posted	4,356
Business Rates e-bills	108
Benefit notification letters sent	7,305

I would also like to inform Members of the number of phone calls that the Revenues and Benefits team have taken over the period following the annual bills and notifications were sent out. This fell from 3,753 in March 2021 to 2,172 in March 2022, a fall of 42% which is a great result. The number of people actually needing to contact the team following receipt of their bills has been attributed to improved signposting to the website for information and better co-ordination of the delivery of Council Tax Bills and Benefit notification letters to claimants.

Of the calls that the team received a number related to the Government's £150 Council Tax Energy Rebate. An explanatory form provided by Government was

issued with all bills. To provide some immediate relief to rising energy costs, while targeting those most likely to require support, Councils including EFDC will provide a £150 one-off payment to council taxpayers for every household that occupy a property which meets certain criteria on **1 April 2022** the main ones being:

- It is valued in council tax bands **A – D**.
- It is **someone's sole or main residence** (therefore **won't** be paid for empty properties or second homes);

How will the Rebate be paid?

The Revenues and Benefits team will again be administering this scheme. For clarification the Rebate is not applied as a discount to people's Council Tax bills – it is a direct payment to eligible recipients (Council Tax data is being used as the vehicle to direct the payments)

The Rebates will be paid as soon as possible from April 2022.

a) Where we hold live direct debit instructions for a council taxpayer of an eligible household

Automatic payment (BACS) will be made to council taxpayers of eligible households. These will be paid in April 2022.

b) Where we do not hold direct debit instructions

We will contact these households as early as possible in April 2022 to make them aware of the scheme and invite them to make a claim and payment will be arranged via BACS or alternative methods where bank accounts are not held. Such payments need to have been made by 30th September 2022.

Discretionary scheme - £377,550

Councils can determine locally how best to make use of this funding to provide payments to **other** households who are energy bill payers but not covered by the Council Tax Rebate. This could include households living in property valued in bands E – H that are on income related benefits or those where the energy bills payers are not liable for council tax. Support from the Discretionary Fund should consist of no more than £150 per household. We will be bringing a discretionary scheme forward in early financial year 2022/23 to provide guidelines on how we allocate the funds available.

Parking

All Epping Forest Council Car Parks have been awarded with Park Mark national safety award. EFDC car parks have passed rigorous risk assessments conducted by the police and the British Parking Association. The assessments include management and maintenance of the facility, ensuring that there are appropriate levels of lighting, surveillance, signage and cleanliness. These criteria are known to reduce the opportunity for crime and create a safer environment for all car park users.

EFDC have partnered with leading EV charge point supplier, InstaVolt, for the first public charging points in an EFDC operated public car park. The charging points have been successfully installed in Oakwood Hill East Car Park, pending UKPN activation of the units. The chargers will go live 28th March 2022.

New off-street car parking tariffs will be implemented from Monday 4th April 2022. A formal Notice of Variation has been given, with advertisement in the local paper and notices put up in car parks. System upgrades and changes to car park signs are ready and will be updated from Monday 4th April 2022.

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Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 05 April 2022
Subject: Customer and Partnerships
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Sam Kane

Recommending:

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

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Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 05 April 2022
Subject: Environmental and Technical Services
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Nigel Avey

Recommending:

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

Waste Management:

This year we are hoping to bring together and recognise the work with the Epping Forest Community in getting involved in keeping Epping Forest Greener and Cleaner.

Keep Britain Tidy is encouraging us all to pledge to pick up one big bag of litter as part of the Great British Spring Clean 2022.

This year's mass campaign, **from 25 March to 10 April**, calls on families, neighbours, friends and colleagues to join forces and pledge to pick a bag of litter from nearby streets, beauty spots and beaches in order to protect our vibrant communities and precious wildlife habitats.

As well as polluting our streets, parks and beaches, litter harms wildlife, domestic pets and cattle, it also costs Epping Forest District Council a staggering £1.7 million a year to clean up.

Litter picking brings together individuals, community organisations, businesses and councils to make a difference to the environment on their doorsteps – and the charity is keen to stress litter picking can be accessible to everybody with the right resources.

Feedback shows a significant increase in the number of people litter picking in the great outdoors to help their mental wellbeing, following the additional pressures triggered by the pandemic.

We would like to recognise the hard work of our communities and have our special green awards to celebrate this.

How it works, simply

- Collect 10 Bags = Bronze Award
- Collect 20 Bags = Silver Award
- Collect 30 Bags = Gold Award

A special certificate will be awarded to those that take part. Certificate will be awarded for litter collected. Between 25th March to the 10th April.

