



Overview & Scrutiny Committee Thursday, 1st July, 2021

You are invited to attend the next meeting of **Overview & Scrutiny Committee**, which will be held at:

**Conference Suite - Civic Offices
on Thursday, 1st July, 2021
at 7.00 pm.**

**Georgina Blakemore
Chief Executive**

**Democratic Services
Officer:**

Vivienne Messenger Tel: (01992) 564243
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Members:

Councillors M Sartin (Chairman), R Jennings (Vice-Chairman), R Baldwin, P Bhanot, P Bolton, I Hadley, S Heather, J Lea, A Lion, T Matthews, S Murray, D Plummer, S Rackham, P Stalker, J H Whitehouse, K Williamson and D Wixley

**PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS TO ATTEND
SUBSTITUTE NOMINATION DEADLINE 18:00**

WEBCASTING NOTICE

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

You should be aware that the Council is a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act. Data collected during this webcast will be retained in accordance with the Council's published policy and copies made available to those who request it..

Therefore by entering the Conference Suite and using the 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 you have any queries regarding this, please contact the Public Relations Manager on 01992 564039.

1. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman will read the following announcement:

“I would like to remind everyone present that this meeting will be broadcast live to the internet (or filmed) and will be capable of repeated viewing (or another use by such third parties).

Therefore, by entering the Conference Suite and using the seating area, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes.”

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

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

4. MINUTES (Pages 7 - 28)

To confirm the minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 3 June and 8 June 2021.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To declare interests in any item on the agenda.

In considering whether to declare a pecuniary or a non-pecuniary interest under the Council’s Code of Conduct, Members are requested to pay particular attention to paragraph (11) of the Code in addition to the more familiar requirements.

This requires the declaration of a non-pecuniary interest in any matter before Overview & Scrutiny which relates to a decision of or action by another Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council, a Joint Committee or Joint Sub-Committee in which the Council is involved and of which the Councillor is also a Member.

Paragraph (11) of the Code of Conduct does not refer to Cabinet decisions or attendance at an Overview & Scrutiny meeting purely for the purpose of answering questions or providing information on such a matter.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS & REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(Democratic & Electoral Services Team Manager) To receive questions submitted by members of the public and any requests to address the Committee, in accordance with Article 6 (Overview and Scrutiny) of the Council’s Constitution.

(a) Public Questions

Members of the public may ask questions of the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee at ordinary meetings of the Committee, in accordance with the procedure set out in the Constitution.

(b) Requests to address the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Any member of the public or a representative of another organisation may address the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on any agenda item (except those dealt with in private session as exempt or confidential business), due to be considered at the meeting.

7. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS - CALL-IN

(Democratic & Electoral Services Team Manager) To consider any matter referred to the Committee for decision in relation to a call-in, in accordance with Article 6 (Overview and Scrutiny) of the Council's Constitution.

8. QUALIS FOUR-YEAR BUSINESS PLAN - 2021/22 TO 2024/25 (Pages 29 - 80)

To pre-scrutinise the attached Qualis Four-Year Business Plan, prior to a decision by Cabinet that is due on 12 July 2021.

9. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 2020/21 ANNUAL REPORT (Pages 81 - 126)

To consider the attached final draft of the Overview and Scrutiny 2020/21 Annual Report.

10. CABINET BUSINESS

Recommendation:

That the Committee review the Executive's current programme of Key Decisions to enable the identification of appropriate matters for the overview and scrutiny work programme and the overview of specific decisions proposed to be taken over the period of the plan.

Article 6 (Overview and Scrutiny) of the Constitution requires that the Committee review the Executive's programme of Key Decisions (the Cabinet Forward Plan) at each meeting, to enable the identification of appropriate matters for the overview and scrutiny work programme and to provide an opportunity for the overview of specific decisions proposed to be taken over the period of the plan.

The Constitution (Article 14 (Decision Making)) defines a Key Decision as an executive decision which:

- (a) involves expenditure or savings of £250,000 or above which are currently within budget and policy;
- (b) involves expenditure or savings of £100,000 or above which are NOT currently within budget and policy;
- (c) is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards;
- (d) raises new issues of policy;

- (e) increases financial commitments (i.e. revenue and/or capital) in future years over and above existing budgetary approval;
- (f) comprises and includes the publication of draft or final schemes which may require, either directly or in relation to objections to, the approval of a Government Minister; or
- (g) involves the promotion of local legislation.

Wherever possible, Portfolio Holders will attend the Committee to present forthcoming key decisions, to answer questions on the forward plan and to indicate where appropriate work could be carried out by overview and scrutiny on behalf of the Cabinet.

The Executive's current programme of Key Decisions of 1 July 2021, as an Appendix to this report, will be published as a very late Supplementary Agenda on 1 July.

11. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 127 - 130)

Progress towards the achievement of the work programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is reviewed at each meeting.

(a) Current Work Programme

The current work programme for the Committee is attached as an appendix to this agenda.

(b) Reserve Programme

A reserve list of scrutiny topics is developed as required, to ensure that the work flow of overview and scrutiny is continuous. When necessary, the Committee will allocate items from the list appropriately, once resources become available in the work programme, following the completion of any ongoing scrutiny activity.

Members can put forward suggestions for inclusion in the work programme or reserve list through the adopted PICK process. Existing review items will be dealt with first, after which time will be allocated to the items contained in the reserve work plan.

12. SELECT COMMITTEES - WORK PROGRAMMES (Pages 131 - 138)

(Chairman of the Select Committee) Article 6 (Overview and Scrutiny) of the Constitution requires that the chairmen of the select committees report to the meeting in regard to progress with the achievement of the current work programme for each select committee and on any recommendations for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The current work programme for each select committee is attached as an appendix to this agenda.

13. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Exclusion

Democratic & Electoral Services Team Manager) 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

(Democratic & Electoral Services Team Manager) Article 17 - Access to Information, Procedure Rules of the Constitution 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.

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EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MINUTES

Committee:	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Date:	Thursday, 3 June 2021
Place:	Conference Suite - Civic Offices	Time:	7.00 - 8.45 pm
Members Present:	Councillors M Sartin (Chairman) R Jennings (Vice-Chairman) P Bhanot, P Bolton, I Hadley, S Heather, J Lea, A Lion, T Matthews, S Murray, S Rackham, J H Whitehouse, D Wixley, S Heap, J McIvor and C P Pond		
Other Councillors:	Councillors N Avey, S Kane, A Mitchell, C Nweke, A Patel, J Philip, D Sunger, C Whitbread and H Whitbread		
Apologies:	Councillors R Baldwin, D Plummer, P Stalker and K Williamson		
Officers Present:	G Blakemore (Chief Executive), A Buckley (Communications Officer), T Carne (Corporate Communications Team Manager), V Messenger (Democratic Services Officer), S Mitchell (PR Website Editor), A Small (Strategic Director Corporate and 151 Officer) and G Woodhall (Team Manager - Democratic & Electoral Services)		

1. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

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

2. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Committee noted the following substitutions that had been appointed:

- Councillor S Heap as substitute for Councillor D Plummer;
- Councillor C P Pond as substitute for Councillor R Baldwin; and
- Councillor J McIvor as substitute for Councillor K Williamson.

3. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2021 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record, subject to the following amendments to Select Committees – Work Programmes (a) Stronger Communities Select Committee (Min no 100 (a)), paragraph 3, sentence 3, to amend ‘Sunder’ and ‘she’ to read:

Councillor D Sunger noted that Councillor J H Whitehouse would like a report on what was happening to the collections to be considered at the next meeting.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest pursuant to the Council’s Members’ Code of Conduct.

5. PUBLIC QUESTIONS & REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee noted that no public questions or requests to address the meeting had been received.

6. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS - CALL-IN

The Committee noted that no executive decisions had been called-in for consideration since the previous meeting.

7. CORPORATE PRIORITIES 2021/22

The Leader, Councillor C Whitbread, presented an overview of the Council's corporate priorities for 2021/22 at the Committee's first meeting in the new municipal year and it was appropriate to physically be in the refurbished Civic Offices. Over the coming weeks members would be invited to tour the building. Good progress was being made with partners and this underpinned the transformation process. This fundamentally protected frontline services and the Council as a low Council Tax authority.

New era - improved technology had been rolled out to enable virtual meetings via Zoom to take place over the last year. The remainder of the Council's estate had moved forward and would be producing returns for residents. Qualis was more than a development company as it provided council housing alongside other development projects and would bring greater savings and returns. There were five sites in Epping, with another sports centre. Qualis' Four-Year Business Plan would set out its future developments and plans. If the Council was to provide frontline services, it had to maximise its assets.

Renewal was the theme of the Leader's presentation. The way we worked would change so would other things change. Businesses would not be seeking to return to the City but would move local, leading to partnership arrangements for use of the Civic Offices and commercial interest in the top floor. There would be a further report to Cabinet on the regeneration of the high streets.

Renewal environment – more charging points were needed. More hybrid meetings held virtually would result in less road usage, which was better for the climate. The first priority was the Local Plan, as it was more important than ever to have planned development, not unplanned. The robust process for the Local Plan was started ten years ago. The main modifications that had been with the Inspector would be taken forward to consultation in July 2021. There was a need for homes to reduce homelessness.

Council housebuilding programme – the Council was proud to deliver this, and so too should members, and to give young people the best chance possible with developments of mixed tenures.

Income / assets – normal parking tariffs had started again in June, but the Council had been flexible and agile with car parking charges. North Weald Airfield was the Council's biggest asset. The National Police Air Service and Air Ambulance were based there, and the airfield was a large asset commercially. The Council was also working on a masterplan for North Weald. Pre-scrutiny was important for the scrutiny committees. In particular, the town centre regeneration reports would be going to Overview and Scrutiny Committee very soon. It would be a busy year ahead for the Council and certainly busy for the scrutiny committees.

Councillor S Murray was supportive of the Leader, but it was important to scrutinise carefully and be healthily sceptical, as scrutiny was important, and it helped the Cabinet. The Councillor was not impressed the Member of Parliament had been

shown round the Civic Offices before members, so he hoped this would be soon. As Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell and Loughton town centres had not benefitted from Central Government and County grants during Covid, member involvement should be allowed on these town centre reports. The Local Plan's ten-year progress had been very interesting and different for various communities as he thought some had been treated more fairly. It would be a greater benefit to the environment if more virtual meetings were held. Councillor C Whitbread replied that Councillor Murray had made some good points and liked – positively sceptical. The Leader was proud of the refurbished Civic Offices and had shown the Member of Parliament and the County Member for Library Services around. The Leader was supportive of officers to advise on the town centre reports. There would always be winners and losers with the Local Plan. The Council was now looking forwards to infrastructure to go with the Local Plan.

Councillor S Rackham agreed it would be a challenging year ahead and scrutiny was vital. What other interaction had there been with other local authorities prior to setting up Qualis? In relation to high streets and partnerships, what sort of partnerships would there be in future? Councillor C Whitbread replied that a healthy amount of scrutiny and scepticism was beneficial. In the initial phase of Qualis a lot of advice was received from other local authorities on failures and successes, as there were always lessons to be learnt. After the Covid pandemic things had fallen behind and it had brought the best and worst out of people, in equal measures. The Council was looking forward to delivering for local people and high streets would change. After 21 June 2021, it was hoped the Government would allow a full unlock. With more people working from home they were getting into a routine and taking lunch breaks but were using the high streets and doing more locally.

Councillor McIvor agreed scrutiny was important and pleased about support of the high streets and that North Weald Airfield played an important role. How was the success of renewal measured? Councillor C Whitbread replied by modernising what we did and by changing the way we did things. The Civic Offices were a modern place to work. With agile working and through great teamwork we had managed to create a civic centre that was future proofed. There had been lots of interest in the third floor as businesses and people would not be returning to the City, so this was a win for Epping. We can survive and bounce back, and this was a good place to start from.

In relation to electric vehicles and air quality across the whole District, Councillor A Lion asked how the roads were going to be developed? Councillor C Whitbread replied this work was ongoing and the Council had employed a Sustainable Transport officer. Also, Councillor Lion's work on broadband in the District early on had meant the Council was doing the right things. With more electric charging points this was moving into becoming more sustainable.

Councillor S Heap asked if staff were okay with agile working and asked about Qualis Commercial? Councillor C Whitbread replied its staff were very important and were a most valuable commodity. The Chief Executive held regular staff briefings, so staff were fully engaged but it was important to listen to staff feedback and come together and move forward. Transformation was ongoing. Qualis Commercial was an important part of Qualis and had started to operate with the five Epping town sites.

Councillor M Sartin acknowledged that there was a lot of work ahead and this would be an opportunity for members of the scrutiny committees to question the work of Cabinet.

8. POLICY ON OUR APPROACH TO TREES CAUSING STRUCTURAL DAMAGE TO ASSETS

The Council had a dual responsibility, to protect trees in the interests of public amenity, but also to try and ensure that no individual suffered undue loss, distress or damage resulting from Council owned and managed trees. The Council's current approach was ad-hoc and some residents were experiencing issues, such as not being able to open windows or keep properties warm due to tree root damage. The proposed policy took a structured approach and would enable the Council to take a consistent approach to the challenges of tree root damage. It also defined the decision-making process. The report author, D Fenton (Director of Housing and Property), had been unable to attend this meeting. The Strategic Director, A Small, professed to having a limited knowledge but would try to answer questions.

Many technical questions were raised and a selection of these included those below.

- Appendices 1 and 2 although referred to in the report were not detailed as such in the report.
- How long would the key evidence take to collate – days, a month or longer?
- The process of evaluating the cost of replacing trees as trees could attract high premiums if trees were very old and sometimes this could involve large sums.
- What was 'Contact trees'?
- There was support for a minimum of two replacement trees for every tree removed preferably within the locality, but what size trees would be used as replacements? The more mature the replacement tree the better the take up.
- If a tree did fail would the contractor that supplied the tree be asked to replace it, for example within the first year?
- Would not want to see the Council's responsibility had ended if a tree died after six months.
- What, if any, was the Council's role about trees on pavements? Loughton Roding ward had disastrous pavements caused by the roots of many trees that had been planted there by Chigwell Urban District Council.
- Were trees on grass verges the responsibility of Essex County Council?
- There were grammatical errors in the report and policy that needed correcting.
- The draft policy was based on damage of trees, but did the Council have a parallel policy of damage of our trees on people?
- Use of 'likely to be viable' was too litigious as it implied the causation was already proven but better to use 'may be viable'.
- Suggestion to use, 'failing mediation landowners could be compelled through court action...'
- If mature trees were being felled, could the person doing the tree works cut the tree into the biggest sizes possible as these were worth a fortune as timber.
- As an authority we had a lot of tree specialists but did the Council need to recruit more?

A Small commented that trees on highway verges were usually the responsibility of Essex County Council and there was some commonality between the two policies as the draft tree policy was based on County's. The Council would deal with cases as quickly as possible but there could be delays with third parties. Technical software was used to determine the value of trees and 'Contact trees' was an officer email address. Councillor H Whitbread, Housing Services Portfolio Holder, replied that she would ensure the Director of Housing and Property responded to members' questions after the meeting.

Councillor D Wixley was a tree warden and tree enthusiast. The software used to assess the values of trees had been devised by C Neilan, a former Council tree officer. The policy should be reviewed annually in his opinion not every five years. Various responsible persons were stated in the draft policy but were tree officers a responsible person. What about damage to drains by trees not just damage to buildings? Council tenants had a responsibility for looking after trees under a tenancy but the cost of sorting a tree out could be expensive. In his opinion there needed to be some leeway on trees in tenants' gardens as it could be difficult for a tenant to afford. Cllr H Whitbread replied that a one-year review might be sensible. The draft policy in relation to garden trees would be looked into further. A Small added that there had been a lack of consistency in the past and having a policy would help.

Councillor S Rackham asked if residents would report trees in the same way as previously and what if officers were inundated with cases under the new policy, would there be a points system? What would the costs be to the Council? Councillor H Whitbread replied the Council was unlikely to be inundated with cases. A Small added that the Council did not anticipate lots of new cases just consistency.

Councillor A Lion asked if this could be made more customer friendly to use as it was a technical document. Was there a database of preserved trees? Was there a way of identifying a tree of being at risk of causing damage? The way the flowchart was looking at this was that it was damage to Council properties, not private, although this was picked up in the report. Residents should be given the opportunity to use this document. Councillor H Whitbread replied that the Council had good relations with housing tenants and held Housing webinars.

Councillor M Sartin asked if the District had any mines or swallow/sink holes? Councillor J Philip affirmed there were sink holes.

Councillor M Sartin asked for the responses to members' questions to be circulated to all members.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Council's approach to dealing with trees which were causing structural damage to its assets was reviewed and recommended that the policy be presented to Cabinet for approval; and
- (2) That responses to members' questions be circulated to all members (see post meeting update below).

(Post meeting update: Responses to members queries were detailed, as below.

Regarding a general query on the scope of the Policy and guidance and what trees were included – *Additional information had been added in the introduction for clarity.*

A general query on 'contact trees' that was included in the Policy and guidance – *This had been altered to the full contacttrees@eppingforestdc.gov.uk email address for clarity.*

Councillor M Sartin – regarding Appendix title request – *this had been done.*
Replace reference to mines with sinkholes – *this had been done.*

Councillor B Jennings – regarding slight wording alteration requests – *these had been done.*

Did we have a timescale for undertaking a Key Evidence Review?

That would depend on the results of the level of monitoring undertaken (minimum 12-months).

Did we know the monetary value of high amenity value trees?

This was currently not known and would be part of the individual tree assessment.

Requested more detail on replacement trees especially size and warranties against early tree failure.

These had been referenced in the Policy and guidance.

Councillor S Murray – regarding questions on street trees – please see Countryside and Landscape response below:

1. The role of the Council for trees planted on the pavement;

There was an agreement between EFDC and Essex County Council that the Local Authority managed the street trees on behalf of ECC and paid us a fee for this. EFDC could make decisions regarding works to trees (thinning, pruning etc) but an actual fell would have to be decided and instructed by ECC.

2. Did the Council have any influence on the type of tree being planted?

The EFDC Tree Officers recommended what species was to be planted where taking into account rate of growth, eventual size, proximity to buildings etc. This had to be agreed by ECC but that was really more of a formality as County did not pay for replacements.

Councillor D Wixley – requested the review date to be changed to annual – *this had been done.*

Error in item 11.2 – *this had been rectified.*

Damage to drains would be identified early in the Property Subsidence Investigation.

Expressed concern over trees being the tenant's responsibility especially when tenants were elderly and requested the Tenancy Agreement was reviewed.

Councillor J H Whitehouse – enquired about the Council's Plain English Officer and grammatical errors in the Policy – *details would be provided out of the meeting.*

Councillor S Heap – requested that approved contractors were used for any tree works – *this had been added to the Policy and guidance.*

Councillor P Bhanot – slight wording alteration requests – *these had been done.*

Councillor I Hadley – enquired about trees causing damage to people and whether the Council had Policy and guidance on this?

Injuries to the public from dangerous trees would be subject to a Health and Safety Executive investigation.

For information: Internal consultation queries were received from:

- Countryside and Landscape
- Corporate Insurance
- Planning Services (Trees and Landscape)

9. CABINET BUSINESS

Cabinet's Key Decision List (KDL) updated to the 1 June 2021 was scrutinised by the Committee and the following points were raised.

(a) Leader Portfolio

Regarding the Qualis Four-Year Business Plan, Councillor S Murray, commented that a consistent approach on when items were going to scrutiny in the KDL would be

helpful, so it did not have to be cross-referenced with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme. Councillor S Murray also asked how progress was going with partnerships within the Civic Offices. Councillor C Whitbread advised this was going well, and more information would be reported shortly.

(b) Planning and Sustainability

It was noted that A Blom-Cooper no longer worked for the Council, so the officer's name needed to be updated.

(c) Finance, Qualis Client and Economic Development Portfolio

The Town Centre Regeneration of Loughton, Epping and Buckhurst Hill, which was being pre-scrutinised at an extra meeting of this Committee on 8 June 2021, would be the first opportunity for members to review. Councillor S Murray continued that the report on the sale of Pyrles Lane site to Qualis also needed to be looked at carefully on 8 June as he did not like the tone of the report. The Portfolio Holder, Councillor J Philip, replied that these were independently commissioned reports on the town centre regeneration and the consultant/report author had consulted with local members, and apologised if he had not been consulted. Not all the options in the reports would be taken forward. Councillor J Philip had a different view of the reports to Councillor Murray. When planning permission lapsed for the Pyrles Lane site the Council did approach Qualis, as Qualis was there to help work with the Council and it must be for the benefit of our residents and of benefit to Qualis.

Councillor A Lion asked about regeneration for Chigwell and local businesses. Councillor J Philip replied it was being rolled out to four town centres so would be returning early to this committee to be scrutinised and would include large rural town centres and North Weald. It was about partnerships working with the Council. Also, anything that was put in place had to be sustainable and to get businesses involved was the right way forward.

(d) Environment and Technical Services Portfolio

The Overview and Scrutiny work programme had 'tbc' for the pre-scrutiny of the business case for the transfer of MOT, Fleet and Grounds Maintenance services to Qualis yet the KDL showed the Cabinet decision was due on 13 September 2021. Would an extra meeting of this Committee be arranged? The Portfolio Holder, Councillor N Avey, replied that he would advise the Executive that the Committee should be able to consider the business case before Cabinet took any decisions.

(e) Housing Services Portfolio

Councillor S Murray emphasised that there were three items that needed to be pre-scrutinised by a scrutiny committee – the Council's Allocations Policy, Tenancy Policy and Housing Strategy. All had been allocated a decision date by Cabinet of 7 March 2022. Councillor M Sartin replied that it was expected that these three items would go to a select committee but the select committees' work programmes within this agenda were for last year. Councillor H Whitbread, Housing Services Portfolio Holder, advised that Stronger Communities Select Committee would be undertaking this pre-scrutiny. Also, Councillor H Whitbread advised that the Waltham Abbey Community and Cultural Centre came under Councillor A Patel, who was the Community and Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder.

Councillor J H Whitehouse queried the following items:

- Use of the wording ‘taken through Governance structure’ for the Council’s Allocations Policy, Tenancy Policy and Housing Strategy as the wording should be clearer and that it would be coming to the Communities Select Committee, as the Portfolio Holder had confirmed at tonight’s meeting;
- How the Review of Tenancy Strategy, tied up with the Tenancy Policy item; and
- Corporate Aims & Key Objectives 2019/20 for the select committees did not align with the current Terms of Reference of those scrutiny committees, which they should, and how this could be achieved perhaps by being reviewed by the Constitution Working Group. Councillor J Philip advised that the select committees had the authority to change their Terms of Reference, provided this was approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and did not need to go to the Constitution Working Group.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Committee reviewed the Executive’s current programme of Key Decisions of 1 June 2021;
- (2) That under the Planning and Sustainability Portfolio the officer’s name needed to be updated;
- (3) That pre-scrutiny of the business case for the transfer of MOT, Fleet and Grounds Maintenance services to Qualis be facilitated to meet the Cabinet decision deadline of 13 September 2021; and
- (4) That Stronger Communities Select Committee would be undertaking pre-scrutiny of the Council’s Allocations Policy, Tenancy Policy and Housing Strategy.

10. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME

The Democratic and Electoral Services Manager, G Woodhall, commented that the number of standing items had reduced from five to three. There was no external scrutiny listed on the work programme, but this could be discussed at the forthcoming Overview and Scrutiny Agenda Planning Group as the work programme was a working document that could be revised throughout the year.

Councillor M Sartin reminded members of the extra Committee meeting on 8 June 2021 and that a large number of items would be going to 1 July meeting. There would be an opportunity to scrutinise external groups later in the year, which members should give serious consideration.

Councillor J H Whitehouse would welcome not having to scrutinise external agencies and rather scrutinise the Council’s internal services for the benefit of residents.

Councillor S Murray suggested that perhaps the Committee might need to respond only if there was a real concern and also that Essex County Council (Children’s Services) should not be the first item on the Reserve Programme. Epping Forest Sixth Form Consortium, the second Reserve Programme item, should have been scrutinised earlier as the Sixth Form Consortium had been in operation for six years, but it had never in reality operated as a consortium. Councillor M Sartin asked if members wished to remove the Epping Forest Sixth Form Consortium from the Reserve Programme, which was agreed.

It was noted that the Scrutiny of External Organisations on pages 69 – 72 of the agenda was for information and gave a summary of all the local authorities and organisations that had been scrutinised since 2014.

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Committee noted its current work programme; and
- (b) That the Committee agreed to remove Epping Forest Sixth Form Consortium from the Reserve Programme.

11. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEES - MEMBERSHIP 2021/22

Article 6 of the Council's Constitution required that the Committee determined the number of select committees and reviewed them. In addition, the membership of the select committees was to be appointed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the first meeting each year, as such appointments were reserved to the Committee and not made by the Council.

Councillor S Murray remarked that he was pleased that two of the new select committee vice-chairmen were new members.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That, in order to reflect pro rata requirements and the lowest number of members necessary to achieve cross-party representation in the rules of the Constitution, each of the select committee comprise 11 members for 2021/22;
- (2) That appointments to the select committees for 2021/22 as set out in the appendix to these minutes, be adopted; and
- (3) That appointments be made to the positions of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of each of the Select Committees for 2021/22, as set out in the appendix to these minutes.

12. SELECT COMMITTEES - WORK PROGRAMMES

Councillor J Lea asked if our housing associations where perhaps work was not being done, could be scrutinised? Councillor H Whitbread agreed that this was a good question, and there was the wider question to ask around housing associations. Councillor S Murray also agreed and that this should be undertaken by the Stronger Communities Select Committee.

Councillor M Sartin advised that it was for the select committees to look at their work programmes at the first meeting in the new municipal year.

13. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

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

CHAIRMAN

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OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEES

APPOINTMENTS 2021/22

Stronger Communities Select Committee (11)
Chairman: J Lea
Vice-Chairman: R Balcombe
Conservative Group: R Balcombe, H Brady, I Hadley, J Lea, S Rackham, K Williamson
Green Party Group: D Plummer
Liberal Democrat Group: J H Whitehouse
Loughton Residents Association Group: D Wixley, C Nweke
Independent Members: S Murray

Stronger Council Select Committee (11) *
Chairman: P Bolton
Vice-Chairman: T Matthews
Conservative Group: R Bassett, P Bhanot, P Bolton, H Brady, H Kane, T Matthews, R Morgan.
Green Party Group: S Neville
Liberal Democrat Group: J M Whitehouse
Loughton Residents Association Group: R Brookes, J Jogia
Independent Members: -

Stronger Place Select Committee (11)

Chairman: A Lion

Vice-Chairman: R Morgan

Conservative Group: R Balcombe, R Bassett, J Share-Bernia, I Hadley, S Heather, A Lion, R Morgan

Green Party Group: S Heap

Liberal Democrat Group: C McCredie

Loughton Residents Association Group: M Owen, J Jennings

Independent Members: -

EPHING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MINUTES

Committee:	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Date:	Tuesday, 8 June 2021
Place:	Conference Suite - Civic Offices	Time:	7.00 - 9.22 pm
Members Present:	Councillors M Sartin (Chairman) R Jennings (Vice-Chairman) R Baldwin, P Bhanot, P Bolton, I Hadley, S Heap, S Heather, J Lea, A Lion, T Matthews, S Murray, S Rackham, J H Whitehouse and D Wixley		
Other Councillors:	Councillors L Burrows, A Patel, J Philip, C Whitbread and H Whitbread		
Apologies:	Councillors D Plummer, P Stalker and K Williamson		
Officers Present:	G Blakemore (Chief Executive), T Carne (Corporate Communications Team Manager), N Dawe (Chief Operating Officer), A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer), J Houston (Specialist Partnerships & Economic Development), P Messenger (Town Centres Project Manager), V Messenger (Democratic Services Officer), S Mitchell (PR Website Editor), R Moreton (Corporate Communications Officer), A Small (Strategic Director Corporate and 151 Officer), S Jevans (Qualis Group Managing Director) and S Rutter (Development Director, Qualis Commercial)		

14. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

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

15. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Committee noted that Councillor S Heap had been appointed as a substitute for Councillor D Plummer.

16. MINUTES

It was noted that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee of 3 June would be confirmed at the next meeting on 1 July 2021.

17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- (a) Pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor I Hadley declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 9, Qualis Quarterly Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2020/21, by virtue of being Chairman of the Audit and Governance Committee, and because of this he was not allowed to be on the Stronger Council Select Committee. The Democratic Services Officer advised that this Committee was not a decision-making committee nor would it be changing the report or taking a vote at this meeting.
- (b) Councillor S Murray declared a non-pecuniary interest in item (9a), Economic Development – Town Centre Regeneration, regarding The Broadway and High Road in Loughton by virtue of being an elected member of Loughton Town Council.

- (c) Councillor S Heap declared a non-pecuniary interest in item (9a), Economic Development – Town Centre Regeneration, regarding Buckhurst Hill by virtue of being an elected member of Buckhurst Hill Parish Council, and item (9), Qualis Quarterly Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2020/21, by virtue of being a member of the Audit and Governance Committee.

18. PUBLIC QUESTIONS & REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee noted that no public questions or requests to address the meeting had been received.

19. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS - CALL-IN

The Committee noted that no executive decisions had been called-in for consideration since the previous meeting.

20. SALE OF PYRLES LANE SITE TO QUALIS

A Small, Strategic Director, introduced this report. When Qualis was created at the end of 2019 it was with the intention of taking forward a number of potential redevelopment sites that the Council had been holding on to for some time, as the market was unable or unwilling to respond, due to local conditions or site challenges. The Council had agreed last year to transfer the Pyrles Lane site but Qualis had held it in abeyance, as the access and site conditions made it more challenging to progress.

Qualis Commercial Development Director, S Rutter, outlined the redevelopment proposal, which was a Local Plan site and was now at the pre-application stage with the Local Planning Authority. The original scheme in 2016 had included flats and houses with a narrow access off Pyrles Lane, but the creation of a suitable entrance road was important. Regarding timescales, Qualis would be ready for the evaluation stage by the beginning of July 2021 followed by a formal offer, and a consultation would be organised for mid to the end of September 2021.

Councillor S Murray acknowledged this was an important site in Loughton. He wanted to see the financial model and queried the use of 'fair' market value rather than 'proper' market value. He felt it probably had around the right number / mix of properties and was conscious the application might go before Area Plans South. Adequate parking would be required as public transport links were not very good. If Cabinet decided to sell the site, what was in place to prevent Qualis submitting a completely different application? Councillor J Philip replied that fair market price was a recognised term. The Qualis Four-Year Business Plan would incorporate a proper business case. The planning committees were there to make decisions but if the plans were changed, the project would need a better business case and return to Cabinet.

Councillor D Wixley, the Ward Councillor, clarified that the Council's Pyrles Lane Nursery had previously been located here and the site had first been disclosed 10 years ago but he had not been kept informed on developments as the Ward Councillor and for residents. A press release would be helpful to avoid any misunderstandings. Based on the houses proposed it would go before the District Development Management Committee (DDMC) not Area Plans South and to Loughton Town Council for comments. He had a phone conversation with S Rutter yesterday. The biggest concern on residents was to those whose properties backed on to this site, especially 77 Pyrles Lane and no. 81, as Qualis wanted to purchase

some land. Since the Council had annually trimmed the trees on the site, what would happen in future? There had been a suggestion that the water supply that went to the GROW community garden would be cut off, but this should be preserved. A site visit before the planning application determination would be useful as the drawings in the report made the site look bigger than it was. He stated that any comments he made were not final, and he reserved final judgement for such meeting. The 167 bus route no longer existed and there were issues in relation to the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation and air quality. There were also concerns about the density of the site, parking and access – Pyrles Lane was a very busy road and the concealed entrance sign got covered up by vegetation, which needed to be addressed. Was 79 Pyrles Lane going to be demolished? In relation to the three additional portions of land being purchased, one included the rear part of 81 Pyrles Lane but where were the other ones? How would the consultation be organised? Qualis' Commercial Director replied that the three portions included the triangle of the access, 79 would be demolished, 81 and the land next to it was owned by the Council. Once the plans had been developed, Qualis would talk to councillors again. Letters would be sent out to the surrounding streets. The Council website would host the consultation and all the documentation/plans, and the consultation would be set up to allow people to register their comments. Near to September, people would be able to visit the Civic Offices to talk to Qualis and see the plans for the site. Councillor J Philip added that if the Council no longer owned the land and land transfer had happened then it might not go to DDMC. A clear steer was needed on what Cabinet should be looking at because if the Council was not the landowner, the planning application would go to the Area Plans South Committee. The application would not be determined by officers under delegated powers.

Qualis' Commercial Director replied to the following questions raised by members.

- Regarding the dates of the timeline, had land values been secured? The land valuations had taken longer than anticipated, but the timescales would become clearer once these were in place by the beginning of July.
- Was affordable housing included, or in addition? Affordable housing would be a percentage of the total number of units in the current scheme.
- What would be the percentage of affordable housing? This would be covered in the viability assessment, as the 14-metre fall across this location meant there were expensive constraints to the site.
- How many and what sort of affordable housing units would there be and what sort of consultation would there be with residents? Qualis had not defined the affordable housing numbers yet. The valuations were being done by the Council and conversations were taking place with those residents that bordered the site. Once Qualis was fully assured of the access arrangements the development could then move forward.
- Had the City of London Corporation expressed an interest in acquiring this buffer land as it owned a section of Hillyfields? Qualis was not aware of any such negotiation but the land was an allocated site in the Local Plan.
- Can we guarantee that any damage caused by construction traffic would be rectified? Yes, Qualis would look at the impact of construction traffic and take any necessary action.

- Regarding the portions of additional land, were they privately owned and could one of the parties say no? The Council had sold no. 81 on a long lease in 1982.
- Housing had a big part to play in carbon emissions, what assurance was there of keeping the carbon footprint as low as possible? Qualis would be looking at the sustainability criteria. There would be numerous environmental improvements, e.g. thermal insulation. Therefore, there would be a comprehensive set-up to meet the carbon agenda, which was part of the Council's criteria.
- Were there any other potentials for the site? Only in relevance to housing stock types. Councillor J Philip added that it was earmarked in the Local plan for residential use.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Committee had discussed Qualis' outline proposal for the redevelopment of the Pyrles Lane site; and
- (2) That the Cabinet consider members' comments and observations from this meeting when Qualis put forward a detailed acquisition proposal.

21. QUALIS QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT - QUARTER 2 2020/21

This report presented the second Quarter's monitoring report for the Qualis trading year 2020/21 and covered the period from 1 February to 31 March 2021. This reflected a shortened quarter due to the change in the Qualis year end. This report would usually be reviewed by the Stronger Council Select Committee but, as this Committee would not be meeting until July, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would scrutinise progress instead, and any actions could be identified in a timely way. Appendix A detailed the Qualis Board monitoring report for quarter 2 as agreed by the Qualis Board on 29 April 2021. Performance was measured against the business plan targets for 2020/21. The Board report had highlighted performance against these using the recognised Red, Amber, Green reporting system (RAG). The majority of the deliverables for quarter 2 were flagged as green. The Strategic Director and 151 Officer, A Small, advised that generally the promise was good as there were few ambers highlighted. As detailed in the report at paragraph 3.2, the cash balance had moved from amber to green last quarter. Regarding Qualis Living (3.3), the delay in securing the third commercial property was the reason that this KPI was flagged as amber, but he believed Qualis had found a suitable property. Income and expenditure remained at amber, as detailed at 3.7. It was reported that the Roundhills site (3.8) had moved to the consultation stage. In conclusion this was an improvement on the last quarter.

Councillor I Hadley referring to the cash balance as being £3.2 million higher, would Qualis reinvest this? N Dawe, Chief Operating Officer, replied that this was essential cash that was needed to run Qualis to the end of year and was not for reinvestment.

Councillor S Murray asked about the use of 'should' in paragraph 3.2 and why was Qualis not more confident? The Strategic Director replied that the Qualis Business Plan expected to make a profit in the second year.

Councillor R Baldwin remarked that in relation to assets (income) versus liability, what tangible assets did Qualis have to offset these liabilities? The Strategic Director replied that the tangible assets it had were the two commercial assets it had

acquired. As long as it had cash in the bank, a current asset, it would ultimately have work in progress showing on the balance sheet as money in the bank, which was an asset as well.

Councillor D Wixley asked what the difference was between assets and long-term assets? The Strategic Director replied that a fixed / long-term asset was anything that could not be liquidised within a year, so cash was usually a current asset while property was a fixed term asset.

Councillor M Sartin reminded members that this would be going to Cabinet on 21 June 2021.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Committee reviewed the Qualis Quarterly Monitoring Report for quarter 2 2020/21 and no actions were identified.

22. ANY OTHER BUSINESS - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION - LOUGHTON BROADWAY, LOUGHTON HIGH ROAD, BUCKHURST HILL AND EPPING TOWN CENTRES

Portfolio Holder Councillor J Philip introduced the town centre regeneration reports. The District had more than one key town centre and they were all very different. The first of the town centre reports had been produced for the last municipal year to kickstart regeneration. The consultant, Mr P Messenger, who was now the Council's Town Centre Project Manager, had looked at these as retail centres, and they were produced throughout the lockdowns. The Council wanted to move forward at a reasonable pace but would not be doing everything in the reports. It had to be done as a collaborative approach driven by businesses in the town centres and was looking at sources of funding from partnership working. Waltham Abbey and Ongar town centres had already achieved improvements, so the Council was looking favourably on things that could be done quickly to improve the town centres. For the longer term in conjunction with other stakeholders in the town centres and with a real commitment from businesses, this was seen as the way forward.

J Houston, Partnerships and Economic Development Specialist, reported that there were six market towns in the District each with their own character, strengths and opportunities. The challenges high streets were facing was recognised and the Covid epidemic had impacted on shops in the high streets, but not at the vacancy levels apparent in other places, so the high streets in the District were starting from a strong base. The Council was at the beginning of the process on how to tackle long term strategy and was one stakeholder in the partnerships. The reports provided a starting point of a localist approach as the high streets had their own characters and attractions.

Councillor A Lion commented that the reports were interesting and detailed. Localism had come in 2011, so it was important to do things 'with' not 'to' businesses and asked about feedback from the work in the Ongar and Waltham Abbey town centres. Was there a plan on timescales as there seemed a lot to do at one point in time? Councillor J Philip replied that it was important to move across all town centres promptly. The Council had employed a Town Centre Project Manager to oversee the schedule but had also budgeted for additional support because one officer might not be sufficient. People were positive about working in partnership with the Council. The project would be rolled out to larger villages as well. Guidance and priorities would initially help to identify the quick wins. The regeneration projects had to be brought in

by the various town centres on what they wanted to see happen through collaborative working.

Councillor M Sartin said that small shopkeepers had been very creative during the lockdowns. Councillor B Jennings remarked that from events that Loughton Town Council had organised, it was larger chains that were governed by head office or the owner of the building, so the high streets were controlled by larger businesses.

In reference to Loughton Broadway, Councillor S Murray remarked that groups and residents had not been consulted. The retail park had impacted on The Broadway as only three out of twelve units were fashion based. District and County should be doing the quick win improvements. Regarding town centre leadership, this could be provided by Loughton Town Council, but he was unsure if there was the staffing capacity at local level, so it depended on what was meant. The Town Centre Project Manager should be the key organiser to work with The Broadway in respect of reinstating the four flagpoles above Brickclamps Path. He was interested in the shuttle bus service between The Broadway and the retail park. If there was Wi-fi in The Broadway it would be useful in attracting a younger profile. He supported working with New City College. Cycling and making places to put bikes was to be encouraged but remarked that the roads were very busy leading to The Broadway and also, any parking recommendations would always be controversial. Councillor M Sartin cautioned that free complimentary parking could be used by shoppers who only wanted to get to the retail park and would not take the time to look around The Broadway shops. Councillor J Philip replied that the Council's Economic Development Team was working with Essex County Council. Multiple people were showing leadership. There were priorities for both Loughton Town Council and the District Council. The shuttle bus was a service the Town Council might fund. Also, short term parking was returning to pre-Covid prices. It was important to identify what the priorities were, as the Town Centre Project Manager would take these forwards.

Councillor S Rackham commented that longer shopping hours were needed. Also, as we were coming out of the lockdown, might it be timely to reintroduce the Local High Streets Task and Finish Panel?

The Town Centre Project Manager replied that shopping had to change perhaps by being more experience driven to entice people back. High streets would change dramatically but the challenge was how to keep core shops and make high streets more attractive. Most of Ongar closed on Sunday but people came into the town to visit the Ongar Railway. He supported the return of the flagpoles to Brickclamps Path in The Broadway. The Partnerships and Economic Development Specialist added that the Council was supporting businesses to trade online. Click It Local was deployed in the District. Shops were trading longer and trading on the pavement, but this was not impinging safety.

Councillor D Wixley commented that the Loughton Broadway report was quite nostalgic, and he supported making the town centre a conservation area because of the 1950s architecture. During the last enhancement of The Broadway parking spaces were removed to the detriment of shop retailers. There was currently a problem with on-street parking that needed to be tackled. The Broadway's central reservation was one of the schemes with the Local Highways Panel, but as it had too many schemes, perhaps it could be dealt with in a different way. Also, the retail park was supposed to have been fashion-led. There was no longer a Town Centre Partnership for Loughton High Road owing to a lack of interest as there were a lot of chain stores. When would this project go forward to the town and parish councils? Councillor J Philip replied that these reports would be going to Cabinet on 21 June when the boundaries and aims of what the Council wanted to achieve would be set.

The Town Centre Project Manager had contacted Loughton Town Council already. The District Council was sensitive as to what to do with conservation areas. Both the retail park and The Broadway were fully tenanted and provided income for such projects and for residents, but we needed to support both shopping centres. Councillor M Sartin queried if the utilities were too close to the central reservation to put in greenery. The Town Centre Project Manager advised that plans had been drawn up for the central reservation. There was a need to get people from the retail park to The Broadway. Also, the Loughton High Road Town Centre Partnership needed direction and support.

Councillor J H Whitehouse was concerned that there had been extensive consultation on Epping High Street, which she had not been included in, but hoped to be involved in this in future. Shop front uniformity had been discussed in the past but she did not agree with this as different and older shop fronts made the high street more interesting, as long as they were kept in good condition. In relation to future residential developments and a cinema, both she and residents had highlighted the need for more parking, but it was doubtful if anything could be done at this stage for those planned developments. There were many buses that came into the town centre and station, but they were not integrated, so improved bus awareness was important. There was a lot of concern about e-scooters and their safety, especially since an accident had happened. Regarding change of use, she was not sure what market driven adaptive look, as opposed to planning determined look, meant. Councillor J Philip thought that planning committees would have no control over market driven adaptive change of uses. The Council would be working with the town and parish councils, but these documents were not going out to consultation. E-scooters were not allowed on roads or pavements in the District except in trial areas across the country where they could be rented. Councillor H Whitbread had raised an e-scooter incident with officers and enforcement action had been taken. The Partnership and Economic Development Specialist replied that during the Covid pandemic there was a lot of free-up (relaxation) by the Government to work with businesses to drive the market forward. There were major opportunities, as a place, with more people working from home and not commuting, so town centre spend was local as opposed to in London when people had been commuting.

Councillor S Heap commented on Buckhurst Hill town centre and that local/independent shops were the way forward as 75% of what was spent in local/independent shops stayed in the District whereas possibly only 45% with chain stores. The library in Buckhurst Hill was mentioned in the report but it required a lot of money from County to repair it. The Parish Council was getting organised and keen to get going, but would there be funding, or would this be through applying for a grant? Town centres could also benefit from greater artistic sensibilities, like flagpoles in The Broadway, to make them more attractive. Councillor J Philip hoped rather than coming to the Council for funding they will be looking to organisations for funding and that businesses benefitting would also put in money. The recommendations in these reports needed to be prioritised and it was also key to meeting residents' desires.

Councillor P Bhanot remarked that he spent lunchtimes in the District as opposed to the City. He queried what success looked like. Free Wi-fi in the town centres would help and help retailers with their online, marketing or retail objectives, but who decided if we had met that objective and what did that objective look like? Councillor J Philip was against free Wi-fi as there were significant issues around security and it did not make sense for the District Council to provide it. The Council needed a project plan on which objectives to achieve but some would be difficult to measure. If footfall was increased that would be a measure of success. Click It Local was a success as a number of businesses had signed up to it. Also, had councillors clicked

on this? It would only benefit businesses if members used it and promoted it with residents. Councillors also needed to publicise to businesses the Economic Development Team's monthly newsletter, Business Matters.

Councillor B Jennings remarked on the lateness of the report published as a supplementary agenda as this was a very important project. Although Loughton Town Councillors had been consulted, District Councillors had not but the Ward Councillors needed to be included in the consultation. He was wary that the Council was in danger of slipping into window dressing with better planting schemes when better shops were necessary. The town centres needed shops to reflect our aspirations and there should be more emphasis on this. He thought the Council was being unambitious in relation to free parking, and lowering rents as it was a private landlord having purchased Centric Parade. It could contribute to rateable properties to help start-ups which would help to get new blood into the high streets. The Council could take a more active role in the types of businesses it was looking for. Councillor J Philip apologised for the lateness of the report. He disagreed with dictating on the types of shops. Centric Parade was a significant investment for the Council, but it was not in the business of dictating retail types. He did not think the Council was unambitious, as shops were driven by what residents wanted, but should encourage people to move in the right direction.

Councillor R Baldwin was disappointed that pedestrianising The Broadway was not mentioned. Vere Road could go one way and Burton Road the opposite way with a through route for delivery vehicles, as this would help solve the parking problems. Councillor M Sartin advised that pedestrianisation of Waltham Abbey town centre had not been particularly successful. Councillor J Lea emphasised that Waltham Abbey town centre had gone downhill after being pedestrianised and unless traffic was coming through a town centre, no traffic resulted in no business.

Councillor S Murray did not believe the College would run Debden Library and that it should return to The Broadway. Regarding the catchment area of Loughton High Road as having a higher disposable income, Valley Hill residents in his ward walked to the High Road but a lot of the independent traders were too expensive for lower income families to use. Loughton Residents Association had been the driving force behind the High Road's successful farmers' market since 2002. Councillor J Philip said that there were many other successful markets in the District and the Council definitely wanted our streets to be places people wanted to come to. Regarding Loughton High Road independents being too expensive, this was one of the challenges. Councillor C Whitbread added that in respect of the development of Debden Library, Essex County Council Cabinet had just reformed following the elections.

Councillor M Sartin said that there was no mention of accessibility in the reports about people with disabilities and consideration should be given to improvements that could be made which might be obstacles for people with disabilities.

Councillor J Philip encouraged councillors to make their comments known to himself or J Houston before Cabinet considered the town centre regeneration reports on 21 June 2021.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the Committee reviewed the reports and members had expressed opinions detailed above around the immediate actions identified prior to consideration by Cabinet on 21 June 2021.

23. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

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

CHAIRMAN

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Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 1 July 2021

Portfolio: Finance, Qualis Client and Economic Development (Councillor J Philip)

Subject: Qualis 4 Year Business Plan - 2021/22 to 2024/25

Officer contact for further information: Andrew Small (07548 145665)

Democratic Services Officer: V Messenger (01992 564243)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) Overview and Scrutiny Committee is requested to consider the Qualis 4 Year Business Plan (attached as Appendix A) and make any comments that they wish Cabinet to reflect upon when they receive this report on 12 July 2021.**

Report:

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. It is a requirement of the Shareholder agreement that each year Qualis produce and present to the Council a one year and a 4 year Business Plan for the Council to consider and sign-off.
- 1.2. The Cabinet was presented with the Qualis single year Business Plan at its meeting in December 2020. However, at that time, the newly appointed Board of Qualis needed time to consider its medium and longer term strategy and requested an extension of a few months to work-up their plans.
- 1.3. This report presents the 4 Year Qualis Business Plan and seeks the Council's permission to adopt this as its direction and focus.
- 1.4. Qualis was initially created by the Council to solve a number of specific problems including the housing maintenance contract re-let and to progress a number of council owned regeneration sites. The work jointly undertaken by Qualis and the Council to develop this 4 year plan has helped to explore and better define its core purpose as a property development and management arm of the council and to highlight the wider aligned opportunities that this presents.
- 1.5. The Council is asked to consider and reflect on the detail, as set out in the attached 4 year business plan, and either approved the plan or make such suggested amendments as the shareholder considers necessary.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. The ownership structure of Qualis was specifically defined in a way to reserve certain key decision for the Shareholder to make. These include certain matters of Governance, Risk and Strategic Direction.
- 2.2. The detail is set out in the Shareholder Agreement and Governance arrangements agreed by Cabinet in February 2020. This sets out the decision-making framework for

Qualis and the ways in which the Council can influence or control Qualis activities in its capacity as Shareholder.

- 2.3. Broadly, the principal control will be through the approval of the annual Business Plan. Qualis presents its proposals each year within the Business Plan and only if the Council agrees this can Qualis implement them. This represents the critical control over the activities of Qualis and appropriate and detailed consideration should be given to the sign-off accordingly.
- 2.4. If Qualis wishes to undertake an activity that was not included within the Business Plan then under the 'Reserved Matters' part of the Shareholder Agreement it must ask for the Council's permission.
- 2.5. Once the Business Plan is agreed, the Council monitors delivery through the Quarterly Monitoring reports. This provides the opportunity to monitor progress and to receive assurance that performance and the finances of Qualis are as expected.
- 2.6. The Shareholder agreement requires a 1 year plan for the forthcoming year and a longer looking 4 year plan, setting out direction of travel and broad intent. As the actions included in the 4 year plan become imminent, they are included in the 1 year plan and seek Council approval at that point. Inclusion in the plan and the Council's agreement to it, gives Qualis the permission to proceed without further recourse to the Shareholder, unless the permission is qualified thereby requiring that it should.
- 2.7. Since Qualis appointed the permanent Board at the end of last year they have been working on their medium term plan in order to present it to the Council (as Shareholder) for agreement. Whilst working on this plan they presented a single year 'interim' plan to the Council last December and it is the commitments contained in this that they are currently working to for the 2020/21 trading year.
- 2.8. The 4 year Plan complements and updates the existing single year plan and in order to align the preparation cycles of the 1 and 4 year plans, some additional permissions are sought which might normally be in the single year plan, thereby removing the need for another 1 year plan in a few months' time.
- 2.9. A commentary on the key elements of the attached plan is set out below divided into the respective elements.

3. 4 Year Business Plan

- 3.1. Originally the council created Qualis to solve specific problems around redevelopment and housing maintenance but potentially also a wider set out ambitions. The work of the past few months has helped to clarify in the mind of Qualis that the core function for the company should be property development and management. By reaching this conclusion it has helped Qualis to better define what should be included in their business model what should not.
- 3.2. Consequently, the Qualis business plan expands on these elements and considers how these should grow over the business plan period to the benefit of the Council and Qualis. Areas are broken down into their respective groupings, such as service management functions, development functions and investment functions. Consideration of the business case is set out below taking each of the core functions in turn.

Commentary

- 3.3. The work undertaken to explore and clarify the core purpose of Qualis is also helpful to the Council in that it allows the Council to consider how Qualis can complement and better align to its own functions and priorities without the need to duplicate and repeat activity.

- 3.4. The governance structure, including members and officer board representation, gives the Council considerable control over direction and performance and allows it to directly benefit from the successes of Qualis. This position of confidence can be exploited to allow for complementary working and specialism without the requirement for duplication. For example, the Council doesn't need its own property advisors when Qualis also has a team of property advisors, similarly this applies with maintenance functions. Duplication is expensive and inefficient for the taxpayer when the Council could equally utilise its close relationship with Qualis to deliver these functions.
- 3.5. Allowing Qualis to specialise and grow its activity in the property area enables the council to delegate or transfer those aligned activities and associated risks to Qualis at an appropriate time in the future, (subject to the appropriate checks, balances and performance measures), allowing for better outcomes, better returns and greater efficiency. In turn, higher profits will be returned to the council from these activities, whilst enabling the council to reduce its cost base and allowing it to concentrate on its key priority activities.

Specific Permissions Required from Epping Forest District Council

- 3.6. To agree the 4 year Business Plan as attached as Appendix A.