For further information and to find out how to register and collect a litter pick pack please contact Wastemanagement@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Leisure Management:

Leisure centre usage trends are continuing to progress well in a positive outlook. There had been a slight decrease in usage trends in December 2021 which is normal for the time of year,

but good growth has been seen in the new year. Revenue from the leisure centres has improved due to leisure centre usage trends.

Procurement and Contracts:

The team have been working on creating a new version of the Procurement and Contracts Checklist, which is a tool to help officers ensure they've considered all relevant factors before proceeding with their project. Following a recent Procurement Audit, it was highlighted that the current Checklist was not always being utilised by officers and it has now been overhauled to ensure that it is easy for officers to complete and it captures the relevant information at the right times in the process.

This will come into effect from 01 April 2022 and will be required to be completed for all projects where the spend is more than £25k and/or a contract is required to be put on place for the requirement.

Social Value – Social Value is being used in the majority of tender processes to award additional scores to those bidders who are based locally, use local supply chains, hire local people and/or make other commitments to the local community (such as charitable donations and providing work placements/apprenticeships throughout the duration of the contract).

We are liaising with Essex CC and other authorities to consider signing up to a Social Value Measuring Tool, also looking at other options. This will help us to measure the amount of Social Value we are creating through our procurement, which can sometimes be difficult to quantify.

Contract Register - we are currently updating EFDC's contracts register and will soon be bulk uploading the data onto our e-Procurement system where we will manage the data from then on. The system will then be able to issue reminders at specified points to prompt officers that decisions around re-tendering, extending or ending contracts etc. need to be made.

Environmental Protection and Land Drainage:

The team continues to work on flood and pollution reduction through reviewing planning applications and reactive response work across the district. The team have provided input to ECC's Section 19 flood risk investigations following the flooding incidents in summer of 2021.

The private water supply charging regime has been successfully implemented and sampling is well under way across larger sites that are required to be sampled annually.

The Council Flood Storage Areas annual maintenance work has been completed, as well as essential works across other site including Bobbingworth Nature Reserve where a new ring path has been installed with a grant from ECC via the Countrycare Team.

Highway Rangers:

The rangers continue to work on reported issues from both Essex County Council and those reported by Members and residents. Recent projects include district-wide road sign cleaning and repair, assisting with keeping roads moving during the recent storms by cutting damaged trees and providing traffic management for other teams.

The team installed a purpose made finger post in traditional style at the Mott Street, Church road triangle. The post was made by a local contractor based in Nazeing. The rangers have recently completed installation of four sets of purpose-made wooden oak gates in Sun Street and Market Square Waltham Abbey.

A new full time Highway Ranger has been recruited and joined the team on Monday 21st March which brings the team back to full strength.

Works for highway rangers can be logged with the following link, highway maintenance such as resurfacing, line painting, potholes and private hedges remain the remit of Essex Highways <https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/environment/highway-rangers-service/>

Grounds Maintenance:

The winter works program of shrub and hedge pruning is coming to an end as the new grass cutting season starts. The gardening teams have begun cutting on Council owned verges and open spaces across the district using the ride on machinery where conditions allow. Tractor work is limited at present due to soft ground conditions however as the weather warms the grass surfaces should harden allowing for maintenance cutting. Hand mowing of the communal back gardens is also underway and the weed spraying of obstacles within the grass is being undertaken to allow for reduced mechanical operations throughout the season.

The team have recently purchased 4 small electric vans to assist with operations throughout the district notably hand mowing and line marking. Residents have noticed the electric vehicles and been very positive about change and move to sustainable transport. EV charging stations have been installed at both the Oakwood Hill and Town Mead depots which are easy to use and require a swipe card for the vehicle being charged.

Car parking on soft grass verges continues to be an issue for residents and grounds have assisted with numerous reinstatement works around the district as required.

The spring bedding schemes planted by the Nursery team are providing a magnificent display at the moment and will soon be followed by polyanthus and pansy, and tulips to follow, bringing a welcome splash of colour across the district throughout the coming weeks.

The team provided assistance to Housing with planting of 500 tree-whips to create a wildlife hedgerow on the Limes Farm estate in Chigwell. This community project involved a number of Council departments working together with additional help provided by local residents and volunteers all of which, made the day a great success.

Fleet Operations:

80% of the new electric vehicle fleet is now in service, the old diesel vehicles will be disposed of at a commercial vehicle auction. The new electric fleet has resulted in 50% reduction in expenditure since January 2022.

MOT income has increased again in the last month, with 95% of slots booked.

The team are currently new electronic vehicle inspections/servicing records, this will reduce administration time and the use of paper. 35 staff that have responsibility for driving Council vehicles have now been through the new driver training course to assess their competence and meet Council insurance requirements.