4. Qualis Living

Key Priorities Identified by Qualis

- Secure new debt facilities from the market to grow the investment portfolio.
 - Take interim management responsibility for the EFDC investment assets.
 - Complete the due diligence exercise in connection with the proposed transfer of investment assets from EFDC.
 - Complete the transfer of investment assets from EFDC.
 - Establish a fit-for-purpose internal property asset management function to manage the property portfolio and reduce outsourcing.
- 4.1. At the point of creation Qualis was loaned £30 million by the Council to acquire commercial property, the income from which would underpin the Qualis Business Plan. The ambition being that this was only the first step in building a much larger portfolio of commercial property with the Council being the primary lender.
- 4.2. In recent years many councils have been building portfolios of commercial property funded by cheap government borrowing purely for revenue return, (termed Debt for Yield). The Government has expressed concern at the value of local authority debt being amassed in this way and in November 2020 changed the PwLB borrowing rules to penalise councils who borrow for this purpose. The professional institute which governs Local Government accounting (CIPFA) has also changed the code of practice thus further restricting access to this funding stream.
- 4.3. Combined, these changes significantly constrain the ability of the Council to lend to Qualis for this purpose without compromising the Council's ability to borrow from PwLB for its own purposes. Qualis has been informed and the Business Plan now proposes to pursue commercial acquisitions with funding of £75 million obtained directly from the market. The Shareholder Agreement requires that Qualis must approach the Council first for any new borrowing requirements and may only approach the market if the Council declines to lend. Because the Council has security over all Qualis assets for the loans previously awarded Qualis will also need to seek agreement to allow an external funder to charge any new commercial assets acquired by Qualis.

- 4.4. The Council also has significant holdings of commercial assets (approximately £148 million) which it relies on to produce a rental income stream that underpins large elements of the Council's core spending. This has enabled the Council to keep its Council Tax charges low in recent years.
- 4.5. Qualis investments in commercial, income producing, assets have built a portfolio of £30 million, (subject to completing the transaction for the latest acquisition). The Business Plan includes proposals to expand this further to £105 million.
- 4.6. With both the Council and Qualis currently having teams which specialise in property management both organisations have identified the obvious duplication and propose an opportunity to combine the operations under Qualis.
- 4.7. There are two potential options in this respect, the transfer of the management function only (contracting out) or the transfer of both assets and management, (via a sale agreement). The latter potentially gives the greatest opportunity to utilise the redevelopment and income generating opportunities to the greatest extent.
- 4.8. Recognising that the Council is heavily dependent on the income produced by its portfolio of commercial property and that the Council's priority is the continued certainty of receiving this income, any transfer or sale contract would need to be underpinned by robust service standards, performance guarantees and / or net income guarantees generated for the Council.
- 4.9. The Qualis Business Plan considers this and recognises that any promises made at this time around income security or performance standards would be done so without a firm understanding of the portfolio nor the risks and opportunities inherent in it. By way of a potential solution the Qualis Business Plan proposes that they work together with the Council to develop a business case over the next year. To facilitate the gathering of knowledge over a period of the next year the Business Plan proposes that they undertake the Asset Management function on behalf of the Council and that the team is seconded to Qualis to support this.
- 4.10. At the end of the year Qualis will present to the Council a Business Case that either supports transfer of the Asset Management Team and / or Asset Sale by setting out the clear benefits and risks to the Council, or which recommends that the Council continues to provide this service itself.

Commentary

- 4.11. As the Council and Qualis are now both managing commercial assets for financial return it would make sense if just one party continued to develop this specialism and their expertise in this area so that duplicated costs can be avoided.
- 4.12. Whilst the function is not core to the Council, the income generated from the portfolio certainly is, so in any arrangement the Council would need to be assured that its income was guaranteed. Without a much deeper understanding of the Council's portfolio Qualis is unable and unwilling to give such guarantees and so a solution is required that will enable Qualis to gain this richer understanding of the properties, tenants, rents, lease terms, etc. which make up the portfolio.
- 4.13. With the Council currently holding vacancies in its Asset Management Team this supports Qualis temporarily taking on the management of this function allowing them to better understand the portfolio and the opportunities that exist. The staff would be seconded and would work through the Qualis equivalent team, with key portfolio decisions being referred back to the Council to make (subject to a scheme of delegated decision making), thus retaining the Council sovereignty and final say on how the portfolio is managed.

- 4.14. Through gaining a deeper understanding of the portfolio Qualis will be able to present a more detailed and robust business case to the Council that contains options on how the Council may maintain and potentially grow its income in the future.
- 4.15. At a point in time where the state and direction of the future economy is uncertain options to protect the Council's income need to be explored and whilst this exploration takes place the Council will also benefit from Qualis experience in this field.

Specific Permissions Required from Epping Forest District Council

- 4.16. To permit Qualis to borrow from the market £75 million for the acquisition of new commercial property and to defer its option to securitise any assets acquired behind that of the lender.
- 4.17. To contract with Qualis for the temporary management of investment and commercial property portfolio and to second the staff in the Asset Management team for a period of up to 14 months.
- 4.18. To request Qualis, working with officers from Epping Forest District Council, to explore the option for the transfer of all investment and commercial assets to Qualis.
- 4.19. It is expected that funding will be required to facilitate this work, which will in the first instance be met from existing professional fee budgets and underspending within the approved budget. If further funding is required a separate report will be brought forward.

5. Qualis Commercial

Key Priorities Identified by Qualis

- Secure Planning Permission for the five Town Centre Sites
 - Commence development of these five sites
 - Establish a sales brand to manage this process and the customer experience
 - Secure planning permission for Roundhills and Pyrles Lane
 - Increase the pipeline at a minimum rate of 120%
- 5.1. The Business Plan sets out the existing regeneration schemes that Qualis is currently progressing, specifically, Cottis Lane, Bakers Lane, St John's Road, Conder Building, Hemnall Street and Roundhills. With the exception of Roundhills, these sites are currently awaiting a planning decision, but it is intended these will move to construction later this calendar year.
 - 5.2. A Business Case is in development for the acquisition and redevelopment of Pyrles Lane. Early proposals for the site have been scrutinised by the Council with the promise of a full business case being presented to the Council. It is expected this will require loan funding from the Council in order to develop out the site and this is covered within the request made of the Council below.
 - 5.3. Beyond these existing specific sites the Qualis Business Plan is predicated on the identification and development of a pipeline of similar sites which would aid the district by bringing forward potentially difficult sites for regeneration and development of new private, affordable and rented housing, thereby addressing the housing shortage in the district and capturing potential developer profits for re-investment or for the benefit of the Council.
 - 5.4. Regeneration has always been a priority for the Council as standing still ultimately results in falling behind and post Pandemic the need for investment in communities is expected to become greater than ever. The regeneration work encompasses not only housing, but will also include the creation of new leisure, retail and job opportunities.

The investment undertaken by Qualis will complement the Town Centre and other 'Place based' investment work of Epping Forest District Council.

- 5.5. To progress this agenda Qualis has requested access to a new loan facility of £35 million that they can utilise when suitable opportunities arise. The need to progress quickly with acquisition once suitable sites come to market requires that such a facility should be readily and quickly accessible and so are asking that the loan facility be pre-authorised by Council with delegation given to the S151 officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Economic Development.
- 5.6. If the Council were prepared to provide this facility access to it would mostly likely be in tranches and the Council would look for adequate security against each tranche.

Commentary

- 5.7. The original vision for Qualis was around redeveloping some of the Council's more challenging sites for the benefit of the district (providing housing, retail, leisure and jobs). Once those original sites are completed the question arises whether the Council would like Qualis to seek new regeneration opportunities or stop there.
- 5.8. In practice one of the Council's core priorities is the ongoing development of 'Place' and this challenge never ends. Qualis provides a strategic vehicle with which to focus on regeneration by acquiring and bringing forward those sites that the market is unwilling to respond to, either because margins are too low or because of local challenges.
- 5.9. Qualis provides an armlength vehicle that can focus on this agenda without the strong private sector imperative of minimum returns so can tackle sites that would otherwise be left undeveloped. This includes a choice around the share of affordable housing targeted for each site, as with the Council ultimately being the beneficiary of developer profit it can potentially chose to sacrifice these in return for higher affordable housing.
- 5.10. This ongoing ambition requires pump-priming by the Council until Qualis has sufficient equity of its own to either raise capital directly from the market or use sales proceeds to re-invest. In the meantime, as lender, the Council's revenue position will benefit from loan margins and risk can be mitigated provided the Council seeks suitable security for loans made.

Specific Permissions Required from Epping Forest District Council

- 5.11. Approval of a new £35 million loan facility in order to pump prime new regeneration opportunities within the Epping Forest District area, with specific delegated permission given to the Council's S151 officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Economic Development to release sums to Qualis when backed by suitable security. The release of sums will be reported to the Council via the Quarterly board reports on Qualis performance.

6. Qualis Management

Key Priorities Identified by Qualis

- Successfully manage service transfers
- Generate productivity and efficiency savings
- Explore opportunities for external income generating work
- Explore other areas of service which could add value to EFDC, residents and the community

- 6.1. Through joint working between the officers of Council and Qualis opportunities for specialism through either the Council or Qualis have been identified and consideration has been concentrated around those services which clearly or logically align to the Property development and management focus of Qualis.
- 6.2. In addition to Asset Management, the other services which are closely aligned to property development and property management are;
 - Ground Maintenance
 - Residential Asset Management and Facilities
- 6.3. After working closely with officers from the Council, the Business Plan sets out an ambition to explore and develop detail business cases for these areas with the aim of demonstrating to the Council potential savings, improvements in performance, income generating opportunities and any risks in achieving this.
- 6.4. Once developed, these will be presented to Scrutiny and Cabinet for consideration and potential agreement. The Business Plan envisages that this would be around the Autumn.
- 6.5. In order for the Council to properly consider the business cases it is expected that these will broadly follow the format and address the question set out in the template attached as Appendix B to this report.

Specific Permissions Required from Epping Forest District Council

- 6.6. Agreement for Qualis to develop Business Cases for the potential transfer of Ground Maintenance and Residential Asset Management and Facilities broadly following the format set out in the template attached as Appendix B. The completed Business Case to be presented to Scrutiny and Cabinet for decision later in the year.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1. The Business Plan sets out its own interpretation, analysis and mitigations proposed for the risks faced by Qualis in Section 10. Some of these are common with those faced by the Council whilst others are unique. The risk which are seen as key to the Council are those set out below;
- 7.2. Qualis failure to repay loans – the Council has already invested heavily in Qualis with loans already made totalling £60 million and existing approvals given for a further £59 million. With the new request of £35 million the indebtedness of Qualis to the Council will rise to £148.5 million by 2023 with £136 million directly borrowed by the Council from external lenders. The cost of borrowing to the Council remains at near historic lows but even so interest charges will be in the order of £3 million per annum (plus amortisation) which the Council will have to pay whether Qualis meets its loan obligations or not. The Council needs to be confident that Qualis business model is sufficiently robust in order that it can meet its obligations. The Council has sought to protect its own interests by taking security over all Qualis assets and bank balances so that in the unlikely event of default the Council can liquidate and repay its debts.
- 7.3. Qualis ability to raise finance in the market – the Business Plan assumes that Qualis Living will continue to grow its Commercial Property portfolio by borrowing a further £75 million from the market. The return generated by Qualis Living from this portfolio in 2024/25 is forecast to be nearly £2.3 million and this is almost 50% of the expected combined profits generated by Qualis in that year. A significant element of the expected return is dependent upon Qualis sourcing competitive finance from the market with reasonable terms. The Business Plan highlights that Qualis (at least in the early years of the plan) has little equity and almost no security to offer to lenders, beyond the assets it intends to purchase and identifies this as a risk to obtaining

finance. In order to enable Qualis to offer security to the market the Council may be asked to place its own claim to any security over equity behind that of an external lender, thereby increasing the risk to the Council in order to reduce the risk to a market lender. If Qualis is unable to secure external market finance, then its ability to achieve the returns contained in the Plan are significantly reduced.

- 7.4. Optimism Bias – the Business Plan forecasts are dependent upon a number of actions and plans coming to fruition in accordance with timelines set out. In practice events may happen sooner than planned or be delayed as a result of events outside of the control of Qualis; achieving Planning permission and the Covid19 Pandemic being good examples. Sourcing external finance, finding suitable development sites, achieving planning permission and sales values holding up as expected are all identified as risks in the plan and any one of these may materially impact upon the level and timing of returns to Qualis and the Council.

Commentary

- 7.5. There are risks inherent in any commercial venture, whether run by the Council or carried out within an armlength company. These can never be fully hedged off and the need for councils to find new income streams and efficiencies means that doing nothing represents an even greater risk of failure.
- 7.6. Therefore, the Council needs to proceed by not trying to avoid all risk, but by understanding the risks and ensuring it has mitigations in place. The Council's commitment to Qualis is underpinned by security over property and cash held by Qualis, and whilst this creates its own problems (such as the risk of a property price crash) if suitable diversified and managed the absolute risk to the Council remains fairly low.
- 7.7. The Council's control over the risks are through the regular and robust monitoring of quarterly performance, the Council representation on the Board of Qualis, the annual review and monitoring of Business Plan updates and through the Council's democratic process.

8. Resource Implications

- 8.1. Qualis was created partly to resolve operational and development challenges being faced by the Council but the Council was also attracted to the significant financial upside, (as shareholder and lender), of benefiting from returns and development profits which would normally have been returned to lenders or the private sector.
- 8.2. The returns and margins delivered by Qualis are central to the Council's Medium Term Financial Plans which allow the continued delivery of core and value added services to the residents, whilst at the same time minimising Council Tax increases.
- 8.3. At a time when local government is facing massive financial challenges brought about by the Government funding reductions over the past 15 years, forecast future reforms and, latterly, the far reaching and potentially enormous impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic. Qualis represents the Council's biggest financial hope for mitigating the severe financial challenges it faces.
- 8.4. Section 5 of the Business Plan sets out in the financial plans for Qualis in some detail. Key elements are reproduced here for members' information and a commentary is provided.

8.5. The table below sets out the combined Profit and Loss account for Qualis.

Qualis Total	2021/22 £	2022/23 £	2023/24 £	2024/25 £
Total Income	13,856,889	53,037,987	142,002,340	32,565,499
Total Expenditure	13,549,327	48,689,496	130,661,526	27,179,690
Profit/-Loss before Tax	307,561	4,348,492	11,340,814	5,385,809
Return	2.3%	8.9%	8.7%	19.8%

8.6. The predicted Profit and Loss Account in the Business Plan shows fast growth in income, expenditure and profits across the 4 years of the Plan. In 2023/24 the numbers include expected sales of residential properties from the Epping Development sites, which explains the bulge in that year.

8.7. The figures include expected returns from the growth in the Qualis commercial property portfolio (funded from market borrowing), development profits from new sites which have yet to be acquired (funded by loans from the Council) and the transfer of Council services, specifically Grounds Maintenance and the Asset Management Team, but excludes any opportunity derived from the potential transfer to Qualis of the Council's commercial asset portfolio.

8.8. The Profit and Loss forecasts are therefore dependent the Council approving all elements of the Business Plan (with the current exception of asset transfer), including approving the loan request for a further £35 million of regeneration finance, and Qualis being successful in sourcing the assumed £75 million from the market.

8.9. The figures are stated before Tax and it should be noted that profits are not the same as dividends paid to the shareholder, (the Council). Qualis is assuming that in the specific timeframe of this Business Plan all profits are retained in order to build equity and therefore resilience into the business model.

8.10. As Shareholder the Council is entitled to a view on this assumption.

8.11. The Balance Sheet for the from the Business Plan is reproduced in the table below;

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Fixed Assets	35,000,000	45,000,000	65,000,000	105,000,000
Work in Progress	64,575,491	75,957,758	5,298,953	3,442,508
Debtors	70,000	77,000	84,700	93,170
Cash	24,565,406	47,198,298	126,031,253	132,106,841
Trade Creditors	-70,000	-77,000	-84,700	-93,170
Loan Balances	-123,833,333	-163,500,000	-180,333,333	-219,166,667
Net Assets and Liabilities	307,564	4,656,056	15,996,873	21,382,682
Share Capital	3	3	3	3
Profit and Loss	307,561	4,656,053	15,996,870	21,382,679
	307,564	4,656,056	15,996,873	21,382,682

- 8.12. The Business shows a steady growth in equity over the Business Plan period to the point in 2024/25 where Qualis has net assets of in excess of £21 million.
- 8.13. The Business Plan shows peak debt in 2024/25 of £219.2 million originally funded from loans from Epping Forest District Council totalling £160 million and £75 million of loans raised from the market, (before repayments).
- 8.14. The loans from Epping Forest District Council are analysed in the table below together with the other financial benefits derived by the Council from Qualis activities, these largely being associated with the rental of office accommodation and the secondment of staff.

		Loan Value	Margin	Duration Years	Already Assumed	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Loans	Working Capital	6,000,000	1.50%	5	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000
	Asset Purchase Market	30,000,000	1.50%	10	450,000	450,000	450,000	450,000	450,000
	Asset Purchase EDFC	18,000,000	4.00%	30	720,000	720,000	720,000	720,000	720,000
	Construction Loan Original Pt 1	35,000,000	1.50%	30	-	525,000	525,000	525,000	525,000
	Construction Loan Original Pt 2	30,000,000	1.50%	30	-	-	450,000	450,000	450,000
	Asset Construction Loan New	35,000,000	1.50%	30	-	525,000	525,000	525,000	525,000
	Discount								900,000
	Dividend					Reinvest	Reinvest	Reinvest	Reinvest
	Direct Benefit to EFDC				1,260,000	2,310,000	2,760,000	2,760,000	3,660,000
	Indirect Benefits EFDC Overhead Reductions				600,000	600,000	600,000	600,000	600,000
	Total Benefit				1,860,000	2,910,000	3,360,000	3,360,000	4,260,000

- 8.15. Assuming it is approved as proposed, the Business Plan indicates that even without dividend distribution the income from loan margins alone to the Council will grow over the Business Plan period by £2.4 million, assuming all assumptions within the Business Plan occur as expected and schemes and initiatives are delivered as set out within the Plan.
- 8.16. This increase in income would be very welcome in the Medium Term Financial Plan period when offset against the Council's significant emerging financial challenges. However, caution is advised because delivery sits outside of the Council's control and plans are seldom delivered as originally envisaged. The Business Plan presented here is rolling plan and so will be updated each year and the changes will be factored into the Medium Term Plan each year.

Commentary

- 8.17. The Business Plan presented offers the Council significant revenue upside which would be very useful in dealing with the challenges expected within its Medium Term Financial Plan. However, there are risks associated with increased borrowing, as explained above in the Risk Analysis section, which mean these returns may be delayed or reduced.
- 8.18. Recognising this, the Council is advised to be cautious in how much and when it reflects the predicted returns in its own financial plans.
- 8.19. Allowing Qualis to reinvest its profits and not paying dividends in this plan period represents a sensible strategy, in that it builds resilience in the financial model presented by Qualis and provides investment capital and a buffer which can absorb financial shocks and reduces the probability that Qualis will need to return to the Council for further financial support.

9. Legal and Governance Implications

9.1. None contained within this report.

10. Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications

10.1. None.

11. Consultation Undertaken

11.1. None

Background Papers

Group Company Governance Document – Cabinet 6 February 2020

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QUALIS GROUP FOUR YEAR BUSINESS PLAN

1st October 2021 to
30th September 2025



Contents

1. Introduction	03
2. Organisational Structure	04
3. Purpose	05
4. Governance	06
5. Finance	07
6. Qualis Living	38
7. Qualis Commercial	44
8. Qualis Management	48
9. Qualis Community	50
10. Risk Management	51
11. Health and Safety	53
12. ESG and Sustainability	54

1. Introduction

Qualis Group Limited (Qualis), which is wholly owned by Epping Forest District Council (EFDC), was established in 2019. It is the Council's property company that operates with flexibility and commercial focus to generate returns that support key services and regeneration.

Core activities include:

- Development
- Investment
- Property Asset Management
- Facilities Management (FM)

Qualis will contribute to the Council's objective to create more jobs, grow the local economy, improve housing and public amenities.

Through the planning process and public consultation we are able to identify key priorities for the local area and its residents.

We welcome stakeholder input to ensure that company activities provide maximum benefit to the community.

The company is currently working to deliver against agreed objectives as set out in the one year (2020-2021) Business Plan. The four year plan provides details on the next phase and sets out key targets and growth opportunities.

The financial plan in section 5 covers the approach, assumptions and key financial information for the Group and each subsidiary.

Since the company became operational in September 2020, Qualis has;

- Submitted planning applications for the five initial Epping sites including; St John's Road, Cottis Lane and Bakers Lane car parks, Conder and Hemnall Street.
- Completed public consultation for the Roundhills development in Waltham Abbey.
- Acquired two investment properties and agreed terms on a third investment.
- Provided financial benefits back to the Council.
- Set up Qualis Management and successfully transferred the housing repairs service from EFDC.
- Appointed the permanent leadership team and Group Board.

- Implemented robust corporate governance arrangements.
- Commenced the development of our Environmental Social Governance (ESG) and sustainability strategies.
- Established a Community Interest Company (CIC) and initiated stakeholder engagement.
- Identified a pipeline of development opportunities and services for transfer.
- Started the development of our corporate culture and introduced employee engagement initiatives.

Over the next four years Qualis will aim to deliver:

- The initial Epping Town Centre developments (subject to planning permission) providing approximately 270 new homes and a new car park that will allow the development of the Council's new leisure centre.
- Build 28 homes on the Roundhills site at Waltham Abbey.
- Explore how we will continue to invest in regeneration across the District, which includes a proposal for a further £35m loan facility from EFDC for site acquisitions.
- Undertake further work to identify potential development and regeneration opportunities across the EFDC property portfolio.
- Continue to build the investment portfolio.
- Continue to grow Qualis Management through the implementation of additional repairs and maintenance workstreams (as agreed in the original Business Plan).
- Consider the benefits of transferring the additional services from the Council including; asset management, grounds maintenance, FM and housing contract services.
- Advance projects within Qualis Community, focussing on employment, sustainability and other key areas.

2. Organisational Structure

Qualis Group Ltd is a private company limited by shares, incorporated in England and Wales. The Group structure is shown below:

Qualis Group – is the parent company that has responsibility for the overall performance and governance of the subsidiary companies.

Qualis Living – is the property investment company that will own, manage, buy and sell assets to maximise returns for the Group.

Qualis Commercial – is the development company that will build schemes on land purchased from the Council or land acquired on the open market.

We are currently reviewing the organisational structure with a view to identifying operational and financial efficiencies.

Qualis Management – is the facilities management company that provides a range of services to the Council and will in future years offer services to neighbouring councils and in the private sector.

Qualis Community – is the community interest company that will support activities and projects that provide a direct benefit to the community.



3. Purpose

Qualis Group was established by EFDC in 2019 as the Council's property company. Its purpose is to ensure that the Council's objectives to create more jobs, grow the local economy, improve housing and public amenities are achieved.

With central government funding to councils being reduced, EFDC, like many other local authorities has embraced the trading company model that will deliver financial returns to the benefit of the Council and its residents.

The primary objectives of the Group are unchanged from the 2020/2021 Business Plan

- To bring forward the development of key sites to provide new homes, public amenities and business premises within the District.
- To act commercially to maximise profits within Qualis and deliver sustainable returns to the Council as Shareholder that will replace reduced Government funding.
- To deliver long-term value across all Group activities and positively impact communities, the environment and local economy.
- To build a highly effective team and create a corporate culture that empowers and inspires people to deliver excellence.

4. Governance

A governance framework has been put in place to enable the Group to effectively organise its operational, financial, risk management and reporting processes. These underpin the Group's plans, assign clear responsibilities and accountabilities ensuring effective decision making and compliance with relevant regulations and legal obligations.

Qualis has entered into a Shareholder Agreement with the Council. The Agreement sets out obligations of the parties and 'Reserved Matters' that Qualis Group Board cannot approve without separate consent from the Council.

The Council has appointed Andrew Small as the Section 151 Officer and Shareholder's representative, responsible for general monitoring, compliance and administration.

One year and four year Business Plans are submitted to the Council for approval. Quarterly financial and operational performance reports are also provided.

The permanent Board was appointed in October 2020 and is responsible for governance and oversight of all company activities. It is made up of nine members including –

Paul ffolkes Davis
Independent Non-Executive Director & Chair

Councillor Richard Bassett
Non-Executive Director

Peter Baynham
Independent Non-Executive Director

Georgina Blakemore
Non-Executive Director

Councillor Howard Kauffman
Non-Executive Director

Farooq Mohammed
Independent Non-Executive Director

Sacha Jevans
Group Managing Director, Executive Director

Paul Hewitt
Group Operations Director, Executive Director

Nick Dawe
Group Finance Director, Executive Director

An annual Board and Committee programme is in place with standing and ad hoc agenda items. Meetings for all companies are currently held on a monthly basis.

The Managing Director of each subsidiary will be appointed as a Board Director for their respective company.

The following Committee structure was introduced in February 2021:

- Executive Committee
- Investment and Development Committee
- Audit and Risk Committee
- Remuneration, Nominations and Governance Committee

A Health, Safety and Sustainability Committee will be established during the next financial year.

5. Finance

Expectation

The original expectation was that within five years of creating Qualis, the Group would be sustainable and returning profit from all its companies. The targets set were as follows:

- Qualis Group would make an annual return of 3% from supervision and other services provided to subsidiary companies.
- Qualis Living, from rental returns and associated services, would make an annual 6% net return on capital invested in buying property.
- Qualis Commercial developments would make an average 15% return on the capital employed to buy land, construct, and complete projects. A slightly lower return would be considered acceptable if a significant regeneration benefit was delivered.
- Qualis Management, from providing services to EFDC, other public bodies, private companies and individuals would make an annual 6% net return within five years of set-up.

EFDC as Shareholder would benefit from the success of Qualis as follows:

- Immediate benefit from the full interest margin from loans provided and a partial margin where cash loans are provided.
- Medium-term benefit from the provision of services where productivity improvements meet inflation costs and income generated from external sales allow discounts to be offered.
- Long-term benefit from dividends, although in the early years re-investment planned to allow Qualis to continue to grow.

Approach

All figures and assumptions are agreed with the appropriate budget holder. In terms of the level of detail the following is expected:

- An annual detailed budget.
- The four year plan in outline detail.
- The thirty five year plan formulaic approach.

Developments undertaken by Qualis would be delivered quicker and more efficiently than would be the case if delivery of the project were by EFDC.

As a broad financial benchmark, the assumption is that services transferring from EFDC to Qualis will be delivered at the same or improved quality, more efficiently and raise up to 20% of income from non EFDC sources in the medium-term.

Assumptions

The following assumptions sit behind the four year plan:

- Inflation, staff costs, increase by 2.5% per year.
- Inflation, non staff costs, increase by 2.5% per year.
- Inflation, construction costs, increase by 2.5% per year.
- Inflation, sale of property and rental uplift increase by 2.5% per year.
- Inter-company recharges are actioned at full costs plus a 3% surcharge, (pending confirmation of the correct approach to reflect HMRC compliance).
- Services provided from EFDC or supplied to EFDC attract a 3% surcharge, (pending confirmation of the correct approach to reflect HMRC compliance).
- Costs incurred in respect of developments are treated as income and expenditure until planning permission is granted, at which point the charges are treated as work in progress and transferred to the balance sheet.

- The underlying cost of money is expected at 2.5%, the cost of loans from EFDC is no greater than 4% and the cost of money from the market at 4%.
- Interest earned through investment activities at 1.5%.
- Loans are expected to continue to be available for local regeneration and redevelopment from EFDC.
- Loans from the market will be required for out of District investment.

5. Finance

Broad Timing and Financial Assumptions

Qualis Management

2021/22 Investment Asset Team
Capital Works
Electrical Testing
Cyclical Decoration

2022/23 Gas- Breakdown and Servicing
Aids and Adapts
Grounds Maintenance

2023/24 Boiler Installation

2024/25 External Income Generation

Qualis Living

2021/22 £5m externally funded asset purchases

2022/23 £10m externally funded asset purchases
Possible investment asset transfer from EFDC, not in figures

2023/24 £20m externally funded asset purchases

2024/25 £40m a year investment

Qualis Commercial

2021/22 Epping Sites and Roundhills already in train
Pyrles Lane and two other development opportunities in figures

2022/23 *Possible advance of some pipeline projects, not in figures*

2023/24 *Possible advance of some pipeline projects, not in figures*

2024/25 *Possible advance of some pipeline projects, not in figures*

Qualis Community

2021/22 Simple Business Plan showing scale of ambition

2022/23 Simple Business Plan showing scale of ambition

2023/24 Simple Business Plan showing scale of ambition

2024/25 Simple Business Plan showing scale of ambition

Qualis Group

2021/22 Performance allowance 5%
Statutory employer pension contribution plus 3%
Two additional transactional employees

2022/23 As above

2023/24 As above

2024/25 As above

5. Finance

Income and Expenditure Summary View

The following figures have been calculated from the details submitted by the relevant budget holder.

Note:

- The figures exclude smaller specialist services that provide support to EFDC's Place Strategy.
- The benefit of the transfer of EFDC investment assets is excluded.
- The figures exclude predicted interest earned due to the volatility and the relatively small scale of the benefit.

Qualis Total	2021/22 £	2022/23 £	2023/24 £	2024/25 £
Total Income	13,856,889	53,037,987	142,002,340	32,565,499
Total Expenditure	13,549,327	48,689,496	130,661,526	27,179,690
Profit/-Loss before Tax	307,561	4,348,492	11,340,814	5,385,809
Return	2.3%	8.9%	8.7%	19.8%

The figures show growing profitability delivered by increases in the range of services provided, a larger property investment portfolio and the completion of developments and subsequent sales. Corporation tax liabilities are subject to review and are not shown in the figures.

Qualis Management	2021/22 £	2022/23 £	2023/24 £	2024/25 £
Total Income	9,185,726	12,899,262	14,078,890	14,685,863
Total Expenditure	9,120,799	12,494,149	13,514,987	13,853,239
Profit/-Loss before Tax	64,927	405,114	563,903	832,623
Return	0.7%	3.2%	4.2%	6.0%

- Qualis Management shows an increasing return as efficiency and external sales (subject to Teckal limitations) are gained.
- The figures include further transfers from EFDC (subject to approval).
- Estimated costs for resources to support the delivery of services to third parties have been included in the figures.

Qualis Living

	2021/22 £	2022/23 £	2023/24 £	2024/25 £
Total Income	2,229,150	2,929,150	4,329,150	7,129,150
Total Expenditure	2,054,930	2,513,263	3,254,930	4,854,930
Profit/-Loss before Tax	174,220	415,887	1,074,220	2,274,220
Return	8.5%	16.5%	33.0%	46.8%

- Qualis Living provides necessary short-term cash flow to the group whilst it is building a robust portfolio of assets.
- Future expansion of the portfolio will be reliant on obtaining finance from the market due to a change in the Public Works Loan Board lending criteria.
- To ensure maximum early cash flow, the portfolio is intended to be supported by loans repaid on maturity.
- The returns projected are based on the Company being able to sell assets within the time frames shown. The exact timing of those sales is not completely certain therefore the projected returns between 8.5% to 46.8% should be seen as indicative.

Qualis Commercial

	2021/22 £	2022/23 £	2023/24 £	2024/25 £
Total Income	1	34,298,048	120,062,552	7,723,013
Total Expenditure	1	30,939,508	110,729,370	5,539,126
Profit/-Loss before Tax	-	3,358,540	9,333,182	2,183,887
Return	0%	10.9%	8.4%	39.4%

- The figures show the anticipated profits to be made on the initial developments, Pyrles Lane in Loughton and other commercially sensitive opportunities.
- All costs are taken as work in progress from the grant of planning permission until completion of the project.
- The figures assume the sale of all completed developments, although these assets may be held to lease for rental income in whole or in part.
- Work has been undertaken to establish a pipeline of future projects, which are not shown in the figures, but could be brought forward.
- The returns from developments range from 0% to 39.4%. Returns in respect of any development are subject to uncertainties and risks (as noted in Section 10). In particular, returns are dependent upon timing, which may be subject to delay, such as the granting of planning permission.

5. Finance

Qualis Group	2021/22 £	2022/23 £	2023/24 £	2024/25 £
Total Income	2,392,012	2,411,527	2,431,747	2,452,474
Total Expenditure	2,323,598	2,342,576	2,362,239	2,382,395
Profit/-Loss before Tax	68,414	68,951	69,508	70,079
Return	2.9%	2.9%	2.9%	2.9%

Includes costs associated with the Qualis Group Board, transactional and administrative support and some operational costs, such as IT and HR functions.

Qualis Community	2021/22 £	2022/23 £	2023/24 £	2024/25 £
Total Income	50,000	500,000	1,100,000	575,000
Total Expenditure	50,000	400,000	800,000	550,000
Profit/-Loss before Tax	-	100,000	300,000	25,000
Return	0.0%	25.0%	37.5%	4.5%

An initial budget has been produced reflecting the potential to raise income currently not available to EFDC, or use income collected by EFDC for specific purposes, i.e. Section 106 contributions for environmental improvements.

Expenditure is related to specific projects.

Balance Sheet

The balance sheet shows a growing net worth of the company despite it being initially set up on a highly leveraged basis. i.e., by loans.

By the 30th September 2025 the net worth of the company is expected to be £27m. This is achieved by a combination of growing operational income, the repayment of loans, and profit made from the sale of completed developments.

Assets purchased from the market are supported by a maturity loan rather than a repayment loan. This will require a sophisticated approach to portfolio management to maintain income and hold assets as maturity loans are repaid.

The Group continues to rely on loans from EFDC to support development activities. The option to repay some loans at the end of the four year period or to use cash receipts from sales to fund subsequent projects requires further discussion and analysis.

The summary balance sheet for Qualis Group is shown below

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Fixed Assets	35,000,000	45,000,000	65,000,000	105,000,000
Work in Progress	64,575,491	75,957,758	5,298,953	3,442,508
Debtors	70,000	77,000	84,700	93,170
Cash	24,565,406	47,198,298	126,031,253	132,106,841
Trade Creditors	-70,000	-77,000	-84,700	-93,170
Loan Balances	-123,833,333	-163,500,000	-180,333,333	-219,166,667
Net Assets and Liabilities	307,564	4,656,056	15,996,873	21,382,682
Share Capital	3	3	3	3
Profit and Loss	307,561	4,656,053	15,996,870	21,382,679
	307,564	4,656,056	15,996,873	21,382,682

5. Finance

Cash Flow

Cash flow projections take into account income and expenditure performance, development, new loan facilities, and the repayment of existing loans, as well as interest receipts.

The success of the Group remains dependent on loans.

To allow continued investment out of District, loans from the market will be required.

To fund construction a further loan from EFDC of £65m is required as previously agreed. This figure is close to the original estimate. The loan is likely to be called down during 2021/22. EFDC will benefit from the loan margin by approximately £1m a year.

From 2023/2024, significant cash balances are forecast that would allow investment in future projects or early repayment of loans.

Page 49

						2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Cash Brought Forward						2,000,000	24,565,406	47,198,298	44,831,253
Operational Activities	Management	Income				9,185,726	12,899,262	14,078,890	14,685,863
		Expenditure				- 9,120,799	- 12,494,149	- 13,514,987	- 13,853,239
	Living	Income				2,229,150	2,929,150	4,329,150	7,129,150
		Expenditure				- 2,054,930	- 2,513,263	- 3,254,930	- 4,854,930
		Asset Purchase				5,000,000	- 10,000,000	- 20,000,000	- 40,000,000
	Commercial	Sales				4,932,422	49,744,629	87,459,059	7,723,013
	Group	Development Cost				- 58,870,946	- 53,465,868	- 9,329,599	7,723,013
		Income				2,392,012	2,411,527	2,431,747	- 8,905,538
	Community	Expenditure				- 2,323,598	- 2,342,576	- 2,362,239	- 2,382,395
		Income				50,000	500,000	1,100,000	575,000
	Expenditure				- 50,000	- 400,000	- 800,000	- 550,000	
New Loans	Investment Asset 2	10		Market	Maturity	5,000,000	5,000,000		
	Investment Asset 3	10		Market	Maturity	10,000,000		10,000,000	
	Investment Asset 4	10		Market	Maturity	20,000,000			20,000,000
	Investment Asset 5	10		Market	Maturity	40,000,000			40,000,000
	Construction Loan 2	30	2021/22	EFDC	Repay	65,000,000	35,000,000	30,000,000	
Construction Loan 3	30	2022/23	EFDC	Repay	35,000,000	35,000,000			
Construction Loan 4	30	2023/24	EFDC/Market	Repay	-				
Construction Loan 5	30	2024/25	EFDC/Market	Repay	-				
Repay Loans	Investment Asset 1	10	2019/20	EFDC	Maturity	30,000,000	-	-	-
	Investment Asset 2	10	2021/22	Market	Maturity	20,000,000	-	-	-
	Investment Asset 3	10	2022/23	Market	Maturity	20,000,000	-	-	-
	Investment Asset 4	10	2023/24	Market	Maturity	20,000,000	-	-	-
	Investment Asset 5	10	2024/25	Market	Maturity	20,000,000	-	-	-
	Working Capital	6	2019/20	EFDC	Repay	6,000,000	- 1,200,000	- 1,200,000	- 1,200,000
	Asset Purchase Loan	30	2020/21	EFDC	Repay	18,000,000	- 600,000	- 600,000	- 600,000
	Construction Loan 1	30	2020/21	EFDC	Repay	6,000,000	- 200,000	- 200,000	- 200,000
	Construction Loan 2	30	2021/22	EFDC	Repay	65,000,000	- 2,166,667	- 2,166,667	-
	Construction Loan 3	30	2022/23	EFDC	Repay	35,000,000	-	- 1,166,667	- 1,166,667
Construction Loan 4	30	2023/24	EFDC	Repay	-	-	-	-	
Construction Loan 5	30	2024/25	EFDC	Repay	-	-	- 80,000,000	-	
Sub Total						24,202,371	46,500,786	44,168,722	9,354,523
Interest Earned	Accounts / Investments	1.50%					363,036	697,512	662,531
Cash Balance						24,565,406	47,198,298	44,831,253	9,494,841
EFDC Provided Loan Balances									
Taken						125,000,000	35,000,000		
Repaid / Reapplied						- 4,166,667	- 5,333,333	- 83,166,667	- 3,166,667
Balance						120,833,333	150,500,000	67,333,333	64,166,667

5. Finance

The tables below show the options available in relation to loans taken from EFDC.

The first option shows running out the loans as agreed.

Option 1

EFDC Provided Loan Balances	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Taken	125,000,000	35,000,000		
Repaid / Reapplied	-4,166,667	-5,333,333	-3,166,667	-3,166,667
Balance	120,833,333	150,500,000	147,333,333	144,166,667

The second option shows the impact of using cash to repay loans rather than reapply it to future projects.

Option 2

EFDC Provided Loan Balances	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Taken	125,000,000	35,000,000		
Repaid / Reapplied	-4,166,667	-5,333,333	-83,166,667	-3,166,667
Balance	120,833,333	150,500,000	67,333,333	64,166,667

Property Investment Portfolio

The assumptions around the asset investment portfolio are set out below. It should be noted the figures shown relate to the additional asset investment made by Qualis only.

It is planned that a high performing portfolio returning 6% to 7% will continue to grow over the next four years.

The initial funding for the portfolio was provided by EFDC, sourced from funds made available by the Public Works Loans Board. Following recent changes, investment for yield no longer meets lending criteria.

Growth of the asset portfolio is highly dependent on loan finance from the market.

The net performance of the proposed portfolio is acceptable and capital growth is probable.

5. Finance

Living summary

Financial Year			LEATHERHEAD	MALDON	COVENTRY	ASSET 4	ASSET 5, 6	ASSET 7-10	ASSET 11-18	TOTAL
		Inclusive Purchase Value	13,807,635	5,565,604	9,500,000	5,000,000	10,000,000	20,000,000	40,000,000	103,873,239
		Gross Return	6.50%	6.54%	6.50%	7.00%	7.00%	7.00%	7.00%	-
2021/22		Rent	897,650	364,000	617,500	350,000				2,229,150
Year 3		Other Income			-	-				-
		Total Income	897,650	364,000	617,500	350,000				2,229,150
	100,000	Living Overhead	4	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000			100,000
	600,000	Group Overhead	4	150,000	150,000	150,000	150,000			600,000
		Financing Costs		552,305	222,624	380,000	200,000			1,354,930
		Total Costs		727,305	397,624	555,000	375,000			2,054,930
		Net Position		170,345	- 33,624	62,500	- 25,000			174,220
				1.23%	-0.60%	0.66%	-0.50%			0.17%
2022/23		Rent	897,650	364,000	617,500	350,000	700,000			2,929,150
Year 4		Other Income			-	-				-
Total		Income	897,650	364,000	617,500	350,000	700,000			2,929,150
	100,000	Living Overhead	6	16,667	16,667	16,667	25,000	33,333		108,333
	600,000	Group Overhead	6	100,000	100,000	100,000	150,000	200,000		650,000
		Financing Costs		552,305	222,624	380,000	200,000	400,000		1,754,930
		Total Costs		668,972	339,291	496,667	375,000	633,333		2,513,263
		Net Position		228,678	24,709	120,833	- 25,000	66,667		415,887
				1.66%	0.44%	1.27%	-0.50%	0.67%		0.95%
2023/24		Rent	897,650	364,000	617,500	350,000	700,000	1,400,000		4,329,150
Year 5		Other Income			-	-	-	-		-
		Total Income	897,650	364,000	617,500	350,000	700,000	1,400,000		4,329,150
	100,000	Living Overhead	10	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	20,000	40,000	100,000
	600,000	Group Overhead	10	60,000	60,000	60,000	60,000	120,000	240,000	600,000
		Financing Costs		552,305	222,624	380,000	200,000	400,000	800,000	2,554,930
		Total Costs		622,305	292,624	450,000	270,000	540,000	1,080,000	3,254,930
		Net Position		275,345	71,376	167,500	80,000	160,000	320,000	1,074,220
				1.99%	1.28%	1.76%	1.60%	1.60%	1.60%	1.03%
2024/25		Rent	897,650	364,000	617,500	350,000	700,000	1,400,000	2,800,000	7,129,150
Year 6		Other Income			-	-	-	-	-	-
		Total Income	897,650	364,000	617,500	350,000	700,000	1,400,000	2,800,000	7,129,150
	100,000	Living Overhead	18	5,556	5,556	5,556	5,556	11,111	22,222	44,444
	600,000	Group Overhead	18	33,333	33,333	33,333	33,333	66,667	133,333	266,667
		Financing Costs		552,305	222,624	380,000	200,000	400,000	800,000	1,600,000
		Total Costs		591,194	261,513	418,889	238,889	477,778	955,556	1,911,111
		Net Position		306,456	102,487	198,611	111,111	222,222	444,444	888,889
				2.22%	1.84%	2.09%	2.22%	2.22%	2.22%	2.19%
Performance				1.00%+	1.00%+	1.00%+	1.00%+	1.00%+	1.00%+	1.00%+
Loan Principle				Maturity	Maturity	Maturity	Maturity	Maturity	Maturity	Maturity
Net Cash In 2024/25										

5. Finance

Development Sites

A financial summary for each of the initial developments is set out below.

The figures assume 25% affordable housing provision which is based on standard financial viability assessments, considerate to Shareholder profit expectations and other public good and benefits provided by the projects.

A pipeline of projects has been identified but is not included in the figures.

Initial sites

Financial Year		BAKERS	COTTIS 1	CONDER	ST JOHNS	HEMNALL	ROUNDHILLS
Cumulative till 30/09/21	Sale Income						
Year 1 and 2	Other Income						
	Total Income	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Land		1,700,000	2,050,000	7,840,000	2,030,000	1,300,000
	Building Costs		920,662	844,365	1,435,125	470,067	330,170
	Fees	588,788	226,999	142,499	489,899	119,799	5,000
	Interest Costs		59,789	37,377	127,599	34,475	21,649
	Qualis Development Overhead						
	Qualis Group Overheads	678,712	750,712	750,712	750,712	750,712	221,502
	Total Costs	1,267,500	3,658,162	3,824,953	10,643,335	3,405,053	1,878,321
	Less Value Engineering	-	-	-	-	-	-
		-1,267,500	-3,658,162	-3,824,953	-10,643,335	-3,405,053	-1,878,321
2021/22	Sale Income			1,591,641	-		1,658,218
Year 3	Other Income						
	Total Income	-	-	1,591,641	-	-	1,658,218
	Land						
	Building Costs		8,274,455	7,934,478	19,451,825		6,910,462
	Fees		25,000				
	Interest Costs		314,284	199,497	549,552	107,772	148,251
	Qualis Development Overhead						
	Qualis Group Overheads		229,741	229,741	229,741	229,741	229,741
	Total Costs	-	8,843,480	8,363,716	20,231,118	337,513	7,288,454
	Less Value Engineering		221,087	209,093	505,778	8,438	182,211
		-	-8,622,393	-6,562,982	-19,725,340	-329,075	-5,448,025

5. Finance

Financial Year		BAKERS	COTTIS 1	CONDER	ST JOHNS	HEMNALL	ROUNDHILLS
2022/23	Sale Income		13,357,490	17,856,408	-		7,914,393
Year 4	Other Income						
	Total Income	-	13,357,490	17,856,408	-	-	7,914,393
	Land						
	Building Costs		1,084,170	5,230,498	23,332,155		635,315
	Fees						
	Interest Costs			291,425	537,247	112,147	80,478
	Qualis Development Overhead						
	Qualis Group Overheads		20,379	224,172	244,551	244,551	244,551
	Total Costs	-	1,104,549	5,746,095	24,113,953	356,698	960,344
	Less Value Engineering		27,614	143,652	602,849	8,917	24,009
		-	12,280,555	12,253,965	-23,511,104	-347,781	6,978,058
2023/24	Sale Income				54,558,473	202,078	900,000
Year 5	Other Income						
	Total Income	-	-	-	54,558,473	202,078	900,000
	Land						
	Building Costs				630,402	1,085,225	23,580
	Fees					24,999	
	Interest Costs				3,765	125,722	
	Qualis Development Overhead						
	Qualis Group Overheads				61,929	247,717	41,286
	Total Costs	-	-	-	696,096	1,483,663	64,866
	Less Value Engineering		-	-	17,402	37,092	1,622
		-	-	-	53,879,779	-1,244,493	836,756
2024/25	Sale Income					1,636,835	
Year 6	Other Income						
	Total Income	-	-	-		1,636,835	-
	Land						
	Building Costs					8,244,563	
	Fees						
	Interest Costs					266,072	
	Qualis Development Overhead						
	Qualis Group Overheads					250,963	
	Total Costs	-	-	-	-	8,761,598	-
	Less Value Engineering		-	-	-	219,040	-
		-	-	-	-	-6,905,723	-

5. Finance

Financial Year		BAKERS	COTTIS 1	CONDER	ST JOHNS	HEMNALL	ROUNDHILLS
Total	Sale Income	-	14,849,999	19,448,049	59,406,354	15,700,331	10,472,611
Including years	Other Income	-	-	-	-	-	-
after 2024/25	Total Income	1,267,500	14,849,999	19,448,049	59,406,354	15,700,331	10,472,611
	Land	-	1,700,000	2,050,000	7,840,000	2,030,000	1,300,000
	Building Costs	-	10,279,287	14,009,341	44,849,507	10,978,566	7,899,527
	Fees	588,788	251,999	142,499	489,899	144,798	5,000
	Interest Costs	-	374,073	528,299	1,218,163	765,865	250,378
	Qualis Development Overhead	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Qualis Group Overheads	678,712	1,000,832	1,204,625	1,286,933	1,850,302	737,080
	Total Costs	1,267,500	13,606,191	17,934,764	55,684,502	15,769,531	10,191,985
	Less Value Engineering	-	248,701	352,745	1,126,029	309,112	207,842
		-	1,492,509	1,866,031	4,847,881	239,912	488,468
	Real Return Inclusive of Funding Costs and Overheads at 25% Affordable	0.00%	10.97%	10.40%	8.71%	1.52%	4.79%
	Sale Value Based on Lease Value		14,849,999		59,406,354		
	Sale Value at Cost		12,231,286		53,179,406		
	Implied Return		21.41%		11.71%		
	Income and Expenditure Charge Across						
2021/22	Income	-					
	Expenditure Net						
2022/23	Income		14,849,999	19,448,049			
	Expenditure Net		13,357,490	17,582,018			
2023/24	Income				59,406,354		10,472,611
	Expenditure Net				54,558,473		9,984,143
2024/25	Income	-	-	-	-	1,636,835	-
	Expenditure Net	-	-	-	-	8,542,558	-

5. Finance

Following Opportunities

Financial Year		PYRLES LANE	COTTIS PHASE 2	LOCAL OPPORTUNITY COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE	LOCAL OPPORTUNITY COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE	TOTAL	TOTAL CUMULATIVE
Cumulative till 30/09/21	Sale Income					-	-
Year 1 and 2	Other Income					-	-
	Total Income	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Land	1,600,000	1,700,000			18,220,000	18,220,000
	Building Costs	368,380		60,000		4,428,769	4,428,769
	Fees	800,499		30,000		2,403,483	2,403,483
	Interest Costs	20,558				301,447	301,447
	Qualis Development Overhead					-	-
	Qualis Group Overheads	221,502			221,502	4,346,065	4,346,065
	Total Costs	3,010,939	1,700,000	-	311,502	29,699,764	29,699,764
	Less Value Engineering	-	-	-	-	-	-
		-3,010,939	-1,700,000	-	-311,502	-29,699,764	-29,699,764
2021/22	Sale Income	941,163			433,400	4,624,422	4,624,422
Year 3	Other Income			308,000		308,000	308,000
	Total Income	941,163	-	308,000	433,400	4,932,422	4,932,422
	Land			8,297,240		8,297,240	26,517,240
	Building Costs	3,669,466			198,723	46,439,409	50,868,178
	Fees			434,360		459,360	2,862,843
	Interest Costs	132,142		318,249	67,262	1,837,009	2,138,456
	Qualis Development Overhead					-	-
	Qualis Group Overheads	229,741		229,741	229,741	1,837,928	6,183,993
	Total Costs	4,031,349	-	9,279,590	495,726	58,870,946	88,570,710
	Less Value Engineering	100,784	-	231,990	12,393	1,471,774	1,471,774
		-2,989,402	-	-8,739,600	-49,933	-52,466,750	-83,638,288

5. Finance

Financial Year		PYRLES LANE	COTTIS PHASE 2	LOCAL OPPORTUNITY COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE	LOCAL OPPORTUNITY COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE	TOTAL	TOTAL CUMULATIVE
2022/23	Sale Income	7,896,313			2,720,025	49,744,629	54,369,051
Year 4	Other Income					-	308,000
	Total Income	7,896,313	-	-	2,720,025	49,744,629	54,677,051
	Land					-	26,517,240
	Building Costs	5,979,592	2,673,160	6,409,290	4,311,740	49,655,920	100,524,098
	Fees					-	2,862,843
	Interest Costs	262,247	27,087	450,817	112,471	1,873,919	4,012,375
	Qualis Development Overhead					-	-
	Qualis Group Overheads	244,551	224,172	244,551	244,551	1,936,029	8,120,022
	Total Costs	6,486,390	2,924,419	7,104,658	4,668,762	53,465,868	142,036,578
	Less Value Engineering	162,160	73,110	177,616	116,719	1,336,647	2,808,420
		1,572,083	-2,851,309	-6,927,042	-1,832,018	-2,384,592	-87,359,527
2023/24	Sale Income	6,574,992	5,410,474	15,553,567	4,259,475	87,459,059	141,828,109
Year 5	Other Income					-	308,000
	Total Income	6,574,992	5,410,474	15,553,567	4,259,475	87,459,059	142,136,109
	Land					-	26,517,240
	Building Costs	172,246	2,436,382	3,007,787	78,885	7,434,507	107,958,605
	Fees					24,999	2,887,842
	Interest Costs	49,367	71,999	510,079	15,077	776,009	4,788,384
	Qualis Development Overhead					-	-
	Qualis Group Overheads	247,717	144,502	247,717	103,216	1,094,084	9,214,106
	Total Costs	469,330	2,652,883	3,765,583	197,178	9,329,599	151,366,177
	Less Value Engineering	11,733	66,322	94,140	4,929	233,240	3,041,660
		6,117,395	2,823,913	11,882,124	4,067,226	78,362,699	-9,230,068

5. Finance

Financial Year		PYRLES LANE	COTTIS PHASE 2	LOCAL OPPORTUNITY COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE	LOCAL OPPORTUNITY COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE	TOTAL	TOTAL CUMULATIVE
2024/25	Sale Income			6,086,178		7,723,013	149,551,122
Year 6	Other Income					-	308,000
	Total Income	-	-	6,086,178	-	7,723,013	149,859,122
	Land					-	26,517,240
	Building Costs			76,074		8,320,637	116,279,242
	Fees					-	2,887,842
	Interest Costs			5,125		271,197	5,059,581
	Qualis Development Overhead					-	-
	Qualis Group Overheads			62,741		313,704	9,527,810
	Total Costs	-	-	143,940	-	8,905,538	160,271,715
	Less Value Engineering	-	-	3,599	-	222,638	3,264,299
		-	-	5,945,837	-	-959,887	-10,412,593
Total	Sale Income	15,412,468	5,410,474	21,639,745	7,412,900	169,752,931	
Including years after 2024/25	Other Income	-	-	308,000	-	308,000	
	Total Income	15,412,468	5,410,474	21,947,745	7,412,900	170,060,931	
	Land	1,600,000	1,700,000	8,297,240	-	26,517,240	
	Building Costs	10,189,684	5,109,542	9,493,151	4,649,348	117,457,953	
	Fees	800,499	-	434,360	30,000	2,887,842	
	Interest Costs	464,314	99,086	1,284,270	194,810	5,179,258	
	Qualis Development Overhead	-	-	-	-	-	
	Qualis Group Overheads	943,511	368,674	784,750	799,010	9,654,428	
	Total Costs	13,998,008	7,277,302	20,293,771	5,673,168	161,696,721	
	Less Value Engineering	274,677	139,433	507,344	134,042	3,299,924	
		1,689,137	-1,727,395	2,161,318	1,873,774	11,664,134	

5. Finance

Financial Year		PYRLES LANE	COTTIS PHASE 2	LOCAL OPPORTUNITY COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE	LOCAL OPPORTUNITY COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE	TOTAL	TOTAL CUMULATIVE
Note:							
Real Return Inclusive of Funding Costs and Overheads at 25% Affordable		12.07%	-23.74%	10.65%	33.03%	7.21%	
Sale Value Based on Lease Value							
Sale Value at Cost							
Implied Return							
Income and Expenditure Charge Across							
2021/22	Income						-
	Expenditure Net						-
2022/23	Income					34,298,048	
	Expenditure Net					30,939,508	
2023/24	Income	15,412,468	5,410,474	21,947,745	7,412,900	120,062,552	
	Expenditure Net	13,723,331	7,137,869	19,786,427	5,539,126	110,729,370	
2024/25	Income	-	-	6,086,178	-	7,723,013	
	Expenditure Net	-	-	140,342	-	3,143,773	

5. Finance

Financial Benefit to Shareholder

The following table gives a summary of the financial benefits that are currently forecast to fall to EFDC.