The recruitment of a new Apprentice is ongoing and currently we have a student who attends Harlow college and is a resident of the district is with us two days a week for a month on work experience.

The installation of a new large vehicle lift, and tyre replacement equipment is expected to be fitted by the end of the month to assist in external repairs and a tyre fitting service.

Countryside and Landscape

Since last November the volunteering tasks have been very well attended, 20 volunteers per task not being uncommon. Winter tasks focus on woodland work. Three tasks were held in Chigwell Row Wood to improve the size and biodiversity of the heathland.

Four tasks were held at Linder's Field to improve the drainage, create new ponds, create habitat for amphibians and new hibernacula to increase the carrying capacity for slow worms that are being relocated onto the site. Some drainage solutions, which also constitute creating new ponds, are also being trialled at Home Mead and working successfully. In Abbots Wood Countryside mended the bridge and the residents were very pleased with the quick response. Other days were spent at Roughtalley's Wood and Norton Heath.

Recent storms have caused damage with trees down in Roughtalley's Wood and some of the other sites too. Most have been dealt with but a few (that are safe) remain to be cleared.

The circular path at Bobbingworth LNR has been completed and the next step is to plant up the edges with native wildflower where the soil has been disturbed during works.

The team assisted with the tree planting at Limes Farm where 500 whips were planted to make a hedge with the help of residents and schoolchildren.

Tree Team

The team worked hard throughout the recent Storm Eunice, with help from the Highway Rangers and Environmental Protection team, they responded to in excess of 50 requests for assistance relating to fallen and damaged trees in district.

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

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 5th April 2022
Subject: Finance and Economic Development Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Councillor J Philip

Recommending:

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

Finance

I have been keeping members updated over the past few months on the delays in getting our Accounts for the 2020/21 Financial Year signed. Members will be aware that the accounts for 2020/21 were not signed off by the 30th November 2021 deadline. The principal reason being a lack of capacity in the Audit sector which is impacting the vast majority of Audits for 2020/21. The Government and professional bodies are aware of the issue and are taking steps to try and ease the situation, but it is generally agreed that there are no quick fix solutions.

Because of the lack of progress, the Council's officers recently escalated our concerns to the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA), being the body who originally let the Audit contract. The PSAA have now been in contact with our Auditors and in turn our Auditors have been in contact with us. It has been agreed that the work on finishing the Audit will recommence in July 2022 (after the Finance Team has produced the draft 2021/22 Accounts) and that they will Audit both sets of Accounts back to back.

As I have previously informed the Council, it is clear that there will be an extended delay to signing of the Accounts due to a situation that is not of our making.

Together with the Chair of Audit and Governance Committee, (Cllr Hadley), I will continue to keep members updated on progress.

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Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 05 April 2022

Subject: Finance, Qualis Client & Economic Development Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Councillor John Philip

Recommending:

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

Economic Development Programme:

The Economic Development team have now initiated a significant number of projects, all of which are supported through Covid related funding sources. These are the economic resilience fund (support accessed via the UK Government's Additional Restrictions Grant funding) and the Welcome Back Fund (support accessed through the EU and UK Governments). This funding support will end in March 2022.

This funding has helped to support the following programmes since the last portfolio report.

- Installation of a new parklet in Waltham Abbey's Market Square at the site of the old 'Moot Hall'. Initial public feedback on this new scheme has been positive.
- Supporting a new scheme with Colchester Business Enterprise Agency LTD for free virtual support for around 50 local businesses assisting them in transferring to a new carbon-neutral model of working.
- Generation of a new quarterly footfall monitoring report via the Huq toolkit which has been purchased. This will use key indicators and data to assess the health of our local town centres and will be presented to town councils.
- Extension of a hanging Banner campaign encouraging residents to shop locally.
- Extension of subsidised FSB business membership scheme to enable local small businesses to take advantage of tax, insurance and dept advice and many other means of support.
- An update of the Visit Epping Forest website has been commissioned.
- Subsidised membership purchased to Visit Essex for local businesses in the visitor economy, that have been particularly hard hit during the pandemic.
- A telephone survey has been commissioned to gain insight into the key issues facing local businesses and support needs going forward. Almost 300 responses have been received so far. In addition, an online survey will be available for all businesses to register their views.
- The purchase of additional planters to be distributed across various town centres in the district.
- The development of a new inward investment website to attract businesses to the area. The site will also be linked to a live property search function with up-to-date information on available premises in the area. The site will be launched over the next few weeks.
- One-off grants of £5,000 were made to active town centre partnerships to assist them in building their business membership and undertaking activities to promote their town centre.