		Loan Value	Margin	Duration Years	Already Assumed	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Loans	Working Capital	6,000,000	1.50%	5	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000	90,000
	Asset Purchase Market	30,000,000	1.50%	10	450,000	450,000	450,000	450,000	450,000
	Asset Purchase EDFC	18,000,000	4.00%	30	720,000	720,000	720,000	720,000	720,000
	Construction Loan Original Pt 1	35,000,000	1.50%	30	-	525,000	525,000	525,000	525,000
	Construction Loan Original Pt 2	30,000,000	1.50%	30	-	-	450,000	450,000	450,000
	Asset Construction Loan New	35,000,000	1.50%	30	-	525,000	525,000	525,000	525,000
Discount									900,000
Dividend						Reinvest	Reinvest	Reinvest	Reinvest
Direct Benefit to EFDC					1,260,000	2,310,000	2,760,000	2,760,000	3,660,000
Indirect Benefits EFDC Overhead Reductions				600,000	600,000	600,000	600,000	600,000	
Total Benefit				1,860,000	2,910,000	3,360,000	3,360,000	4,260,000	

5. Finance

Risk and Sensitivities

The financial plan has been put together using a standard planning approach with low medium and high growth options. The Four Year Business Plan (2021-2025) is based on the medium growth option.

	Low Growth	This Plan	High Growth
Overall profit in 2021/22	£295,218	£307,561	£319,863
Overall profit in 2024/25	£10,487,935	£10,924,935	£11,361,932
Range	94%		104%

The following specific risks and sensitivities have been considered and are summarised with outline risk management actions below:

Issue	Probability 1-20	Impact 1-20	Summary Management Action
General pay inflation over Treasury norm of 2.5%	5	5	Pay and incentive arrangement pegged to financial performance of Qualis.
General non-pay inflation over Treasury norm of 2.5%	5	5	Contracts and procurement approaches control prices of goods supplied.
Development construction costs	7	10	Economic uncertainty in short-term assumed and therefore procurement designed to fix development cost at commencement of project.
Development sale price	7	10	Baseline set prudently however if costs increase then probability of market rate for sales increasing is high, i.e., this risk offsets impact of cost risk.
External funding asset investment	7	5	Initially low amounts of private sector funding assumed, £5m in 2021/22, negligible impact initially. Risk addressed through agreed approach to lenders and feedback already received.
EFDC does not provide additional £35m loan for further projects	5	5	Financial benefit to EFDC is high. Qualis can offer repayment of this loan in full over five years.

6. Qualis Living

Qualis Living has developed a strategy to build a diverse property investment portfolio across a mix of locations and asset classes with minimal occupational risk and no immediate capital expenditure requirement. The company has targeted assets with immediate and long-term income, with strong tenant covenants and attractive yields that provide a surplus after the cost of finance.

All investment proposals are assessed by the Investment and Development Committee before being recommended to the Group Board.

The 2020-2021 Business Plan made reference to an objective to build a £90m portfolio. Following changes to Public Works Loan Board lending criteria, which now prohibits investment for yield, the primary source of finance to grow the portfolio is unavailable. The company will now seek to raise debt from the market.

Detail on the two properties purchased in 2020 is provided on the following pages.

6. Qualis Living



Birchwood Building, Leatherhead

The Birchwood Building is a recently refurbished multi-let office building of 34,939 sq ft (3,246 sq m) together with 154 car parking spaces. It is located within The Leatherhead Park situated on Springfield Drive adjacent to the international headquarters of Unilever and the national headquarters of CGI.

The building provides modern, high specification, trendy office space. The property is let to Zoetis UK and Hyundai Motor UK on full repairing and insuring (FRI) leases producing a total income of £916,389.75 per annum.



Hyundai UK is a wholly owned subsidiary of Hyundai Motor Company, with its principal activities include the importation and sale of cars and parts to consumers. Hyundai is a Korean company that sells cars to customers in more than 190 countries and employs over 75,000 staff. Hyundai is the fastest growing car manufacturer in the world due to its focus on technologically advanced, high quality vehicles.



Zoetis UK undertakes the development, manufacture, marketing and sales of animal health medicines and vaccines, with a focus on livestock and companion animals. Its parent company Zoetis Inc is listed on the New York Stock Exchange and is the global leader in the sector with over 300 product lines and a presence in 120+ countries.



Wicket's, Maldon

The property is a purpose built stand-alone retail warehouse of 28,199 sq ft (2,620 sq m). The site extends to 3.13 acres with the store occupying 0.7 acres. In addition, there are 149 car parking spaces to the front of the building.

The building is located in Maldon, East Essex and is let to Wicket's Building Supplies Limited and provides a total income of £457,000 per annum.



Wicket's was established in 1972 and has grown into one of the UK's leading DIY retailers. In April 2021 the company demerged from Travis Perkins Plc and was listed on the London Stock Market in its own right. It has a market capitalisation of circa £630m, and in a sector that is performing well.

6. Qualis Living

Detail on the property to be purchased provided below, target completion July 2021.



Greenfields House, Coventry

Greenfields House is located on the Westwood Business Park, which sits adjacent to Warwick University Campus. 50 companies are based on the park including, EON, Tui, Barclays, RBS and the Institute of Housing.

The property is a two storey office building of 30,000 sq ft split into two wings with external car parking for 106 cars. It has low site coverage of 14%.

The building is the head office of the Camping and Caravan Club Ltd.

The tenure is long leasehold from Coventry City Council for 125 years from 2003. Coventry City Council has confirmed that it will be prepared to extend the long leasehold subject to negotiation.

The current rent is £694,503 per annum and is let to the Camping and Caravan Club on a FRI lease until 25 March 2031.

Proposed Investment Assets Transfer

EFDC owns and manages a property investment portfolio that provides approximately £9.43m of net rental income per annum and has a capital value of £148m (based on a March 2021 draft valuation). The portfolio is made up of mostly retail and industrial property.

The Shareholder has indicated that they wish for Qualis, as the Council's property company, to consider the transfer of the investment assets to consolidate the portfolio and drive performance to maximise returns for the Council.

It is proposed that Qualis will purchase the investment assets on a part loan and part equity arrangement. EFDC would receive an income guarantee from Qualis, and benefit from a full loan margin. It is also proposed that the Council receive a share of the upside achieved through proactive asset management.

Qualis will gain access to sites that have development potential, creating a strong pipeline for regeneration across the District, with each project expected to provide significant financial returns.

The indicative timetable which is subject to agreement, is provided below. This includes the transfer of personnel, assets and the joint appointment of professionals to undertake comprehensive financial, technical and legal due diligence.

Item	Timing
Secondment of asset team	October 2021
Financial	October to December 2021
Property valuation and technical	October 2021 to January 2022
Legal	October 2021 to February 2022
Transfer of assets and personnel	April to October 2022

6. Qualis Living

The key priorities for Qualis Living over the four year period are as follows -

- Secure new debt facilities from the market to grow the investment portfolio.
- Take interim management responsibility for the EFDC investment assets.
- Complete the due diligence exercise in connection with the proposed transfer of investment assets from EFDC.
- Complete the transfer of investment assets from EFDC.
- Establish a fit for purpose internal property asset management function to manage the property portfolio and reduce outsourcing.

7. Qualis Commercial

Qualis Commercial has several key development schemes in Epping that featured in the 2020-2021 Business Plan. The schemes are at different stages of development and approval. The planning applications for Cottis Lane and Bakers Lane were submitted in December 2020, and the applications for the three residential schemes at St John's, Conder and Hemnall Street were submitted in March 2021. A summary of each scheme is provided below:

Cottis Lane - 330 multi-storey car park with ancillary retail and office accommodation.



Bakers Lane - Leisure Centre



Images above are for illustrative purposes only

7. Qualis Commercial

St John's Road

£ Value: £58m 🏠 Residential homes: 184



Conder Building

£ Value: £17m 🏠 Residential homes: 45



Images above and opposite are for illustrative purposes only

Hemnall Street

£ Value: £15m 🏠 Residential homes: 41



For the purposes of the four year Business Plan, it was assumed a Planning Committee meeting would take place in July 2021, with a completed Section 106 Agreement and the issue of planning permission in September 2021.

Each scheme requires enabling works as preparation for a full start on site, these were envisaged to commence from September 2021.

Cottis Lane Phase 1 (car park only)	Start November 2021	Completion September 2022
Bakers Lane To follow Cottis Lane <i>Note: The project is now being delivered by Places Leisure working in partnership with EFDC</i>	Start October 2022	Completion May 2024
St John's Road To be delivered in phases	Start January 2022	Completion June 2023
Conder Building Independent from other sites	Start January 2022	Completion March 2023
Hemnall Street To follow Bakers Lane	Start June 2024	Completion July 2025

7. Qualis Commercial

In addition to the Epping Town Centre sites we have also included the following in the Business Plan. The Roundhills scheme in Waltham Abbey will provide 28 new homes. Public consultation concluded in June 2021, and the planning application will be submitted in July 2021. Subject to consent being granted, the development could be completed before the end of 2022.

Roundhills



The development proposal for the Pyrles Lane site in Loughton was presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June 2021. The indicative scheme will provide 33 new homes. This is subject to agreeing terms with EFDC but we aim to complete negotiation by September 2021, with a view to submit the planning application in November 2021. If successful, completion of the development is programmed for August 2023.

Beyond the initial developments in Epping, Waltham Abbey and Loughton, the business intends to establish a significant pipeline.

A high-level review of additional opportunities across the District has been completed. This review indicates significant scope for growth. We are proposing to invest a further £35m to progress other regeneration opportunities within the District.

The key priorities for Qualis Commercial over the four year period are as follows

- Secure planning permission for the five Town Centre Sites
- Complete development of these five initial sites
- Establish a sales brand to manage this process and the customer experience
- Secure planning permission for Roundhills and Pyrles Lane
- Increase the pipeline at a minimum rate of 120%

8. Qualis Management

Qualis Management was established to provide FM services. Its initial focus is on the Council's housing repairs and maintenance service which transferred in September 2020.

The company operates commercially and delivers quality services at competitive rates. It uses the latest technology and smart sourcing solutions, to drive efficiency and increase productivity.

Over the next four years (subject to agreement), the company will transfer additional services from EFDC ensuring continuity and mitigation of risk. Relationships with specialist contractors and subcontractors will continue until such a time when Qualis is able to self-deliver.

Qualis Management will also provide services to Group companies and extend the service offer to neighbouring local authorities and the private sector to increase income and profitability.

To generate income from sources other than EFDC, the company will require additional internal skills and expertise in business development, bid writing and marketing, which has been included in the budget forecast. Opportunities identified include:

Direct Customer Services

There are currently 1085 leaseholders within EFDC housing portfolio. Providing volume based repairs activities that operationally fit alongside current services. Ideas could include:

- Undertaking general repairs in leaseholders homes, which avoids any Leaseholder Section 20 considerations.
- Providing a 24 hour emergency home care service to leaseholders for a fixed monthly fee.

The offer would need to be developed in year three, to launch in year four.

Commercial Arrangement

To generate sizable revenue, the company will need to consider bidding for contracts on a competitive basis.

A full analysis of the potential target clients and market is planned in 2023. It is proposed that we initially target smaller providers who are less likely to fall into complex procurement arrangements. Further consideration is needed from a risk and reward perspective.

Additional expenditure in the way of resources to service larger contracts would be required.

Productivity

Driving productivity through effective management is a priority. It is anticipated by year four, Qualis Management will be able to provide a 2% efficiency saving against the initial business case. Annual value for money reviews will be undertaken to track progress against this target.

Planned / Capital Works

The Business Plan assumes £2m per annum from planned / capital works from year one onwards. EFDC are in the process of undertaking a major stock condition survey, which may change the assumptions made in the original financial model. The plan will be revisited in year two once the new EFDC five year plan is developed and available.

8. Qualis Management

Residential Asset Management and Facilities

There are opportunities to explore a more holistic approach to management of the housing assets. In addition to repairs and void management, the company could provide a comprehensive service to include; compliance and building safety, full capital works and mechanical and electrical delivery.

Linked to the commercial assets and maintenance aspect there is also an opportunity to explore a full FM package for all office spaces.

A full business case would need to be developed in conjunction with EFDC over the course of this Business Plan.

Grounds Maintenance

The integration of this service into Qualis Management makes sense from a commercial and customer perspective. The Council are currently reviewing the service to understand whether this would be better delivered through Qualis. The service currently generates £1.6m of income and £1.5m of expenditure. The primary areas where Qualis Management could add value include -

- Technology
- Customer service and engagement
- Productivity
- Contractual arrangements
- Service integration

The proposed timetable (subject to agreement) for the transfer of additional services from EFDC and external income generation is provided below:

QM 4 Year Business Plan	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Capital Works	■			
Electrical Testing	■			
Cyclical Decoration	■			
Gas- Breakdown & Servicing		■		
Aids & Adapts		■		
Grounds Maintenance		■		
Boiler Installation			■	
External Income Generation				■

The key priorities for Qualis Management over the four year period are as follows -

- Successfully manage service transfers
- Generate productivity and efficiency savings
- Explore opportunities for external income generating work
- Explore other areas of service which could add value to EFDC, residents and the community

9. Qualis Community

A new Community Interest Company (CIC) was set up in 2021 to deliver a range of projects to benefit the people and communities of Epping Forest District.

Qualis Community will work to improve the socio-economic aspirations for all, including the most disadvantaged communities, and collaborate with existing community groups and stakeholders.

The creation of a CIC will see profits and assets generated used for public and community good.

A rigorous and transparent governance structure will ensure that activities align with local needs, to be developed through close dialogue with local communities and wider stakeholders including District, Town and Parish Councils.

The CIC aims to generate funding and create a surplus, which in turn is used to fund services which have been identified by the community as key priorities.

Consultation with stakeholders to build a picture of what the local community would like to see the CIC deliver commenced in May 2021.

Early feedback has highlighted some key priorities for the area including:

- Employment and Training
- Enhancements to the look and feel of the area
- Business and Enterprise
- Sustainable Environment
- Transport
- Community Facilities

The finance section includes income and expenditure forecasts for the CIC, which is based on assumptions around project opportunities and funding.

10. Risk Management

The Group has developed a risk mitigation strategy which identifies the following key internal and external risks:

External

- Economic
- Political and regulatory
- Investment market
- Occupier markets
- Availability and cost of finance
- Catastrophic business event

Internal

- Finance strategy
- Investment strategy
- Development strategy
- Operational strategy
- People and culture
- Information technology and systems
- Governance
- Supply chain management

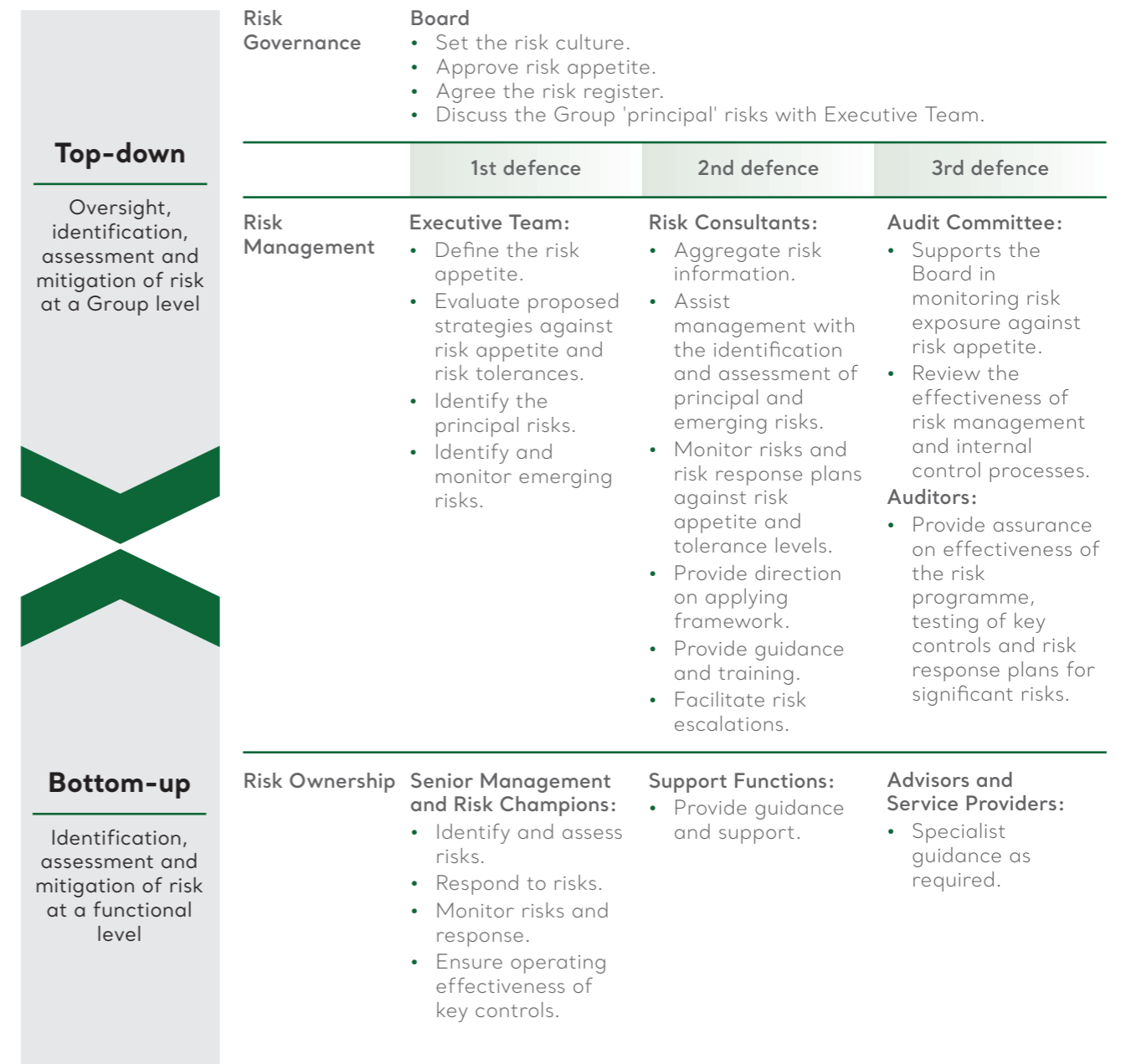
The Risk Framework opposite shows the high level approach to risk management across the Group.

A detailed risk register was produced and approved by Qualis Group Board in February 2021. Key strategic risks were also identified. All risks are reviewed regularly.

The Group was established in 2019, a time of relatively high economic and political uncertainty. In 2020, the arrival of COVID-19 impacted the economy in ways we have not seen in a generation. The structure and purpose of the Group mean it is fairly resilient to the impacts of the pandemic. The importance of activities to be undertaken by Qualis are arguably even more important as EFDC will likely see further budget / funding cuts as part of the recovery effort.

Property development requires significant capital investment in project cycles for up to five years. This combined with uncertain investment and occupier markets makes development activities the highest risk activity of the Group.

As the Group becomes more established and there is more certainty around investment, development and service opportunities, it will be possible to consider a different approach to risk.



11. Health and Safety

Qualis Group Board and the Executive Team believe that the health and safety culture comes from the top of the organisation. It applies to all activities of the Group as an employer, service provider, owner, developer and manager of property and operator of a community interest company.

The Board of Directors accepts responsibility for Qualis Group to provide safe and healthy environments and to prevent injury and ill health, in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and associated regulations.

The company employs competent personnel and ensures that adequate resources are provided for the prevention of incidents and ill health in the workplace.

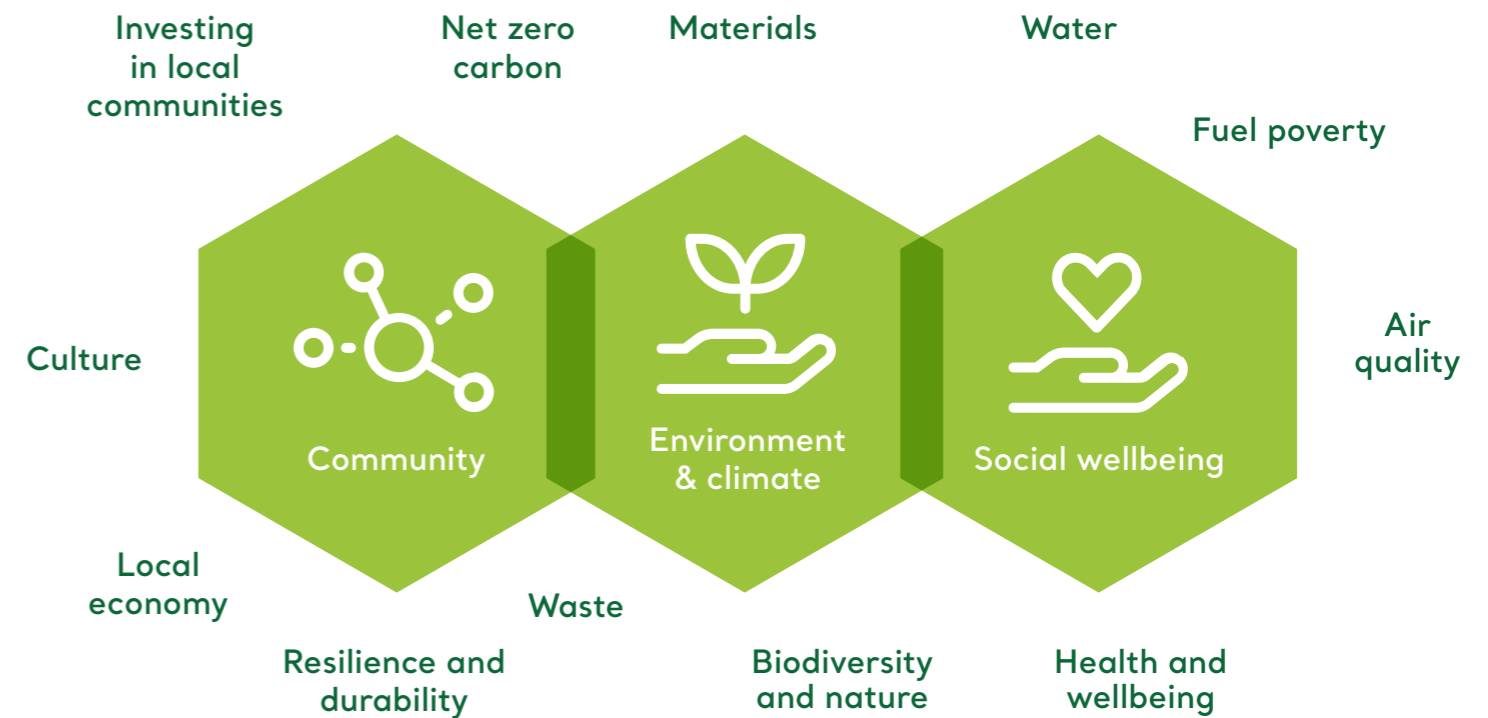
We will provide appropriate health and safety information, instruction, training and supervision for all employees and we are committed to creating a positive health and safety culture. We will do this by actively promoting health and safety throughout the organisation through the development of a behavioural based health and safety program which will be delivered to all employees.