- Grant made to the Epping Forest Chamber of Commerce to assist in it carrying out public engagement events and business-to-business activities in the district.
- The continued growth of the LoyalFree scheme with almost 100 businesses now participating.

To find out more about these above schemes and all the projects that the team have enacted since the beginning of 2021 with this funding, please speak to John Houston at jhouston@eppingforestdc.gov.uk or call 01992 564094.

The Government have now released initial details of the new UK Shared Prosperity Fund which will provide investment to areas across the country. A number of key themes are highlighted for the development of an investment plan, these include skills, town centres, visitor economy etc. Further details are expected over the coming months, officers have already begun initial work on bid preparation.

For more information on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, please visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-pre-launch-guidance/uk-shared-prosperity-fund-pre-launch-guidance>

Business E-Newsletter:

The Economic Development Team are set to release the March edition of the 'Business Matters' e-newsletter with topics focusing on, Ride London 2022 coming to Epping Forest, the well-received Waltham Abbey Parklet, FSB membership uptake, the Regus opening event, the Colbea deal, and the recent business survey. The monthly e-newsletter is distributed to over 2,000 businesses within the district.

General Economic Briefing:

Unemployment has decreased month on month since February 2021, reflecting that the jobs market is now much healthier than during the pandemic. Unemployment in the district now stands at 2,895 or 3.6% of the total working population.

Visitor Economy:

Whilst hospitality across the district continues to prosper as the last pandemic restrictions are lifted, the tourism sector is planning for its traditional season-opening at Easter. There is still caution around the strength of the return to normality as many visitors may still have concerns. Our larger attractions such as the Royal Gunpowder Mills, Copped Hall and, to a lesser extent, Epping Ongar Railway, have the task of re-engaging with their volunteers that are vital for both visitor-facing and behind-the-scenes roles. This, in part, is being demonstrated by the slow recovery of the programme of events being publicised at the moment. With the possibility of foreign travel opening up, the strength of the staycation legacy remains to be seen. However, concerns over inflation and hesitancy over restrictions still in place in a changing world may continue to make short breaks closer to home attractive.

Homegrown opportunities are also offered by the Women's International Road Cycle Racing and Ride London 100 events coming up at the end of May immediately followed by the Queen's Jubilee. Both these events will generate local activity with the International Women's Race putting the area, and particularly Epping Town, on the worldwide map and bringing team supporters, cycling enthusiasts and significant media coverage. We recognise the challenges this will bring to some local businesses, and we hope in future years to be able, with the greater notice, to do more to generate greater economic benefit. Details for the Sunday event are being released to the public with details for the Saturday event being promised for the end of March. As this is the first of at least five years of this event, and possibly ten, the economic

team will be assessing the impact and using year one as a learning curve to maximise help and advice with actual examples from year 2 onwards. The event will help with showcasing the district and it is hoped we will be able to further promote the district as a visitor destination, especially in Epping High Street on the Saturday and in central Ongar on Sunday where a major rest stop for the cyclists is being planned for the town's carparks.

The Queen's Jubilee beacon lighting and celebrations are being left very much to towns, parishes and community groups to organise with the council offering a light-touch approach to any requests for road closures etc. Indications are that local groups are canvassing for ideas and support for such events at the moment and will announce these once agreed and sanctioned. If any events in our district are open to a wider audience, they will be listed on the tourism website.

Essex + Herts Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ):

The date of the next DIZ Smart Place Seminar has been confirmed as 13th May. This event, 'How Can Digital Help Save the Planet?', which will focus on issues around digital and sustainability, will feature a number of guest keynote speakers examining the emerging themes in this area and a series of workshops that will explore those themes and how they might apply to organisations from the public, private and third sectors. Both Microsoft and CGI have been confirmed as keynote speakers. Further details will be shared including an Eventbrite link to book a place for the event which will be delivered online.

The DIZ delivered its most recent contribution to the ongoing series of online events run by Digital Leaders. The DIZ Programme Manager, in conjunction with Clive Emmett at CVS Uttlesford, delivered a session on 'The Power of Genuine Collaboration - Achieving more together than working alone and had in excess of 170 attendees register to attend. A recording of the session is available and can be viewed at <https://vimeo.com/679049976/936145c3ad>

The 'Ultrafast GPs' Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) project, which delivered ultrafast fibre broadband connectivity to 74 GPs across East Hertfordshire and West Essex in 2021, saw the last of those GP sites migrate to its enhanced service in March. This final surgery, in Waltham Abbey, encapsulates why the project was delivered as it is now accessing download speeds in excess of 270 Mb/s compared with pre-project speeds of 15 Mb/s. Similar transformations have taken place across the other sites. Feedback from health partners has indicated that the new network is having a huge impact on the surgeries and, with a noticeable increase in the use of digital. The newly upgraded circuits, which are intended to bring increased resilience as well as capacity, have proved invaluable in supporting them through the pandemic.