Health and Safety performance is assessed through internal and external audits. Findings from audits will be used to identify areas for improvement to management systems and to the overall health and safety performance.

12. ESG and Sustainability

We recognise the importance of Environmental Social Governance (ESG) and we are currently developing our strategy to ensure it is fully embedded in the vision, purpose and operation of the business. We are working to implement robust performance measurement against ESG criteria and transparent reporting.

Alongside ESG, we are developing our sustainability strategy which will be finalised in October 2021. The business has agreed key priorities as shown in the diagram below.



The Group is committed to:

- Comply with legislation, regulations and codes of practice.
- Work with the Shareholder to promote the ESG and sustainability agenda.
- Integrate ESG and sustainability considerations across all business activities.
- Ensure all employees are fully aware of our strategy and targets.
- Make customers and partners aware of our targets and encourage them to adopt similar practices.
- Be transparent about performance.
- Strive to continuously improve.



If you would like this information in another format or language please contact:

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Epping Forest District Council – Service Review Framework				
Date	<i>May 2021</i>	Version	<i>1.0</i>	Owner
Purpose	<p>This framework is designed to ensure that proper consideration has been applied to options for service improvement. It seeks to identify and address the key reasons for any change proposed and sets out options for change that can be considered by the Council. This framework does not seek to establish an outcome (decide an option) but merely sets out the facts, and supplies options for consideration.</p> <p>This framework should seek to deliver a document that will stand alone and contain all the essential information about the service, its performance, drivers for change and options for improvement.</p> <p>This framework is design to reside at the beginning of any consideration for a change to any service, should a change be selected a further element of the framework 'EFDC readiness for service' (Section B) should also be populated to ensure that any project to make the change is best informed, and the change is still valid, prior to it taking place.</p>			
Section A - Initial Service Review				
No.	Description	Purpose	Questions	Sources
1	Scope	This section sets out the scope of the review and places limits on the extent of analysis	N/a	
2	Service description	Describes the service in question and sets out to the reader what the service does, and at the highest level how it works. This should be a simple explanation and allow anyone, without prior knowledge to understand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the service do? • Why is it required? • How does it work? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service plans • Process information • Stakeholder interviews • Staff interviews
3	Driver(s) for change	Describes why change is required, typically due to, Market demand or trading opportunity, Organisational need, Customer request, Technological advance, Legal requirement, Ecological or environmental impacts (e.g., carbon footprint reduction), or Social need.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why is the change required? • Why is it required now? • How will the change support the Council's strategic objectives? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council strategy • Local plan • Development plan • Service plans
4	Background	Describe what events have led to this review. This section sets the context for the review.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What events led to this review being required? • How does the service fit with the Council more widely? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submissions to Committees • Essential performance information • External benchmarking • Strategy • Service plans

5	Performance	Describe in detail how the service is performing presently, set out the context of performance over time (aim for 3 to 5 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How well is the service performing today? • How do we know this? Cite what data and why it proves performance • Describe the performance levels in comparison to 'good performance' • Demonstrate service performance over time (is it better/worse or the same?) • What is the customer perspective? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management information • KPI's • Stakeholder feedback • Analysis • Benchmarking • Customer feedback • Complaints • Portfolio holder perspective
6	People	Describe the capacity and capability of the Staff who undertake the service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do they seem? Happy, engaged, or indifferent? • Does the service have sufficient capacity? • Are the staff capabilities at the correct levels to drive good performance? • Are staff engaged with personal development? • Is the service carrying unfilled roles? If so, then why? • Does the service have high levels of sickness absence or unplanned staff turnover? If so, why? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HR data • Structure chart • Staff interviews • Stakeholder interviews • Customer feedback • Personal development plans
7	Process and technology	Describe the systems and technologies employed by the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is used? • What for? • Is the use restricted to this service only? • Does the service hold the license or is it held by I.T.? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT systems and assets records • Licensing documents • Budgets • Process/systems documentation • Stakeholder interviews

8	Cost and budget	Describes the service delivery and associated costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the cost of delivery? • Is the cost stable, increasing or reducing? • Is the cost acceptable? • Are good cost control techniques being employed? • Can an improvement be demonstrated? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgets • I+E • Benchmarking
8	Strategic issues	Describes strategy development and service delivery in the context of best practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does strategy development exist? • Does it work? • Does it translate to outcomes? • Do staff understand their connection to the strategy? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy • Strategy development process information • Action plans/work boards
9	Risk	Sets the risk context for the service and tests mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can risk management be demonstrated? • Do staff understand the method? • Is it effective? Can that be evidenced? • Is mitigation tested? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk register • Audit reports • Staff interviews • Test reports
10	Options	Describes options for change and sets out relative strengths and weaknesses for them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying how similar projects were done in the past • Documenting the alternative solutions. • Quantifying the benefits of implementing each solution • Forecasting the costs of implementing each solution • Assessing the feasibility of implementing each solution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service change documents • External best practice • Professional sources (like RICS for example)

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying the risks and issues associated with each solution 	
11	Options summary	A summary of the relative risk and return for each option. These are assessed in a matrix.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact on people Impact on process Impact on technology Impact on income Impact on Cost (delivery) Impact on the Customer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Options table
12	Feasibility	Are the options feasible?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are suggested Markets feasible? Are available technologies feasible? Is the intended Operation feasible (include Quality of processes) Is the option economically feasible? Is the option feasible with current or planned capabilities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market research Technology appraisal or RFI Operations analysis Cost models and ROI analysis HR data
13	Recommendation	Selects and describes the reason for the selection of the option	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selected an option Explain why that selection was made 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Options table
14	Stakeholder engagement list	A list of stakeholders that have been engaged during the analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List stakeholders
15	Bibliography	A list of documents (or sources of information) that have been used for reference during the analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Document repository Data storage location/name
16	Change register	Informs changes to the document as reviews take place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What change took place Why that changes was required Who made/proposed that change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications evidence Draft reviews

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The date the change was made The new version reference for the document 		
Section B - Readiness for Service					
Purpose	This element ensures that all proper considerations have been given to change the service, including people, process, technology, contracts, and measures. It is designed to guide the user to ensure all essential thinking has been done prior to making a change happen. This framework covers both internal change and any change to services that may engage a third party or external supplier.				
Page 75	1	Change validity	Seeks to answer if the change being proposed is still valid, and if the Business Case and associated benefits till remain intact and accurate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the case for change still valid? The case is unaffected by any events that has occurred since it was completed? Are the business benefits still deliverable? Has the risk profile remained static or reduced? Have any changes occurred that impacts the validity of the proposal? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Section 1 business case for change Benefits table or reference Risk register Council meeting minutes
	2	People	Ensures that our staff have been properly engaged and have the correct information at their disposal. Ensures that HR process issues have been satisfied	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the staff that will be impacted engaged with the change process and planning? Have essential contract issues been addressed with HR? Has essential notice been given (or planned) Has the timing of the change been effectively communicated? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Job Descriptions TUPE information Pension analysis Evidence of staff engagement Employment contracts

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the Team met key stakeholders? • If TUPE arrangement(s) apply, has the process been formed and executed? • Has any pensions risk been mitigated? • Has any remuneration ceiling or constraint been addressed? 	
3	Process	Ensures that process connect between parties to protect and/or enhance ways of working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans for managing the working relationship exist for both parties? • Process level connectors are in place and have been tested? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational or implementation plans • Management reporting framework • Process documentation
4	Technology	What technologies will be required, will changes in licensing be needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the technology map up to date? • Have licensing issues ben resolved? • Has any new software requirement been implemented, or is implementation planned? • Has a transition plan been completed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT asset information • Licensing records • Budgets and payments • Process documentation
5	Assets	Seeks to ensure that any asset transfer is understood, and costs are agreed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If assets are to transfer have costs been agreed? • Is this element of agreement contained in the contract? • Is there evidence that the new supplier has sufficient funding to pay for the asset(s)? is it evidenced? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset register • Finance records • Contract terms • Loan terms (if this applies)

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does any residual liability exist? And if so what controls are agreed to mitigate them? 	
6	Contracts	If the service is moving to an external arrangement this section seeks to ensure that contractual issues have been designed and addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have contract arrangements been agreed and completed? • Are operational arrangements in place? • Have measures been agreed, and more formal data collection been implemented? • Have prerequisite insurance been sought and implemented? • Does the legal advice agree that the contracts are robust and can be executed? • If supply or service contracts are to be transferred, do they have sufficient flexibility? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contracts • Contract registers • Management information frameworks • Insurance policies • Legal advice
7	Risk	This section seeks to ensure that risk is managed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has any insurance or residual liability been mitigated? • All parties have plans to mitigate the risk? • Does a risk management process exist with any associated governance engagement? • Is the risk of implementation being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy framework • Risk register • Testing outputs • Project management documentation

			managed? Can this be evidenced?	
8	Business continuity	Section to cover the associated controls to ensure that business continuity is maintained.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do business continuity plans exist? Is there evidence that they have been tested? Are the triggers for the BC plan understood and thresholds agreed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business continuity plans Testing plans Risk register Audit reports
9	Regulation or legislation	Seeks to ensure that any requirements have been investigated and agreed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the change require any regulatory process changes or mitigations? And if so are they planned or executed? Does the change require any legislative process changes or mitigations? And if so are they planned or executed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal advice Service advice Regulatory frameworks legislation
10	Implementation management	Confirm that all parties have agreed plans for training, communication, roll-out, production release and support as required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was any testing (technology, physical, process or people) required? If so, can we evidence that the testing has been completed and that the results are satisfactory? Are training plans completed? Is there a communication plan and can we evidence its efficacy? Were any previous actions required (from the business case) been implemented? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation plan Training evidence/plans Communication plans Previous change plans/evidence Stakeholder map Organisational structure charts Operations plans Service plans

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the parties have plans that set out the changes, stakeholders, and timing? • Does a management process for overseeing the change exist? • Do organisational structures and controls exist to manage the change delivery? • Has any residual service (or part thereof) or process element been considered, and if so have arrangements been made to protect residual business continuity? 	
11	Governance	Seeks to ensure that proper approvals have been, and/or will be sought prior to the change being finally agreed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence to support essential approvals is in place? • Evidence that feedback from key stakeholders has been sought and considered? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council meetings minutes • Council approvals or submissions timetables • Portfolio holder support/evidence • Change register(s)
12	Lessons	Sets out lessons learned to improve the transfer process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there lessons from this process that should be applied to future change? • Has agreement been sought to modify the framework of change to include them for the next change? • Has the change to the framework been made and a new version issued? 	

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Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting: 1 July 2021



Subject: Overview and Scrutiny 2020/21 Annual Report

Officer contact for further information: V Messenger (01992 564243)

Democratic Services Officer: V Messenger (01992 564243)

Recommendations/Decision Required:

- (1) That the attached final draft of the Overview and Scrutiny 2020/21 Annual Report of the work undertaken during the past municipal year be agreed; and**
- (2) That this Annual Report be submitted to the Full Council on 29 July 2021 for approval.**

Report:

1. This is the sixteenth report under the new scrutiny regime instituted by the Council in April 2005 and incorporates the three Select Committees. The Local High Streets Task and Finish Panel is currently waiting to be reconvened.
2. This report is produced in accordance with Article 6, Overview and Scrutiny Rule 37 of the Constitution that requires an annual report to be submitted to the Council each year.
3. Further to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 15 April 2021, the attached annual report has been updated and amended to incorporate comments submitted.
4. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to agree this annual report so it can be submitted to Council on 29 July 2021 for approval.

Reason for decision:

Annual report is in accordance with the Constitution Article 6, Overview and Scrutiny Rule 37.

Options considered and rejected: N/A

Consultation undertaken:

This is the first draft to consult members at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee above.

Resource implications: N/A

Legal and Governance Implications: N/A

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications: N/A

Background Papers: None

Impact Assessments: N/A

Risk Management: N/A

Equality:

There are no equality implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

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Overview & Scrutiny 8 June 2021
Chairman: Cllr Mary Sartin

Overview & Scrutiny 2020/21 Annual Report



© Epping Forest District Council - photos of refurbished Civic Offices 2021

Report by: V Messenger, EFDC Democratic Services Officer (April 2021)

CONTENTS

PAGE

Introduction and Welcome from the Chairman	5
What is Scrutiny	7
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	7
Select Committees	7
Task and Finish Panels	8

SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

Agenda Planning Group	9
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	11
Joint Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen	22
Stronger Communities Select Committee	23
Stronger Council Select Committee	31
Stronger Place Select Committee	36

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Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2020/21

Introduction and welcome from the Chairman

Welcome to the sixteenth annual report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee of Epping Forest District Council.

This has been an unprecedented and challenging year. The start of the municipal year saw the Elections in May 2020 suspended by the Government as the emerging Covid-19 pandemic caused a national lockdown in March 2020 – the UK's first. Fortunately, the resumption of Council meetings virtually was facilitated by Government legislation under the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020. Following the enactment of the Coronavirus Bill in Parliament and after consultation with the Chairman of Council, the Head of Paid Service, the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer, the Council declared an Emergency under the Constitution – Article 3 (The Executive), Appendix 7 (Action in Designated Emergencies).

The last Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in the 2019/20 municipal year was held on 28 January 2020, as the meeting on 17 March had been postponed. However, with the resumption of committee meetings being held virtually on Zoom, this had kept scrutiny members busy throughout the municipal year, as Council business continued at pace. In the interests of transparency, all the scrutiny committees were also webcast by the Corporate Communications team. For the scrutiny committees, virtual meetings started in June with the first virtual meeting in the new municipal year on 22 June 2020 for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee when the memberships of the select committees were approved.

This is the second year since the select committees were restructured for the start of the 2019/20 municipal year, from May 2019. The three new select committees aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan ambitions for Stronger Communities, Stronger Council and Stronger Place.

The annual report provides information on the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and the three select committees. Additional information is given in this report on the time limited Task and Finish Panels set-up during 2019/20 – one that had reached a stage to be able to complete most of its business before the first national Covid lockdown and one that was suspended.

I would like to thank the chairmen and members of the three select committees and the task and finish panels. Also, my special thanks go to my Vice-Chairman, Councillor Bob Jennings for all his help and support throughout this very challenging and unique year.

And of course, I would like to thank all the officers who have worked so hard to keep the members of the scrutiny committees informed and provided with the background information the needed to carry out their investigations.

CLlr Mary Sartin
Chairman – Overview and Scrutiny

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Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2020/21

What is scrutiny?

- Scrutiny in local government is the mechanism by which public accountability is exercised.
- The purpose of scrutiny in practice is to examine, question and evaluate in order to achieve improvement.
- The value of scrutiny is in the use of research and questioning techniques to make recommendations based on evidence.
- Scrutiny enables issues of public concerns to be examined.
- At the heart of all the work is consideration of what impact the Cabinet's plans will have on the local community.
- However, the overview and scrutiny function is not meant to be confrontational or seen as deliberately set up to form an opposition to the Cabinet. Rather the two aspects should be regarded as 'different sides of the same coin'. The two should complement each other and work in tandem to contribute to the development of the authority.

Alongside its role to challenge, the scrutiny function has also continued to engage positively with the Cabinet, which is why Cabinet members cannot be members of scrutiny committees, and there continues to be cross party co-operation between members on all panels.

Scrutiny has continued to provide valuable contributions to the Council and the Cabinet remained receptive to ideas put forward by Scrutiny throughout the year.

The rules of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee also allow members of the public to have the opportunity to address the Committee on any agenda item.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee reviewed the Executive's programme of Key Decisions (the Cabinet Forward Plan) at each meeting to identify appropriate matters for its work programme and for the overview of specific decisions proposed to be taken over the period of the Forward Plan. The Cabinet has also had the opportunity to ask Overview and Scrutiny to look at any items of work that they considered needed either scrutiny or pre-scrutiny.

The Committee has also engaged with external bodies, whose functions related to the Council or were other public bodies that provided services within the District, for the purposes of scrutinising or having an overview of parts of their work that have had an impact on the District and its people.

The Committee also received stand-alone reports from officers and the select committees on work undertaken during the municipal year.

Select Committees

The select committees were reduced following a restructure from four to three at the start of 2019/20 to align with the Council's Corporate Plan 2018-2023 and the three pillars of its corporate ambitions:

- Stronger Communities;
- Stronger Council; and
- Stronger Place.

The terms of reference of the three select committees were agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its first meeting, which set out a rolling programme of ongoing and cyclical issues for reviewing. A lead officer was appointed to each select committee to help facilitate this process. These select committees continued to grow throughout 2020/21 to identify any related items to scrutinise. The Committee monitored their work as the Chairmen of the select committees regularly reported their progress at each meeting.

Task and Finish Panels

Task and Finish Panels can be set up by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to deal with ad-hoc projects or reviews included in the annual work programme for overview and scrutiny. The Panels are restricted to those activities which are issue-based, time limited and non-cyclical in character and also have clearly defined objectives.

Although no Task and Finish Panels were set up in 2020/21, the Waste Management Task and Finish Panel managed to conclude most of its work as its last meeting was early March 2020. However, the Covid pandemic interrupted the work of the Local High Streets Task and Finish Panel, which had only held one meeting in February 2020 before the first national lockdown ensued in mid-March 2020.

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2020/21

Overview and Scrutiny Agenda Planning Group

The Overview and Scrutiny APG, as it is often referred to, is where the lead scrutiny officer, the Chief Executive, G Blakemore, Strategic Director, A Small, and the Chief Operating Officer, N Dawe, meet with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review which business items will be going forwards to the next Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This is not a public committee, but the agendas and minutes can be accessed by members via the Extranet or via the Intranet for staff.

Other relevant officers that attend the APG include the Service Director Strategy, Delivery and Performance, L Wade, most of the Democratic Services Team led by G Woodhall, Democratic and Electoral Services Manager, as well as the Corporate Communications Manager, T Carne, and Legal Services Assistant Solicitor, R Ferreira. All officers who have a report going to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will usually attend as their reports will be reviewed and may require amendments. The decision on whether their reports will go to the next meeting will be taken by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and other members of the Group.

The APG leads into the four cycles of the select committees, although extra meetings may be scheduled at the discretion of the Chairman, such as for Stronger Council (to review the draft budget) or Stronger Communities for additional items during the municipal year. This cyclical scrutiny process normally concludes with the main Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. However, as the Overview and Scrutiny Committee holds six (plus) meetings each municipal year, these are usually preceded by the APG meetings.

The APG will also review select committee or task and finish panel reports that require a decision from the main committee. The work programmes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and select committees are also assessed. The Chairman and Vice-Chairman may consider any matters that need to be raised at the next Joint Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Further information on the Joint Meeting can be found later in this report.

Full details of the agendas and minutes can be found on the Intranet.

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Covid-19 dominated the municipal year and emergency Government legislation under the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 was enacted on 1 April 2020. This legislation suspended the 2020 elections until May 2021, but importantly and for the first time in history, allowed council meetings to be held virtually.

Members for 2020/21:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee holds six meetings each municipal year. The membership was approved at the first (annual) Council meeting on 21 May 2020, which was held virtually.

Councillor Mary Sartin (Chairman)

Councillor Bob Jennings (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:
Roger Baldwin
Peter Bolton
Les Burrows
David Dorrell
Ian Hadley
Steven Heather
Jeanne Lea
Stephen Murray

Councillors:
Dave Plummer
Sheree Rackham
Paul Stalker
D Stocker
Darshan Sunger
Janet H Whitehouse
David Wixley



Cllr Mary Sartin



Cllr Bob Jennings

The lead officer was Georgina Blakemore, Chief Executive.

Terms of Reference

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may within its specific functions:

- review and scrutinise decisions and performance of the Executive and Committees, and Council officers;
- review and scrutinise the performance of the Council's policy objectives, performance targets and/or particular service areas;
- question members of the Executive, the Chief Executive and Service Directors about their decisions and performance;
- make recommendations to the Executive and appropriate Committees and the Council arising from the outcome of the scrutiny process;
- review and scrutinise the performance of other bodies operating in the District and invite appropriate organisations to address the Committee about their activities and performance.

Committee workload

The **first** meeting each municipal year specifically looks at the year ahead. The Overview and Scrutiny held its first virtual meeting on 22 June 2020, having been delayed by the Covid crisis. At this meeting the Leader of Council presented an overview of the Council's Corporate Priorities for 2020/21 and the Cabinet's Forward Plan of Key Decisions was reviewed. The Committee also

discussed its work programme and reserve programme, in addition to the select committees' Terms of Reference and work programmes.

Importantly, it considered nominations for the membership appointments of the select committees for the current municipal year and appointed the chairman and vice-chairman of each select committees. Accordingly, the memberships were agreed for the select committees – Stronger Communities, Stronger Council and Stronger Places. In the interests of transparency, all scrutiny committees throughout the municipal year were held virtually on Zoom, which allowed member and public participation. These meetings were also webcast and available for viewing on the Council's website.

► **Scrutinising and monitoring the work of the Cabinet**

The Committee received a presentation from the Leader of Council on the Council's corporate priorities for the municipal year 2020/21 at its first meeting in June. Thereafter, ongoing business throughout the year had involved the review of the Executive's programme of Forward Plan of Key Decisions at each meeting. The Chairman was keen for members to scrutinise Cabinet's work for each of the seven Portfolio Holder areas – The Leader, Finance and Economic Development, Commercial and Regulatory Services, Customer and Corporate Support Services, Planning and Sustainability, Housing and Community, and Environmental and Technical Services. Portfolio Holders were regularly in attendance to answer members queries and provide further information where necessary.

Members raised concerns throughout the year including the following:

- Status of the Pyrles Lane site in Loughton – a report would be going to Overview and Scrutiny on 8 June 2021 to facilitate pre-scrutinise Qualis' acquisition and development of the site before Cabinet's decision which was due on 21 June 2021;
- New Council policies should be pre-scrutinised – this was being addressed. A new policy on the disposal of HRA assets was pre-scrutinised on 2 February 2021; and a new Policy on the Council's approach to trees which were impacting on the safety of its assets would a reviewed by the Committee at the meeting on 3 June 2021;
- Accountability of Qualis – regular reports would be provided and quarters 1,2 and 3 were considered by the Committee on 15 October 2020; the Qualis four-year business plan would be pre-scrutinised by the Committee on 1 July 2021;
- Transfer of services to Qualis – pre-scrutiny of the business case for the transfer of Corporate Asset management service to Qualis was also scheduled for 1 July 2021;

► **Call-in requests**

The Committee received two call-ins. The first call-in was because of the report (C-017-2020/21) to Cabinet on 14 September 2020 that approved New City College (formerly Epping Forest College) be granted a "variation to the covenants further to previous removal of restrictive covenants, in order to facilitate the College's plans for the site". At the November 2020 meeting, the Committee discussed the call-in as the College site was subject to restrictive covenants in favour of the Council in relation to the use of the property for education. These were agreed to be released in 2019, but since this time, in order to facilitate further College plans, two variations to the covenants were required. The first involved transfer of land to the residential developer to facilitate housing development. The second involved transfer of development land from the residential developer back to the College and removal of the restriction that said land could only be used for residential purposes. This was to facilitate the College's proposed wellness centre. The Committee resolved that the recommendation be referred to Cabinet, and on 3 December, the Executive reaffirmed the decision taken at their meeting held on 14 September 2020 on the release of the restrictive covenants for the College. Details of the November meeting agenda and minutes can be viewed at this weblink: <https://rds.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=395&MId=10551&Ver=4>

The second call-in was over the Planning and Sustainability Portfolio Holder Decision of 11 December 2020 regarding PLS-003 (2020/21) on the adoption of the Interim Air Quality Mitigation Strategy. An extra meeting was organised to hear the call-in on 7 January 2021, when J Maurici QC, the Council's appointed Counsel, and the Council's air quality consultants from AECOM, Drs J Riley and H Venfield, were also in attendance. The reasons stated for the call-in were because the proposed mitigation was: insufficient and thus probably unlawful; the Holohan judgment implied it was insufficient to have identified a suitable mitigation strategy (the Clean Air Zone) unless the competent authority (EFDC) could ensure the mitigation would be carried out; and the proposed mitigation strategy also made no reference to the amelioration of damage done to the wellbeing of the SAC by particulates. The councillors that supported the call-in were concerned that the strategy would allow EFDC to issue irrevocable planning permissions on the basis of a mitigation that might well be removed during the examination of main modifications by the independent inspector before the Local Plan was finally adopted. A robust and lengthy debate ensued but the Committee voted to confirm the decision of the Planning and Sustainability Portfolio Holder. Full details of all the reasons for the call-in and the January meeting agenda and minutes can be viewed at this weblink:

<https://rds.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=395&MId=10714&Ver=4>

► High street and local economic recovery

The Council's Covid-19 response and recovery was added to the Committee's work programme as a standing item at its first meeting on 22 June. This was an important addition so that members could review the progress being made throughout the pandemic and the three national lockdowns triggered by the Covid crisis that impacted on everyone in an unprecedented and major emergency from mid-March and continued into the next municipal year. However, the Portfolio Advisory Group for Covid-19 Recovery was created, under the Commercial and Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder, and Councillor A Patel took the lead in high street and local economic recovery. Although the work somewhat aligned with the Local High Streets Task and Finish Panel, the Committee agreed not to continue with the work of the Task and Finish Panel, which allowed officers to concentrate their focus on the PAG workload, but reconvene it once the pandemic was firmly in the recovery phase. Therefore, no meetings of the Task and Finish Panel were held for this municipal year.

► Waste Management

The final report of the Waste Management Task and Finish Panel was presented by the Chairman, Councillor L Burrows, for members to review at the 16 July meeting that had been carried forward from the postponed meeting of 17 March 2020. Seven recommendations of the Task and Finish Panel were highlighted, which included the possibility of a third wheeled bin for households within the District, the future collection of food and garden waste, the provision of the Street Cleansing service, new high street refuse bins, and the possibility of further changes to the Service as a result of the Environment Bill 2020 and further Resource and Waste Strategy. The Environment Bill 2020 set out how the Government planned to protect and improve the natural environment in the UK.

The Committee's approval of the seven recommendations were detailed in full in the minutes of its 16 July meeting and were available to view on the Council's website at the link below:

<https://rds.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=395&MId=10549&Ver=4>

An additional recommendation made was to reconvene of the Waste Management Task and Finish Panel when any new information arising from the Environment Bill and any new legislation was introduced by the Government. However, although the Environment Bill was introduced into Parliament on 15 October 2019 and was re-introduced to Parliament on 30 January 2020 following the general election in December 2019, the Covid crisis was delaying its progress.