The DIZ is keen to extend its reach on social media and has been increasingly active on Twitter and LinkedIn over recent weeks. Should members wish to keep up to date with news from the DIZ, as well as stories of interest from across the digital agenda, you can follow the DIZ social media streams as follows:

Twitter: @DizMatters <https://twitter.com/DizMatters>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/dizmatters/>

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Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 05 April 2022
Subject: Housing Services
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Holly Whitbread

Recommending:

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

Community Resilience:

We are now recruiting two vacant Environmental Enforcement Officer posts. Adverts have been placed and will close 11th April. Two new Essex Police Officers have been appointed to the Councils dedicated policing team, Pc Tom Butler will join us from the Operational Support Group and Pc Liam Amner will join us from the Loughton Local Policing Team

ASB Team/Police:

The ASB team are proactively working with our Police section to combat pickpocketing on Market days. Operation Forsythia involves being visible to the community and increasing crime recording so we can measure success in this problem as a lot of incidents are going unreported.

EFDC Policing Team

February Taskings

- Closure order preparation for problem property in Waltham Abbey
- Planning and preparation for tasking group with EFDC teams around engagement and enforcement with a 'scored' organised crime group active in the district. Meeting has taken place in February, rolling actions to target legitimate business used by OCG.
- Loughton, reports of cannabis odour from EFDC property. Out of hours visits required. These have all been completed and returned to the lead officer.

Activity

ASB complaints: 23

Data request: 41

Sanctuary referrals: 0

- An FPN was issued for the breach of a Community Protection Notice (CPN) for cannabis odour, the FPN was paid.
- Youth nuisance was reported at a residential court in Waltham Abbey, a patrol was carried out and a knife was found within block of flats, joint work with the police to collect it and Police intel form completed.
- Joint meeting was held with Neighbourhoods regarding a property where reports of ASB and Noise were received from two local councillors. Visit completed and social care referral sent to Children's Social Care.

- A Community Safety morning was held in Epping High Street with Essex Police in relation to reports from the Town Council regarding pickpockets in the area on market day. The Business Crime team visited and spoke to all the businesses and gave some crime prevention materials to the post office in McColls as it has been identified that vulnerable adults are collecting their pension and then being followed. We will be doing regular stalls at the market on a Monday going forward and will incorporate tasking to our CST.
- Crime Prevention training organised for the ASB team
- A Professionals meeting was held in relation to neighbour issues at an address in Loughton.
- The team have organised Every Contact Counts training for the district, the training was about exploitation, gangs, grooming, county lines etc
- Lambourne Parish Council has received advice and support regarding issues they are experiencing on their land.

Environmental Enforcement Team:

Activity

- A premise licence has been called in for a review in Loughton.
- 1 Statutory Noise Abatement Notice served 1
- £400 Fixed Penalty Notice issued for flytipping was has been paid.
- 4 Fixed Penalty Notices issued for breach of a Community Protection Notice against a licensed premise in Chigwell have not been paid and will now be prosecuted.
- 2 dogs have been seized from a residential property in Waltham Abbey following numerous complaints and prosecution against the owner. The animals remain in an animal care facility, and the perpetrator has pleaded not guilty to causing a nuisance and a trial date has been set for June 2022.

CCTV

The CCTV and Police section are collaborating with the organisers of the Ride London cycle event providing a CCTV service and additional manpower support on the event weekend.

CCTV assessment for the possible placement of CCTV cameras at a path on Centre Drive, Epping as part of the Safer Streets funding bid. Costs to be sent to Essex Police/PFCC's office for further consideration.

There have been 25 requests for CCTV images, which is 2 less (7%) than last month.

There are currently 3 rapid deployment cameras operating in the district.

Activity

Key incidents requested by the Police:

- Jewellers in Epping High Street broken into.
- Persistent Hoax caller in Waltham Abbey.
- Stabbing Debden Broadway/Burton Road and related incident at Borders Lane.
- Pedestrian knocked over and seriously injured, vehicle drives off without stopping, Albert Road Shopping Arcade, Queens Road.
- Domestic Violence suspect identified entering Norway House, images for Cumbria Police.
- Mugging incident High Street Epping.