► Customer Services

Its initiatives and performance over the previous municipal year were reviewed by the Committee on 16 July 2020. The Annual Report for 2019/20 included an update on the following topics within the Programme:

- the Customer Service Strategy;
- customer satisfaction;
- the corporate Contact Centre;
- the Digital Inclusion Programme;
- Members;
- partnership working;
- digital payments; and
- communications and public relations.

Furthermore, Customer Services' future direction for 2020/21, particularly its Strategy in its response and support for residents during the Covid crisis and how the public contacted the Council with the closure of the Civic Offices in mid-March, was also reviewed. However, the Strategy was just the start of the process to put people at the heart of everything it did, and it was anticipated that this would evolve over time to meet the changing needs of the Council's residents. Customer Services was also aware that the Council would not be able to channel shift everyone to digital contact under the Digital Inclusion Programme, as individuals had different needs. As Cllrs M Sartin and S Rackham highlighted at the meeting on 16 July, the ability and/or preference of some people to use technology also declined, especially as they got older.

► People Strategy

A new People Strategy was presented to the Committee in July 2020 by the Service Director for Business Services, P Maginnis. The Service Director highlighted the road map for the candidate journey from the video, with its seven steps: Pre-attraction; recruitment; onboarding; learning; performance and talent management; communication; and leaving the organisation. The Ambition of the Strategy was to have the right people with the right skills who were highly motivated and high performing, and to transform the service provided by the People Team. The Strategy would build on the work undertaken during the life of the previous People Strategy, and had six main themes:

- attracting and retaining our best candidates;
- developing our Leaders;
- supporting the Council to evolve and embrace change;
- developing the skills and behaviours of our employees to make EFDC
- a great place to work;
- creating a culture of engagement and wellbeing; and
- creating a culture of collaboration, innovation and creativity to enable our employees to fulfil their potential.

In July 2020 the Council had a target of 10% of staff being mental health aware and first aid trained by 2021. By February 2021, mental health first aiders numbered 63, which had exceeded this target of trained employees. Subsequent updates provided to the Committee at the meetings held on 15 October, 19 November 2020, and 2 February 2021 highlighted:

- The Council's Apprenticeship Programme and more apprentices were employed than was required under its public sector duty.
- A new Employee Assistance Programme (EAP), known as Perkbox, had been launched on 1 September 2020 and by February 2021 87% of staff had signed up. Plus, Perkbox Medical with 24/7 access to online GPs and a free learning platform hosted by Magpie.
- The Insight engagement platform, developed by Perkbox and the People Team, had enabled employees to receive and answer questionnaires from January 2021.
- The Recognition platform launched on 1 December 2020 let staff nominate others as super stars.
- New automated recruitment processes through iRecruit to recruit, attract and induct candidates, and help retain officer talent with a new career landing page called "A Place of Opportunity".

Although future updates would only be reported to the Stronger Council Select Committee, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee could seek periodic reviews.

► **Corporate Plan Key Action Plan Year 3 (2020/21)**

The Key Action Plan provided a mechanism for reporting on the Council's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and key programmes of work and highlighted the Council's overall performance against agreed Corporate objectives. Year 2 of the Action Plan covered 2019/20 and represented the second reporting cycle for the Council's Corporate Plan (2018-23). Performance Measures for year 2 had been streamlined to improve the focus on how Corporate Objectives were being met and quarter 4 was reviewed by the Committee on 16 July.

The performance of Year 3 (2020/21) quarters 1 and 2 by exception (only) in relation to the 16 KPIs and work programmes within the Corporate Plan were reviewed by the Committee in November 2020. The Strategy, Delivery and Performance Director summarised the key points in the report, which included an internal officer governance structure that had been established to focus on the delivery of the Corporate programmes aligned to the Stronger ambition objectives. This would strengthen governance and internal decision-making, as the programmes would be led by a director enabling corporate performance management to be aligned with individual performance management. All projects would be aligned under one of the three Stronger select agendas. There were three exceptions under the Corporate plan programmes scope and performance measuring report. These concerned the telecare offering project, the ICT restructure delayed by Covid-19, and the Local Plan due to Inspector's capacity to digest main modifications' (MMs) submissions.

The exceptions only for quarter 3 performance were reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny at the meeting on 2 February 2021. Based on comments made by select committee members, further work had been necessary on the website to remove the 'contact us' email address, which had been replaced by a new general enquiry – a recommendation of the Ombudsman. On the Sheltered Housing Review, the reason for the RAG red status was in relation to the high cost of Wi-fi access in communal areas and its impact on service charges. Disaster recovery was not progressing at the planned rate due to resourcing issues in ICT caused by a restructure with the loss of 17 individuals on the team, but 10 people had now been recruited.

The Committee reviewed and commented on the delivery against the quarter 4 milestones specifically the projects that highlighted exceptions, which was determined by a red status. There were more 'reds' than in previous quarters but the reasons for the red status were referenced. The focus on the red status was where there had been missed targets on key milestones, a key issue of resolution or KPIs had missed targets. These had been reviewed in detail by the Stronger Council Select Committee on 13 April 2021. The majority of cases would be re-baselined to achieve a green status and the reasons for this would be referenced. The quarter 4 KPIs had been unavailable because of the timing of the reporting period but these detailed in the minutes. Also, People KPIs were in their infancy. Staff turnover had increased mainly because of the ICT restructure.

► **Service Plan objectives**

The objectives for quarter 1 and progress were reviewed on 16 July 2020. The Committee was advised that although services had been maintained and an outstanding effort had gone into ensuring these were in operation throughout, the impact of the additional demand on their BAU activities or supporting other services had resulted in an impact on quarter 1, 2020 objectives. In addition, further impact to objectives had been as a result of emergency legislation to stop certain activities or as a result of lockdown and shielding.

► **Qualis Quarterly Monitoring Reports 2019/20**

The governance framework for Qualis was agreed by Cabinet on February 2020 and the requirement that Qualis should report to Epping Forest District Council on its performance on a quarterly basis. In view of the first quarter being a period of basic set-up activities following company registration in

October 2019, the report covered both quarters one and two (Cabinet Report C-022-2020/21). The monitoring report for quarter 3 for the period 1 May to 31 July 2020, was pre-scrutinised by Overview and Scrutiny on 15 October 2020 before Cabinet met on 19 October 2020. In quarter 3 Qualis completed the loan funding transaction, progressed planning work on the Epping Development sites and prepared for the transfer of Housing Maintenance at the end of September 2020. With the impact of Covid-19 on all Council activities, Qualis has performed in line with expectations during quarter 3. Key asset acquisitions and service transfers would take place during quarter 4 and monitoring reports would look different from that point forward.

► **Disposal of HRA Assets**

The Committee was more pro-active in the pre-scrutiny of Cabinet decisions. The report related to the disposal of HRA assets and a proposed policy. The Council owned some 12,000 assets which included, properties, garages, land, pathways, unadopted roads, alleyways and grassed areas on residential estates. A standard assessment procedure (SAP) rating was used by the Government for energy efficiency. The Council would be looking at SAP ratings and costs so that if there was a deficit in income over the 30 years of the plan for an asset, the Council was looking to its disposal and to reinvest the capital into other projects in the HRA framework. The Project Director HRA, D Fenton, advised that two small parcels of land sold for £80,000 that the Portfolio Holder had approved had been used to reinvest in its estates. Therefore, the recycling of capital receipts of dwellings and land would be reinvested into the capital programme. To ensure that the sale of land or assets met the highest standards of Governance, a policy has been written to set out the framework in which these disposals would take place.

► **Accommodation Strategy**

Progress reviews were undertaken by the Committee in October and November 2020 when the Service Manager for Strategy, Delivery and Performance reported that the refurbishment works of the Civic Offices were developing well and discussions had progressed on the Travel Plan with the appointment of a Sustainable Transport Officer. The Strategy for the space had been focused on introducing new ways of working and learning how individuals had been working from home. In terms of both partner and commercial space, there had been some positive interest. The Customer Journey for residents was also being developed. By mid-October works had continued forwards and had reached a critical stage of the project, in confirming the design and the fixtures and fittings. When refurbished, the loop system would also be as extensive as possible. The contract was within budget, and a positive variance of £91,806 was being forecast. A Members briefing had been held on 16 November 2020 where plans, layouts and more information around the delivery of the programme had been shared. However, members were informed at the February 2021 meeting that in future the Stronger Council Select Committee would monitor these updates, which would likely reduce as the refurbishment of the Civic Offices was approaching completion.

► **Elections Planning Progress Report**

The report provided an update to the May 2021 elections. The postponed 2020 elections and those due on 6 May 2021 were being planned by the Elections Planning Group at monthly meetings. Despite uncertainty if the May 2021 elections would be going ahead because of the Covid crisis, the Returning Officer, G Blakemore, was still planning on the assumption the elections would happen. The order of counts had been confirmed as Essex County Council on Thursday 6 May followed by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner on 7 May. Local elections would be counted on 8 May. Staff resourcing for the elections had been positive. Some of the polling stations might not be available in May. A hangar at North Weald airfield had been booked for the counts, which would be large enough to accommodate social distancing. A detailed project plan and risk assessment in line with LGA guidance were being regularly updated. It was likely there would be an increase in the number of postal votes this year and various measures would need to be in place, such as social distancing at polling stations.

Shortly after this meeting, the Government announced the elections would go ahead on 6 May 2021 but with guidelines on the precautions to Covid that would be required to mitigate its risk, such as social distancing and use of PPE and adequate sanitising etc. This report instigated a number of questions from members on 2 February 2021 with concerns about an increase in postal votes and unavailability of polling stations. Electoral Services was aware of these concerns and that some polling station venues were being used as Covid vaccination centres or were in schools, which could pose a problem in light of the Government's recent guidance on not using schools, if possible. The Strategy, Delivery and Performance Service Director also reported that staff resourcing for the elections had been positive.

► **Co-option of Independent Member to Stronger Communities Select Committee**

At the last meeting of the Stronger Communities Select Committee on 14 January 2021, members agreed to recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that Mr W Marshall be co-opted to their select committee. Officers had also strongly supported his appointment, as he was currently the Chairman of the Tenants and Leaseholders Forum and his participation at meetings would ensure that tenants opinions and input would be considered in relation to Housing issues scrutinised by the select committee. It was also important that tenants had a voice at this level especially in relation to the publication of the Social Housing White paper. As Mr Marshall's appointment was close to the end of this municipal year, the Committee recommended his co-option to Council for approval and that this should continue until the end of 2021/22 when it could be reviewed.

► **Budget Monitoring Reports**

The Budget Monitoring Reports for quarters 2 in November 2020 and quarter 3 in February 2021 were reviewed by the Committee instead of the Stronger Council Select Committee because the timings of the select committees' meetings were slightly out of sync for these financial reports. It was hoped that timing issues would improve in 2021/22.

► **Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme**

The work programme was regularly reviewed by the Agenda Planning Group (APG) and Committee throughout the year. As a result, both the Accommodation Strategy and the People Strategy were moved by the APG in January 2021 to the Stronger Council Select Committee to scrutinise. The APG also was queried if Qualis' group company structure needed to be a standing item on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. However, all the scrutiny committees would have the opportunity to review their work programmes, and this would be revisited in the new municipal year. The transfer of Council services to Qualis was also added to the work programme including scrutiny of charging for Environmental Information Requests (EIRs) at the Committee's 2 February 2021 meeting, which would be items for the next municipal year 2021/21.

► **Select Committees' work programmes**

Each select committee Chairman summarised progress made against their work programme in their meeting leading up to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny meeting and reported on any recommendations for the Committee to consider. Further information on the select committees' work is also detailed later in this annual report.

External Scrutiny

External scrutiny of outside bodies was an integral part of the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to review and scrutinise their performance especially for those operating in the District and invite appropriate organisations to address the Committee about their activities and performance.

► Epping Forest Youth Council Annual Reports – 2019/20 and 2020/21

The April 2020 Youth Council elections were interrupted by the first Covid national lockdown in mid-March and all 29 candidates were offered a seat on the Youth Council for a two-year term until 2022 – 25 remain in office.



The presentation from the Youth Council on its work during 2019/20 was postponed but took place on 16 July 2020. Five youth councillors presented the highlights which covered the:

- 'We are safe' project and a letter of thanks had been received from Buckingham Palace;
- Epping Forest Youth Activities map that had been updated and expanded;
- Health and Wellbeing Youth Conference;
- undertaking surveys on local youth issues in the District's schools;
- Youth Council's social media activities;
- external funding secured for youth projects from the Jack Petchey Foundation, the Safer Communities Fund and the High Sherriff of Essex;
- receipt of several awards, certificates and letters of recognition;
- production of a two-minute film in April 2020 on how Covid-19 had affected young people within the District; and the
- undertaking of a post-Covid-19 survey of young people on their mental health and wellbeing.

At the Leader's invitation, youth councillors attended Cabinet in October 2020 to summarise the findings of the #Your Say Youth survey. Furthermore, their report on the Health and Wellbeing of Young People in the Epping Forest District during Covid-19 was well received by members. This revealed that of the 383 young people who responded to the survey 74% were coping well with the first lockdown, but 33% were struggling and feeling stressed by schoolwork. Young people experienced social isolation and 28% missed the contact with friends, extended family and daily school life.

Lack of contact with their grandparents instigated this 'Keep your Granny Safe' poster campaign.



The Committee received an annual progress report on the work undertaken during 2020/21 by the Epping Forest Youth Council supported by the Community, Culture and Wellbeing Team at the meeting on 15 April 2021. Four Youth Councillors, Aliza Zarras from West Hatch, Martin Prinsloo from Davenant Foundation, Natalie Moffat from Roding Valley and Sonny Bazzoni from Epping St John's gave an informative presentation on the activities of the Youth Council. Their views on the challenging year that unfolded with the unprecedented Covid crisis and national lockdowns was inspiring for the Committee to hear, and especially how the Youth Council's work had helped them and their fellow students in the District's secondary schools cope. Poster campaigns on 'Staying Safe' and 'Keep your Granny Safe' (see poster above) were also praised by members. The additional external funding achieved for 2020/21 of over £5,000 was impressive and complemented the Council's annual grant of £5,000. A key project for the Youth Councillors in 2020/21 was the MiLife C19 Health and Wellbeing project. Launched in the District's secondary schools in December, it

focused on supporting students, year 9 upwards, with their mental and physical health to build personal resilience and confidence in order to tackle the challenges Covid-19 was presenting. Youth councillors were working in partnership with the Red Balloon Foundation that had previously created the award winning MiLife programme with the Youth Council several years ago. MiLife C19 was an extension of this and new online resources would be made available on the MiLife website <https://www.rbf.org.uk/milife> The project was multi-faceted and included cultural and physical activities to support the wellbeing sessions, which were being conducted by the Council's Community Culture and Wellbeing team. The MiLife C19 promotional launch film had been distributed to seven District secondary schools and was also available to view at this weblink: <https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/youth-council-launch-new-wellbeing-project/> EFYC topical mugs were sent to NHS staff at Princess Alexandra Hospital in February to remind them to take regular breaks and to the District's secondary/independent headteachers. Youth councillors also had the opportunity to be virtual guests of the Right Honourable Dame Eleanor Laing MP and the High Sheriff of Essex. The youth councillors were looking forward to the EFYC 2021 conference this November.

► Local Mental Health Services

The Associate Director of West Essex Mental Health Services, Ms S Rea, from the Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (EPUT), focussed her presentation to address specific questions members had raised before the meeting on 15 October 2020 and gave a wider overview of EPUT's services within the District. This encompassed:

- the impact of Covid-19 on mental health;
- EPUT's response during Covid especially for older people and those with dementia;
- funding for local mental health services;
- the mental health and wellbeing of students aged 18 plus;
- services for older people and all age dementia;
- EPUT Services in Epping Forest for the adult community; and
- working in collaboration.

The ramifications on mental health from the Covid pandemic was being addressed by supporting those people already using the services. The Trust was also examining how to develop the Crisis Team using funding from Essex County Council, for example the Crisis Café in Harlow. There was a pilot scheme for young people aged 18–25, which it intended to continue and supported any initiative that reinforced the view mental health was an issue that could affect anyone. The Trust always campaigned on World Mental Day to raise local awareness of mental health issues.

► UK Innovation Corridor

Director, Dr J McGill, and Independent Business Chairman, Dr A Limb, accepted the invitation to attend on 19 November 2020. Their overview clarified the work of UK Innovation Corridor and its benefit to the Epping Forest District. Its geographical area extended from north east London to Cambridge and Peterborough, and from Stevenage eastwards to beyond Stansted Airport. The local authorities that formed the Innovation Core included Epping Forest (a founder member), Broxbourne, East Hertfordshire, Harlow and Uttlesford district councils. It had changed its name to the UK Innovation Corridor as this evidenced the importance of 'innovation' to match the scale of its ambitions, and no one else had claimed the name. It was an important asset for the UK, and by raising its profile was a corridor to the world.

The Innovation Corridor was a leading sci-tech region and collective corridor to England as a whole. It had become the UK's most productive region and was home to 2.1 million jobs. A fifth of those people were employed in the 'knowledge economy' – ICT, life sciences, advanced manufacturing and engineering, transport and logistics. The main sectors for Epping Forest were construction, business services, public admin and health, but lower employment in the information, financial services, communications and R&D sectors.

How did the Innovation Corridor support the Council? It was a voice to Advocate, Broker and Coordinate – an ABC. It was a non-statutory, like-minded group and coalition of the willing that gave it a bigger voice to lobby national and London government and private investors for districts' ambitions, such as Harlow and Gilston and the Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ). It lobbied for infrastructure, rail, road and digital, and promoted the local economy but there were areas of deprivation. It helped to promote investment opportunities, such as those for the North Weald Airfield Masterplan.

Members questions centred on work that had been done to promote skills and its support in this area. There was more collaboration with colleges as the Innovation Corridor had signed the Regional Skills Concordat to get investments into colleges to retrain the older workforce and provide for the younger workforce. It recognised that economic growth could widen social inequality and during the first Covid lockdown had devised a suggested policy document on "Covid-19: A recovery where no-one gets left behind", which had been circulated to members after the meeting.

► North Essex Parking Partnership

The Group Manager, Mr R Walker, gave a comprehensive overview of its operations to the Committee on 2 February 2021. Formed in April 2011 the north part of the partnership comprised Essex County Council (ECC) and six other local authorities – Colchester (lead LA), Braintree, Epping Forest, Harlow, Tendring and Uttlesford. NEPP had been set up to bring the operation out of deficit and reported to the Joint Parking Committee, which was made up of NEPP officers and partnership members. The governance arrangements allowed each authority member a vote plus up to six schemes a year. Kerbside parking management was funded from penalty income from patrols but was not an income generator. Funding also came from resident parking permits, pay and display schemes and sundry income. The operational team and patrols issued some 76,000 penalty charge notices (PCNs) in the year before the coronavirus crisis. NEPP had CCTV patrol cars and enforcement officers monitoring parking infractions, footway parking and obstructive parking. The enforcement process could be challenged by the public. Parking schemes encompassed ECC safety and congestion, new housing schemes, traffic schemes and socially necessary schemes. Most consultations were undertaken in the winter months as maintenance work was targeted for completion in the summer. The scheme process usually took a minimum of 50 weeks to be implemented. A project team was looking at innovation of the scheme process to try and automate it going forwards. NEPP was involved with school safety parking issues, especially near primary schools. A data led team was looking at efficiencies and investing in digital technology. It was developing fixed camera and mobile sites. A 3PR scheme was looking at safe parking at schools, so people parked where it was safe to park and then walked to the school. Parking in future included looking at footway parking, obstructive parking, active travel to get people in / out of town centres, connected, autonomous and new types of vehicles, and electric vehicles and environmental issues.

Members questions covered the red routes painted on the roads in Epping Forest in May 2020 and that a full consultation on these would be held, yellow line applications for parking schemes, delivery vans not being able to park in loading bays, speeding on roads, safety of Enforcement officers, controlled parking zones, residents parking zones, idling vehicles and fines for drivers on enforcement issues.

► Young People's Mental Health Services

The Committee had the opportunity to scrutinise West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group for Young People's Mental Health Services on 15 April 2021. Ms S Garner who was the Assistant Director, Southend, Essex & Thurrock Children & Young Peoples Emotional Wellbeing & Mental Health Collaborative and Programme Director Joint Commissioning SEND (Essex) and was based at St Margaret's Hospital in Epping. She collaborated with seven Clinical Commissioning Groups and three local authorities. As she was the lead commissioner in Essex, equal access across Essex was important. Targeted and specialist services for children and young people 0–18 were accessed via a single point of access, supported by a County-wide crisis team, learning disability service and eating disorder service. Continued support where clinically appropriate was also available up to age 25. There was a locality hub based at Harlow and others sited in each CCG area. Various mental

health disorders were covered, but of all the referrals, including self-referrals, coming into the Essex single point of access, 25 per cent were referred on to other people/organisations. The Crisis Support teams visited individuals to review and assess them 24/7. The Children and Young People Eating Disorder service, which covered anorexia and bulimia, and the Learning Disability service had seen a rise for their services during the lockdowns. There were seven community teams that worked alongside six youth offending service workers. There was a lot of provision with place base teams, life coaching and various support help available. The referrals between 2015 and 2020 had increased annually, but it was better to catch these early. During the Covid pandemic services had continued to operate as usual. Digital help offer had been expanded through apps and online therapy. Group therapy and support offers were widened, as was communication through schools and community groups to reach young people in need. Additional support was being provided for community eating disorder services and the voluntary and community sector to support the Crisis teams and single point of access. Future plans for young people's mental health services were outlined, which included development of 0–25 services, and getting risk support and the Crisis teams integrated and working across the NHS and Children's Services.

As the youth councillors had presented their annual report at this same meeting, their work on the MiLife C19 Health and Wellbeing project supporting young people in the District during the Covid crisis, achieved a crossover interest in relation to the mental health of young people. They had stayed to hear this presentation and were invited to ask questions after members. Questions covered various aspects including: the number and types of referrals during the Covid crisis; what constituted a crisis; silent cases, home visits; at what point were mental health issues defined; male suicides; how the outcome for a child was measured and what evaluation was done that the right treatment had been provided; and what had inspired Ms Garner to motivate mental health. Although the stigma around mental health had declined, ultimately it needed to be normalised, and for people to help each other and include others more.

Further information on the agendas and minutes of past meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are available to view at:

<https://rds.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=395&Year=0>

Joint Meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen

The joint meeting is held twice a year and is an opportunity for the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the scrutiny committees to come together and discuss mutual issues. The meetings are not webcast as this is more a discussion committee to inform, be informed and provide feedback to the Senior Leadership Team (lead scrutiny officers), the Service Director Strategy, Delivery and Performance and the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager.

Here members can voice their opinions and concerns on how something can be improved, or needs to be acted upon etc. Officers can likewise raise any issue that they believe will be beneficial to the running of the scrutiny committees.

This year joint meetings were held on 25 August 2020 and 11 January 2021.

Topics that arose from the joint meetings included:

► **Independent scrutiny members** regarding their co-option to scrutiny committees. The select committees could invite a co-opted member to join, as a non-voting member, subject to a proposal being made to Overview and Scrutiny that Council also had to approve. In addition, independent, non-voting scrutiny members could act as expert witnesses.

► **Informal advance chairman's pre-meetings** would facilitate additional scrutiny by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of a select committee prior to the agenda being published. Democratic Services select committee officers have been asked to organise an informal advance Chairman's pre-meeting with the relevant lead officer to discuss forthcoming work programme items to gauge member input.

► **Meetings timings** needed to be looked at and good governance arrangements instated, as the scheduling of committees in the annual Calendar of Meetings was important in relation to the scrutiny committee cycles.

► **Pre-scrutiny of Cabinet business** was also integral to the scrutiny process. Members supported more pre-scrutiny going forwards. The scheduling of scrutiny meetings should also sync with Cabinet meetings.

► **Scrutiny driven by members** would be greatly improved if officers' reports did not use 'to note' in the (decision) recommendation. Therefore, members emphasised that better use of wording in recommendations would give members the opportunity to scrutinise all reports going to the scrutiny committees.

► **Scrutiny items and reports** for the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be assessed at the Agenda Planning Group to see if they could be scrutinised more effectively by a select committee. It was for the chairmen of the select committees to provide feedback to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on business items that had been scrutinised.

► **Training** for members of the scrutiny committees, especially chairmen and vice-chairmen, was another concern as this had been deferred because of the cancellation of the 2020 elections. An influx of newly elected councillors was anticipated after the elections in 2021. Therefore, members agreed at the meeting in January 2021 that training on scrutiny must be provided in the next municipal year, but the scope of the course would be finalised nearer the time. It was hoped that a trainer used by the Local Government Association could be booked.

Members were hopeful that their reciprocal dialogue with the lead scrutiny officers at these joint meetings would work towards improving scrutiny processes within the Council in the 2021/22 new municipal year.

Full details of the agendas and minutes can be found on the Intranet.

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2020/21

Stronger Communities Select Committee

Members for 2020/21:

The Stronger Community Select Committee held five virtual meetings this municipal year. The membership was approved at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its first virtual meeting on 22 June 2020.

Councillor Darshan Sunger (Chairman)

Councillor Jaymey McIvor (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

Amy Beales

Ian Hadley

Jeane Lea

Ann Mitchell

Dave Plummer

Sheree Rackham

Jo Share-Bernia

Janet H Whitehouse

David Wixley



Councillor Darshan
Sunger



Councillor Jaymey
McIvor

The lead officer was Nick Dawe, Chief Operating Officer.

Terms of Reference

Core areas of responsibility were:

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

◆ **Customer Excellence** – delivering services that put the customer at the heart of everything we do

◆ **Behaviours and Insights** – future-proofing the Council's service provision by understanding customer needs and expectations over the next ten years and beyond; and

◆ **Partnerships** – working with public, private and third sector partners to deliver and develop services to our community, businesses and visitors to the district including shared and cross-border working.

(2) To monitor levels of customer satisfaction and provides scrutiny of services that are not performing to standard and develop proposals for their improvement. This will also include matters of concern that are identified by the select committee in its review of Corporate Key Performance Indicators.