Internal / Other Requests

- Shop keeper in Broadway Debden pouring wastewater around footpath and tree.
- Lorry hitting entrance barrier North Weald Airfield.
- Road Traffic Collision Broadway Debden.

Safeguarding

An owner-occupier was safeguarded prior to an eviction due to debts that was without incident, the resident has been provided with temporary accommodation while his needs are assessed. It was an excellent work example of collaborative working with the Private Sector Housing Team in facilitating this smooth transition and liaising with external agencies.

A tenant who previously was who was wandering around, making threats to kill was taken to Whipps Cross Hospital under a s135 warrant. However, he was discharged the same day and returned home. He promptly continued with his increasingly distressing noise nuisance and disturbance to other residents. Following a discussion with his MH Care Co-ordinator a psychiatrist will now visit to carry out another Mental Health Act Assessment. In the meantime, the Environmental Enforcement and Neighbourhood Officers are following relevant procedures for noise and ASB.

A Child Protection Conference was held with the Neighbourhood Officer for a family that had an infestation of flies etc. All relevant agencies, (Police, Social Care, Schools and Health) agreed that the case met the threshold for Child Protection under Neglect.

The SSGO worked with the Councils Domestic Abuse Support Specialist (DASS) and the Senior Temporary Accommodation Officer (STAO) on two domestic abuse cases which had become very complex.

Activity

13 new cases

- Children only 2
- Adult only 6
- Adult and children 5

There were 14 opportunities for children to be harmed and 11 opportunities for adults to be harmed.

Referrals

- Social care 7
- Allocated Social Worker 1
- MHT 1
- Police 1
- External organisations 3
- Existing Team 1

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Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 05 April 2022
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 review of the 'Big 4' housing strategies and policies

On 1 March 2022 Stronger Communities Select Committee agreed the officer recommendations for the Allocations Scheme, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the Tenancy Policy for the period 2022-2027.

On 7 March Cabinet approved the recommendations for the Allocations Scheme, the Rough Sleeping Strategy and the Tenancy Policy for the period 2022-2027 with one minor amendment to all three reports – that they shall be reviewed in the year leading up to 2027.

The Allocations Scheme 2022-2027 will take effect from September 2022 to allow for the Rehousing team to put the mechanisms in place to allow for implementation.

The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2022-2027 will take effect in July 2022 to enable the Homelessness team to agree the details of the delivery plan with signatories to the strategy.

Stage 2 Consultation for the overarching Housing Strategy will commence in May 2022 and Members will receive an invite within the next 2 weeks for a briefing session during the consultation period.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

The Strategy team co-ordinated a response to the Regulator of Social Housing Consultation on the Tenant Satisfaction Measures that it is proposing to introduce as part of the Tenants Charter for Social Housing. The team held a resident focus group and an exceptional meeting with the Tenant and Leaseholders Panel in conjunction with the Land and Estates Team Manager and the Resident Involvement Officer to ensure their views were incorporated into the response.

National Housing Hero Awards

The Housing Hero Awards are organised by Inside Housing as part of the Chartered Institute of Housing Annual Conference which will be held between 28-30 June 2022.

The team has submitted nominations for the following categories:

- Inspirational Leader of the Year: Deborah Fenton, Director of Housing and Property
- Best Company Health and Wellbeing Initiative: Bringing Housing Services and Community Culture and Wellbeing together
- Team of the Year: The collaborative team of Estate and Land Management and Culture and Community

The nominations are assessed and shortlisted by a panel of judges representing all parts of the housing sector. The winners will be announced at an award ceremony and featured in Inside Housing Magazine.

Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation

Jennifer Gould is sponsoring a joint project between Community Safeguarding and the Homelessness team to achieve DAHA accreditation. This includes fulfilling 8 priority areas and standards within the legal framework of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

DAHA is a partnership between three agencies who are leaders in innovation to address domestic abuse within housing; **Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse, Peabody** and **Gentoo**. The Council's aim is to complete its action plan to achieve accreditation by 2024.

Homelessness

In December of last year, the Government announced the Protect and Vaccinate scheme which saw a further £28 million allocated to local authorities in England to build on the work throughout the pandemic. The aim of this funding is to support rough sleepers off the streets and drive the uptake of Covid-19 vaccinations within the rough sleeping community. EFDC have, to date, accommodated a total of 21 rough sleepers and are working to move those on into more settled accommodation. Together with our NHS colleagues and ECC, we have set up a drop-in vaccination clinic for this cohort, which is taking place on the morning of 29th March 2022, at St Johns Church in Epping.

We've recently welcomed a new Private Sector Lettings Officer into the team who joined us this month. We're very excited to continue developing a private sector lettings scheme and really strengthen our offer to all prospective landlords while increasing provision for our customers.

Rehousing Team

The team have welcomed new tenants into several of our new build sites so far this year, including Bewlay Close in Ongar, Aspen Close and Plane Close in Buckhurst Hill. We have a further 10 new build sites being handed over to us throughout the rest of the year, which is a fantastic achievement for a local authority to be building so many new properties in the current climate.

The team are also hard at work on our implementation plan for the new Housing Allocations Scheme, as mentioned by Janice earlier in the report.

Norway House

The staff at Norway House are currently planning 2 events for the residents to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, and Ride London passing through the district. The children will be hard at work in the After-School club creating banners and flags that we can display outside Norway House when the Ride London event passes along Epping Road. We are also planning a 'street party' type event to celebrate the Jubilee.

We are currently at full capacity at Norway House and are trying to identify other potential accommodation examples, if for example we need to accommodate any families coming to us from Ukraine at short notice.

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Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 5 April 2022
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

The emerging Local Plan is at an advanced stage in its Examination following the Main Modifications Consultation in Summer 2021 and the collated representations published online and provided to the Inspectors in October 2021.

The Inspectors' Final report had been expected in the first quarter of 2022, although we have been advised by the Planning Inspectorate that this is subject to delay and are urgently seeking a revised timetable. 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.

Volume 3 of the Council's Sustainability Guidance covering refurbishments and extensions was adopted at Cabinet in March 2022 to sit alongside the already published Volumes 1 and 2 relating to major and minor developments respectively. The Planning Policy Team is working with colleagues across the Council to ensure the guidance is appropriately publicised and applied moving forward.

The Implementation Team was successful in its bid for funding to produce a design code for the Latton Priory Strategic Masterplan Area. Under the Pathfinder Programme, DLUHC have awarded the Council £120,000 to produce the design code that should follow the National Model Design Code process, which has a strong emphasis on community and stakeholder engagement to empower communities to have their say on development. The design code and the delivery process should be exemplary and aspirational, with a focus on sustainable transport, green infrastructure, socio-economic wellbeing and high-quality placeshaping in line with District and HGGT Vision. The programme will run for a year with the intention that the design code is endorsed soon after.

A report was taken to the Council's Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 31 March 2022 to comment and make recommendations upon the adoption of a Partnership Agreement for the delivery of Site Access Management and Monitoring measures (SAMM) for the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation and the approach to securing contributions within the District for decision by Cabinet at its forthcoming meeting on 11 April 2022. The Agreement has been jointly developed by the Council with other competent authorities, Natural England and the Corporation of London as Delivery Body and will replace the 'Interim Approach to Managing Recreational

Pressure on the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation' adopted by the Council in October 2018.

North Weald Airfield Strategic Masterplan Framework was the subject of public consultation from December 2021 to January 2022. The Final Masterplan is to be presented to Cabinet hopefully in April to be formally endorsed by the Council.

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 has undertaken a 6 week consultation (known as a Regulation 16 consultation) on the Plan (ending on Thursday 23 December 2021) and the Plan's examination has now commenced.

3 Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT)

The HGGT Work Programme aims to deliver the overarching objective of coordinating and enabling delivery of 16,000 homes by 2033, along with associated infrastructure, delivering the Garden Town Vision, principles and guidance that has been agreed by the 5 partner councils. 3,900 of these homes are allocated within Epping Forest District, making up over a third of the District's allocated housing.

The key priorities for the Garden Town for 2021/22 are:

- Delivering the Garden Town Vision of quality, beautiful and sustainable places
- Enabling the Infrastructure Foundations for Growth
- Maximising and Accelerating Delivery with a focus on outcomes by 2025
- Ensuring our Governance is Fit for the Future

A Memorandum of Understanding for the Rolling Infrastructure Fund (RIF) was agreed by EFDC Cabinet in December 2021, and across the HGGT partnership. The HGGT Transport Strategy, which sets out a clear Mode Share Objective and set of active and sustainable travel principles, was endorsed to have material planning weight by EFDC Cabinet in January 2022, with the HGGT Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) also noted as evidence base by Cabinet in January.

A Stage 1 report on Future Governance arrangements was taken to Cabinet in February 2022, which reported the recommendations made by the HGGT Governance task & finish group and the in-principle decision to consider the establishment of a 5 Council Joint Committee model. This recommendation was agreed by Cabinet, with the expectation that Stage 2, further detailed work on the constitutional and operational requirements for the Joint Committee, would return to Cabinet for approval.

HGGT was delighted to be successful in a bid to the DLUHC PropTech Digital Engagement Fund, to deliver Garden Town-wide digital social value mapping and quality monitoring framework. The fund supports the widespread adoption of digital citizen engagement tools and services within the planning process, with the aim to increase the use of digital engagement.

The PropTech project seeks to co-create a digital map with local and neighbouring residents to identify what local people need and value in their area, by gathering information relating to social value and quality of life. By building a clear picture of what people currently value and need, a long-term approach can be taken to support masterplanning and stewardship arrangements, and to monitor the changes to quality of life and social value particular in relation to current and future planned growth, and help to inform a stewardship model of community building.

A HGGT Green Infrastructure Strategy has been commissioned, due to complete in 2023. This GI framework strategy will sit as an endorsed strategy by the Garden Town Board and the 3 District Councils, holding material planning consideration, within the suite of HGGT Core Documents.

The HGGT team submitted a Capacity Fund Bid to Homes England, the outcome is still awaited.

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, 152 planning permissions have been successfully released equating to 217 dwellings (which includes living accommodation for nursery workers). 14 applications have been withdrawn and five have been refused planning permission. The St Thomas More site in Debden (allocated site LOU.R16) will be issued as soon as the necessary signed legal agreement has been returned by the applicant, which will add a further 26 dwellings to the housing stock – the development includes a new community centre.

Initial estimations were that the release sequence for applications would be completed by the end of April 2022. However, the programme is slightly behind as the Authority made a commitment to re-consult on all applications. At present completion of the release project is planned for the end of July 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, and this has contributed to the increased pace of release.

Planning Enforcement

The updated Local Enforcement Plan will be published on 1 April 2022. The plan commits the Service to amended priority categories for specific types of enforcement complaints and associated initial site visit deadlines, as well as performance monitoring of initial site visits and completion of the initial stage of the enforcement investigation within one calendar month.

5 Climate Change

Climate Change Action Plan

A report on the outcomes of the Climate Change Action Plan Consultation, which took place between 12th October and 26th November 2021, has been agreed to go to Overview and Scrutiny on 31st March with the updated Action Plan then going to Cabinet on 11th April.

Home Energy Efficiency

EFDC were allocated approximately £361k for the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Phase 2 (GHGLAD2), this a scheme to fund energy efficiency and renewables in low efficiency, low income housing. The amount of funding is expected to upgrade 35-40 homes. Working with the private housing team, the communities and wellbeing team and our managing agent 38 referrals have been generated to date with the referral window open until the end of March. Installations are to be complete by the end of June.

The Sustainable Warmth scheme will follow on from GHGLAD2 with any extra referrals carried over. The Sustainable Warmth programme incorporates GHGLAD Phase 3 for on grid properties and the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) for off grid properties. EFDC have been allocated £1.3m following a successful consortium bid, this funding is to be spent by the end of March 2023.

Tree planting

Volunteers from the local community, Limes Farm Community Group, Councillors, Parish Council, St Winifred's Church, Limes Farm Primary and Junior Schools and Officers from across the Council came together at the Limes Farm Estate to plant 501 trees in Chigwell.

A mixture of native species were planted as part of the Local Authorities Treescapes Fund grant allocation. 3 apple trees were also planted as part of the Queen's Jubilee Canopy to commemorate Majesty's Platinum Jubilee. Two of the apple trees were kindly donated by Chigwell Parish Council.

Further trees are to be planted before the end of March at Jessel Green and Rochford Green, Loughton.

Report to the Council

Committee: **Audit & Governance**
Date: **5 April 2022**
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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Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy

(Including Anti-Money Laundering Policy)

November 2021

CONTENTS

	Page(s)	
Section One	Purpose of Strategy	3
Section Two	Key Objectives	3-4
Section Three	Definitions	4
Section Four	Strategic Response	5-6
Section Five	Key Fraud and Corruption Risks	7-8
Section Six	The Council's Approach to combatting Fraud & Corruption	8-10
Section Seven	Responsibility for implementing this strategy	10-11
Section Eight	Supporting Policies, Procedures and Processes	11-
12		
Section Nine	Policy Reporting, Review and Monitoring Performance	12
 <u>Appendices</u>		
Appendix One	Fraud Response Plan	13-
16		
Appendix Two	Anti-Bribery Policy	17-
19		
Appendix Three	Anti Money Laundering Policy	20-27
Appendix Four	Report to MLRO (Money Laundering Reporting Officer) Form	28-29

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 <u>and fully utilise available methods of loss recovery (e.g. POCA (Proceeds of Crimes Act))</u>

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	
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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

Report to the Council

Date of Meeting: 5 April 2022

Committee: Constitution Working Group (Councillor S Rackham)

Date: 23 November 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.