The **scrutiny role** incorporates the following:

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

Committee workload

As the last meeting in the municipal year 2019/20 in April 2020 had been postponed, outstanding work items carried over into the 2020/21 municipal year. At each meeting members had the opportunity to review the Terms of Reference and the work programme.

1st virtual meeting – 21 July 2020

► **Grow Community Garden** based in Loughton gave a presentation of its work with the support of Councillor D Wixley. The Project Co-ordinator, Heidi Chow, introduced members to this inclusive community garden that brought people together in a safe and supportive outdoor space to grow organic vegetables. The project started in 2016 after Loughton Town Council had offered a piece of land to Grow Community. Having successfully applied for grants from the Council's Grant Aid Scheme, essential equipment was purchased, and the project progressed with help from their volunteers to clear the overgrown land, plan out the site and steadily plant various vegetables. People of all ages volunteered, and two sessions were run weekly on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The community garden was open all year round. Under normal circumstances this project was organised on a drop-in basis and all volunteers were provided with lunch and refreshments, but during Covid social distancing restrictions were in place and volunteers were asked to bring in their own food and drink.

► **Impact of Covid-19 on the District's housing communities** was highlighted in a report by the HRA Project Director, D Fenton. The emergence of Covid-19 and the first lockdown had led to an understandable level of concern and worry for the residents of the Council, and the number of applicants applying for Universal Credit had risen. There had been a significant increase in telephone calls, up by over 100% in March 2020. The report provided an overview of the measures being taken to support residents whilst also working to protect the rental income, therefore providing some certainty for the HRA account.

► **Customer Services quarter 1 update** had focussed on the low staffing levels in the Customer Services team through staff sickness, staff leavers and a delay in recruiting new staff, which had seen other staff drafted in to help out. The Service Director (Customer Services), R Pavey, reported that complaints had fallen as all managers now received training to diffuse situations to prevent them escalating into an official complaint. Behavioural training and training to improve customer services skills of these staff would help improve the Council's customer strategy.

► **Epping Forest Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2028** was outlined in the annual presentation made by Public Health Improvement Officer, F Ferrari. The Epping Forest Health and Wellbeing Board was made up of representatives from Epping Forest District Council, Essex County Council Public Health, the West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and a wide range of health providers and third sector organisations. To improve the health and wellbeing of local residents, three multi-agency action groups had been established by last summer – the Start Well Action Group (pre-birth to 19 years), the Be Well Action Group (19 – 65 years) and the Age Well Action Group (65+). The key priorities of the strategy were to improve the mental health of residents, increase physical activity, tackle loneliness and social isolation, and increase safe and independent living at home.

2nd virtual meeting – 15 September 2020

► **Council-funded Police Officers' bi-annual report** highlighted the Council's continued funding to employ an additional Essex Police Sergeant and two Police Constables to supplement existing local policing resources. The Service Manager Community Resilience, C Wiggins, advised members that the team had an initial 3-year contract, which had been extended for a further two years. The team was tasked in-line with District Community Safety Partnership priorities which were identified through the Annual Strategic Assessment and aligned with the priorities set by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner. As well as working to those priorities, the team could be requested, via a tasking process, to support any Council department where there was an identified threat, harm or risk to staff. Joint tasking had been implemented on a fortnightly basis, in line with police tasking in which current tasks and new requests were reviewed. When not deployed on tasks, the team was assigned patrols in areas identified through risk terrain mapping which focussed on areas of high-risk and high-harm crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB). District crime levels were affected by Covid, but the team remained fully operational and 2020 had continued to be a challenging period. The Community Resilience Team temporarily relocated to Ongar Police Station while the Civic Offices were being refurbished. The last quarter had seen Essex Police situate Community Safety Engagement Officers (CSEO) across the County. The Epping Forest CSEO was embedded with the Community Resilience Team. The CSEO was tasked to work within the Community Safety Hub taking a lead on problem solving, working with partners and the community to reduce crime, ASB and protect people from harm within the District.

► **Customer Services quarter 2 update** for 2020/21 showed an increase in customer frustration had occurred as changes in services had not been communicated to them, and service areas had been reminded of the need to do this. The Service Manager (Customer Services), S Lewis, reported that 35% of residents had indicated that they preferred to pay cash and did not wish to switch to alternative payment methods. As a result, the cash office at The Broadway, Loughton, reopened in August 2020 for two days a week, but a longer-term solution would be developed. The special waste collection service had been well received and was considered to be good value by residents. Also, the reporting of potholes and requests for pavement maintenance were popular topics via the Council's social media channels, even though these were the responsibility of Essex County Council. Unfortunately, the Council's Customer Strategy had not been launched as planned to external customers due to the Covid pandemic continuing. Phase I of the Strategy was to 'fix the basics' which included a customer services health check to be undertaken by service areas. It was felt that this should be mandatory for service areas to complete. Phase II was 'customer shoes' and a training pilot with Impact Factory would be launched next month to deliver customer services training to staff. Phase III was to embrace new technology and priorities were being reviewed by the ICT team. Finally, there were a number of events planned for National Customer Service week from 5 October 2020, and a number of key messages would be communicated to staff over the coming months.

► **Corporate programme delivery** to illustrate the alignment between the select committee and the Council's corporate programmes was outlined in a report by the Strategy, Delivery and Performance Service Director, L Wade. An officer structure had been established to focus on the delivery of the corporate programmes in line with the Council's Stronger Ambitions' objectives. The select committee had three of the Council's corporate programmes aligned to it – the Community

Health and Wellbeing Programme, Customer Excellence Programme and Community Data / Insights Programme.

The Council's focus was also on the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as its corporate programmes. As the Council's recovery planning and response evolved, so too would the projects as there were interdependencies across the corporate programmes. Councillor S Kane, Customer and Support Services Portfolio Holder, provided members with some further understanding of the Community Data / Insights Programme.

3rd virtual meeting – 14 January 2021

► **Operational changes at the Broadway Housing Office** would ensure best use of resources and delivery of a customer centric service. Housing Management was restructured in February 2020 into Income Recovery, Neighbourhoods (tenancy management and enforcement, and ASB), and Estates and Land Management. During the first lockdown, all three Housing offices at the Civic Offices, Limes Farm and The Broadway were closed. The Broadway reopened on 10 August 2020 but only the cash office on Mondays and Tuesdays and utilised by the Estate and Land Management Team on Wednesdays to Fridays but closed to the public. The HRA Service Director, D Fenton outlined the following proposal that after the Civic Office refurbishment, the Income Recovery Team would reposition itself alongside the Estate and Land Team at The Broadway Office which would be reinvented as a drop-in hub on Mondays and Tuesdays alongside the cash office, and offer residents the opportunity to engage with a range of services such as the Rehousing Team, Housing Benefit, Council Tax, Citizens Advice Bureau and Peabody Trust. The drop-in hub could also be used to provide digital upskilling by Digital Buddies to the District's 21,000 residents who currently did not use social media.

► **Rough sleeping update** encompassed the Council's response to rough sleeping in the District during the Covid pandemic and the additional funding that had been secured to support the service. The Community and Wellbeing Service Director, J Gould, reported on the progress made in housing the 27 rough sleepers identified between April and December 2020. The Government had made a commitment to continue Rough Sleeper Initiative Grant funding and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme into 2021/22, which the council would try to secure a share of this future funding.

► **Whipps Cross Hospital development programme** briefing had been attended by the Chairman, Councillor D Sunger. The briefing had updated key stakeholders and community representatives on development progress thus far although nothing substantial had arisen since the presentation given to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee previously in 2017.

► **Digital Inclusion** update on the current work and future direction of further projects aimed to tackle the real challenge that Covid had created, which was to reduce digital exclusion, particularly with the difficulty of face to face services. The Customer Services Director advised members that it had re-energised its digital buddy network. There were twenty-nine buddies who were willing to give their time to support residents. Working in collaboration with other service areas and external partners some initial activities started included digital buddy support

► **Customer Services quarter 3 update** covered 'what our customers were telling us' and that customer satisfaction had reached 80%. Although residents had reported missed waste collections and bin deliveries to the Council, these were being addressed. Call volumes for quarter 3 were consistent with previous quarters. First point resolution was at 45% and call causation codes had been reintroduced to identify the reasons for contact and whether they could be dealt with at first contact. Large numbers of call transfers were still required to Qualis and the Planning department, and this would be monitored. The webcasting equipment was being upgraded for hybrid meetings and the Corporate Communications team was also looking into creating a community platform. The Customer strategy was launched on the website and Internal Audit had completed a satisfactory audit of the Customer Services Transformation plans.

► **Co-option of a non-member to the select committee** was agreed and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's approval was sought for the co-option of an independent member, Mr Wyn Marshall, who was Chairman of the Tenants and Leaseholders Forum. This was also strongly supported by officers as it would ensure that tenants opinions and input would be considered in relation to Housing issues scrutinised by this select committee. Subsequently the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2 February 2021 recommended this co-option to Council for approval and, as Mr Marshall's appointment would be close to the end of this municipal year, also recommended to Council that this appointment should continue until the end of 2021/22 when it could be reviewed. Council approved Mr Marshall's co-option as an independent non-member of the Select Committee on 25 February 2021.

4th virtual meeting – 30 March 2021

► **Essex Police District Commander** Chief Inspector Ant Alcock made his annual presentation and reported on the work the Police had covered over the last year, especially in relation to the Covid pandemic and three national lockdowns that had followed, in addition to policing in the Epping Forest District.

► **Community Safety Partnership Annual Strategic Assessment, Annual Report and Partnership Plan** were presented by C Wiggins, Specialist Technical Services Officer. Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) were required to complete an annual Strategic Assessment which was used to direct and guide their activities, under the requirements as responsible authorities, of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The District worked closely with Essex Police analysts to produce this document, which this year was a common template for all two-tier local authority areas. The aim of the Epping Forest Strategic Assessment was to determine the strategic priorities for the financial year 2020-21. Community Safety work encompassed ASB, disorder and the misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances. The report included statistical data and analysis of crime types. Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions impacted on crime committed and reported in 2020 and caused crime types to experience unprecedented significantly reduced or increased levels. As restrictions changed, crime levels had continually readjusted. The CSP Plan was a new addition of the Partnership and provided information at a glance on the planned delivery of Epping Forest CSP going forward. Community projects and initiatives in 2020 had included:

- Crucial Crew – an educational programme for year 6 pupils on community safety was launched digitally on the Council's website;
- J9 domestic abuse initiative – the aim was to raise awareness of domestic abuse and assist victims to seek the help they desperately needed. Started by the Council, training was now available all over the County;
- Training delivered virtually on child sexual exploitation, gangs, county lines, modern slavery/human trafficking and hate crime;
- Cross border meetings were held every four weeks between the Council, Essex Police and the Metropolitan Police;
- Enforcement issues from the pandemic included 'mansion/house parties' as clubs, pubs and bars were not open, the misuse of Epping Forest especially at High Beach, and joint enforcement undertaken by the Corporation of London, Essex Police, North Essex Parking Partnership and the Council.

The timescales of the Annual Report were extended to account for the unprecedented impact of Covid on the CSP and wider agencies over the last 18 months. Violence, vulnerability and serious acquisitive crime were the strategic priorities for 2019/20 and would continue to be in 2020/21. A dynamic daily briefing and tasking structure was adopted in the District which had the ability to directly respond to areas of concern and address local issues. This ensured a relevant, justified and cost-effective use of resources. Historically, Halloween and bonfire night had caused challenges to the District in relation to youths being anti-social and committing criminal acts. In 2020 the Council worked closely with Essex Police to produce a plan around enforcement and engagement. The Horizons Project (Phoenix Futures) supported clients who were identified as suffering from Significant Multiple Disadvantage- substance issue, offending behaviour and homelessness.

Members questions included if there a contact number that could be given to homeless people and did the Council work with other bordering authorities in addition to the Metropolitan Police? C Wiggins advised that any homeless person should firstly, be directed to the Council's Homeless Prevention Team. The New Horizons project mentioned in the report was for more entrenched homelessness and assisted people with a holistic approach. The project was now being extended to other areas such as Harlow, Brentwood and Tendering as a result of the success in Epping and Chelmsford. C Wiggins advised that the Council did work with other bordering Police authorities and had a good working relationship with Hertfordshire Police. There was another question on whether the Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Plan on a Page could include additional details of the planned schemes for the three priorities; and what was a Local Action Group? C Wiggins advised that a glossary would be included in next year's CSP Plan with a further explanation of each scheme. The Local Action Group was the bringing together of Council officers and multi-agencies to create an overall approach to case specific ASB issues / locations within the District.

► **Council-funded Police Officers' bi-annual report** was presented by C Wiggins and covered the period September 2020 to March 2021. In addition to the earlier report in September 2020, the Essex Police team in the District accepted and completed 50 tasking requests in 2020 in spite of the challenges presented by Covid-19 (2019 had 52). These tasks included amongst others: a cross border operation with the Metropolitan Police to deal with serious crime in the south of the District; supporting Council officers visiting licensing and business premises over possible Covid legislation breaches; also supporting Planning Enforcement and Community Resilience officers where there was a risk to staff; targeted patrols in response to persistent ASB; and the recovery of stolen vehicles.

5th virtual meeting – 22 April 2021

► **Overview of social recovery initiatives and projects** delivered to support the District's residents as a result of Covid-19 was reported to members by the Community, Culture and Wellbeing Service Manager, G Wallis. The responsibility had fallen to Epping Forest District Council to swiftly establish a multi-agency Community Hub following the first national lockdown in March 2020 to provide emergency support for the district's most vulnerable residents. The setting up of community initiatives and projects, which were identified under the themes of Positive Communities, Positive Activity and Positive Mental Health, contributed towards the continuing social recovery of the District. These included:

- Place-based engagement in Paternoster and Shelley Wards that built a picture of the needs of residents as they emerged from the lockdown and laid the foundations for tackling health inequalities. This would develop a model of best practice that could then be replicated in other parts of the District;
- A Disability Inclusion Project for children and young people with disabilities and their families, welfare calls to support families and online training for families providing strategies to cope with the pressures of lockdown;
- Fall Prevention project called the Social, Active, Strong Project;
- Physical activity programmes adapted and delivered virtually including walking football, athletics, tennis activators, Wild Cats Girls Football, Get Active sessions and the Active Living Programme for older residents;
- Cultural activity programmes including the Epping Forest Festival of Culture;
- The election of the Epping Forest Youth Council and virtual MiLife C19 Mental Health Project;
- The creation of older peoples' resource packs for "Stay Well This Winter", "Senior Safety Day" events and a "Little Book of Big Scams" booklet giving advice about fraud;
- The virtual delivery of the Epping Forest District Museum and Educational Outreach services;
- To establish a Waltham Abbey Community and Cultural Centre in the heart of the Town;
- The 'More Than Bricks & Mortar' initiative which ensures the Housing & Property Services work with residents in respect of the Council's capital investment programme priority estates across the District;

- Epping Forest Health and Wellbeing Board including the Start Well Action Group (pre-birth to 19); Be Well Action Group (19 – 65 years): and Age Well Action Group (65 years +); and
- West Essex Health Inequalities & Prevention Committee.

Residents continued to be placed at the heart of the health and wellbeing agenda with staff using the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) techniques to support the social recovery of the Epping Forest District, building strong, resilient, cohesive and healthy communities in for the future.

► **Customer Service update** covered the Council's Customer Service KPI's for overall customer satisfaction, first point resolution, complaints, call volumes and the Customer Strategy. R Pavey, Customer Services Director, reported that throughout the lockdown period many customers had channel shifted to self-service help, which had been assisted by removing 'contact us' and encouraging customers to use the online forms or completing a general contact form. The automated scripts developed for the customers and the Call Centre Officers also reduced the call waiting times and resolutions to 47% for 2020/21. Areas that had been affected by the closure of face to face contact had been the cash offices, although the payments teams had supported customers by taking payment over the telephone.

The Customer Strategy would continue to drive the single point of contact through the remaining service areas into the contact centre and would focus the following:

- Gaining a better understanding of the customer and their needs;
- How and why the customer contacted the Council;
- Utilisation of modern technology, to enhance the customer contact experience;
- Service delivery improvements;
- Customer shoes cultural training; and
- Digital buddies support for residents.

In the first quarter of 2021/22, focus would be given to a new welcome lounge and plans for a partnership hub, the development of in-house customer shoes training and promotion of Service Superstars. This would also include the re-opening of the cash office in The Broadway and payment kiosk in Waltham Abbey and the Civic Offices. Other enhancements were for the continuation of webcasting with new hybrid webcasting capability, the promotion of Digital Buddies in the community and a member technology and contact process review to improve the ICT for members.

R Pavey advised members to contact the Customer Contact Team directly, who could log and monitor their enquiries and ensure responses were given. There was currently a team manager vacancy, which had reduced the capacity by 50%, although they were in the process of recruitment. The Customer and Corporate Support Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor S Kane, advised that they were investigating issues mentioned by members about the phone service and IT systems were being investigated. In response to a question on whether the face-to-face cash collection services had been affected by the shift change in payment methods, R Pavey advised that a need for a cash collection service was still required. Going forward though, it would need further consideration the monetary figures to members would be supplied via the Bulletin.

► **Universal Credit** – an update was provided by the Customer Services Director, R Pavey. As a result of the work of the Universal Credit Impact Working Group a Multi-Agency Hub was developed at the Museum in Waltham Abbey in early 2020, which was sadly curtailed with the onset of the Covid crisis. During 2020 a virtual signposting resource was developed bringing the outcomes of the Universal Credit Group's work and aligning it with the new challenges presented by Covid, particularly with extensions to Wellbeing and Employment initiatives. In 2020 the Cabinet approved the concept of a Community Hub at the Civic Offices recognising the opportunities that a newly refurbished Civic Offices could offer to make it a true community asset. Work to establish the Community Hub has been taking place in two ways. Firstly, there was the physical creation of the Hub space as part of the Accommodation Programme within the Civic Offices. Secondly, there had been engagement with partners who wished to come and work with EFDC in the Hub and establish practical arrangements built around customer service journeys. The design and on-going delivery of

the Hub was being managed by a Steering Group, chaired by the Customer Service Director involving key EFDC services and partners. The activity of the Hub provided three key offers to its users and customers:

- Offer 1: A core offer of advice – delivered through a dedicated team of EFDC services and hub partners to include general advice and guidance, housing, homelessness and rough sleeping, welfare and housing benefits and council tax support, well-being, financial inclusion, digital support and social isolation. This would centre on prevention to support the most vulnerable, identify opportunities to make an impact through intervening earlier and tackle issues more quickly to prevent escalation and to reduce the likelihood for repeat needs for services in the future.
- Offer 2: Access to a range of information, support and guidance – this would be tailored to local need and be delivered by voluntary and community sector organisations and community groups, as well as local residents volunteering their time. As a growth model, this was expected to change and grow with time and create a location for enabling individuals to build new skills through self-serve, assisted self-serve and confidence building.
- Offer 3: A community space and programme of community activities – this was to deliver activities and events for the community, and to reflect the specific interests of local people.

The next steps in the implementation of the Hub was to ensure it could operate in a Covid-safe way. Appropriate risk assessments would be carried out in conjunction with the Council's Health and Safety team. There would be publicity around the opening of the Hub which was due to open on 21 June 2021 but this was dependant on Covid-19 restrictions.

Full details of the agendas and minutes of Stronger Communities Select Committee can be accessed on the Council website at:

<https://rds.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=809&Year=0>

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2020/21

Stronger Council Select Committee

Members for 2020/21:

The Stronger Council Select Committee held four virtual meetings this municipal year. The membership was approved at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22 June 2020 at its first virtual meeting.

Councillor Peter Bolton (Chairman)

Councillor David Stocker (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

Richard Bassett
Heather Brady
Rose Brookes
David Dorrell
Helen Kane
Steven Neville
Michael Owen
Sheree Rackham
Jon M Whitehouse



Councillor Peter Bolton



Councillor David Stocker

The lead officer was Andrew Small, Strategic Director and 151 Officer.

Terms of Reference

Core areas of responsibility were:

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

◆ **People Strategy**

◆ **Accommodation Strategy**

◆ **Digital Enablement**

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

The scrutiny role incorporates the following:

- to engage in policy review and development, with a focus on improvement and how this can be best achieved;

- to develop a work programme each year that effectively scrutinises the areas of responsibility outlined above;
- to consider any matter referred by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet or a Portfolio Holder and to make recommendations as appropriate;
- to look outwards and show community leadership;
- to consider the effect of Government actions or initiatives that affect the Select Committee's areas of responsibility and the impact on customers, residents, businesses and visitors to our district, and to respond to consultation activities as appropriate;
- to establish working groups and task and finish panels to undertake any activity within these terms of reference;
- to undertake pre-scrutiny through the review of specific proposals of the Council and its partner organisations or other local service providers to help develop policy;
- to monitor and review relevant projects and associated closure and benefits reports; and
- to engage with the community and encourage community engagement.

Committee workload

As the last meeting in the municipal year 2019/20 in April 2020 had been postponed owing to the first national lockdown of the Covid crisis, outstanding work items carried over into the 2020/21 municipal year. At each meeting members had the opportunity to review the Terms of Reference and the work programme.

► **Corporate Plan 2019-20 corporate performance** progress was regularly scrutinised throughout the year. The Corporate Plan Action Plan provided a mechanism for reporting to Members on the Council's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and key programmes of work and highlighted the Council's overall performance against agreed corporate objectives. The Strategy, Delivery and Performance Service Director, L Wade, reported in July 2020 that in quarter 4 the Covid crisis had impacted on the corporate objectives. The corporate programmes and the service objectives were being reviewed, but most importantly was the Covid recovery activities and the financial impacts and the prioritisation around these, taking into account the capacity of resources available and the funding needed to deliver these. KPIs for subsequent quarters were detailed below under Corporate performance reporting.

► **Corporate performance reporting** to do with the scope of the corporate programme of work and associated benefits in 2020/21 within the report would be used to baseline Corporate performance management on a quarterly basis in future. At the meeting on 13 October 2020, the exceptions highlighted in red included: the Telecare offering project due to delay in cessation of service following withdrawal of the County tender; the ICT restructure due to a delay in completion of restructure; the Local Plan due to delays in the review of the main modifications document as a result of the Inspector's limited capacity to review. Going forwards, members agreed that all programmes and projects be reported back to the Select Committee, not just exceptions. KPIs for quarters 1 and 2 were reported within the Corporate programme governance report at the meeting on 13 October. At the meetings on 14 January 2021 for quarter 3 and 13 April 2021 for quarter 4, the Committee robustly scrutinised the reports on the progress of project delivery against the quarter milestones and KPIs within these reports.

► **Corporate programme governance** showing the internal governance to manage and deliver the programme of work aligned to the Stronger Council ambitions in 2020/21 was detailed in a report by the Strategy, Delivery and Performance Service Director at the October 2020 meeting. An internal officer governance structure had been established to focus on the delivery of the Corporate programmes aligned to the Stronger ambition objectives.

► **People Strategy updates** were regularly reported throughout the year by the Business Services Director, P Maginnis. By July 2020 a new people's strategy had been introduced which aimed to build a people team that could deliver the strategy and have the right people with the right skills who were highly motivated and high performing. The strategy was broken down into these themes:

1. Attracting, on boarding and retaining the best talent;
2. Develop our leadership;
3. Embracing change to support the Council's evolution;
4. Creating a culture of engagement and wellbeing;
5. Developing our skills and behaviours to make the Council a great place to work; and
6. Achieving organisational goals through a high performing and flexible workforce.

At the core was transforming the People Team to become an enabler for the organisation. The Strategy set out the ambition for our workforce – the right people with the right skills, highly motivated high performing and business efficient.

At the meeting on 13 April 2021, the Service Director P Maginnis, presented the updating report on the People's Strategy. Appendix 1 to the report set out the achievements realised during Year 1 of the Strategy, 2020 – 2021. In summary, the People Team supported the organisation's wellbeing, the accommodation project by developing new ways of working, developing the culture to become more resilient, improving policies and process, and including the use of technology to automate as much as possible. Appendix 2 of the report set out the work programme to achieve Year 2 of the Strategy 2021 – 2022. Members asked about staff satisfaction surveys given the recent turbulence and were informed that regular polling surveys were undertaken using the Perkbox platform the results of which were shared with the service directors for analysis. Concerns on the wellbeing of staff while most were working from home was also raised. The Service Director advised that managers held one-to-one meetings with their staff and that 10% of the workforce had completed mental health training including managers to make sure the needs of staff were being looked after.

► **Accommodation Review updates** were regularly reported throughout the year by the Strategy, Delivery and Performance Services Director, L Wade. Refurbishment of the Civic Offices was underway and continued to stay on budget and on time. The contractors, ISG, operated in a 'Covid free' environment with all the appropriate policies and guidelines in place. As staff were working remotely due to the coronavirus pandemic, this had enabled the contractor to minimise all health and safety related risks. By October 2020, the accommodation programme was progressing and was at a critical stage of the project, in confirming the design. The accommodation Programme Board continued to meet on a monthly basis to oversee the delivery of the programme and covered the following workstreams:

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

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

By January 2021 deliveries of orders for fixture and fittings were taking place. Minor amendments had been made to the ground floor space to enable a large PACE room to be available impacting on the consultation space. Requirements for the desk and car park system were now complete and configuration of the IT system that would manage this had now commenced. One of the "Travel to the Civic" options for employees and residents was by demand responsive travel (DRT). This was launched in January 2021 and there had already been a positive take up for the service with residents which it was hoped could be extended to employee usage. Individual sessions had been taking place with teams and there had been a big focus on decluttering. A "scan it, scrap it, store it, stop it" campaign, ensured staff only retained what was necessary and that files could be retained in digital form. Talks continued with partners on commercialisation of the Civic Offices second floor and using the touchdown space in the community hub. The refurbishment remained on budget.

By April 2021 works on the refurbishment of the Civic Offices had been completed but it had to be repopulated in a Covid safe way. One of the first activities to take place was the issuing and opening of postal votes for the 2021 May elections with people socially distanced for their safety. A positive meeting had been held with Essex libraries and the second floor was available for viewings. A huge effort had been made by staff to clear out of the Conder building. This had highlighted that the Council could contribute towards the climate change emergency by relying less on paper and by streamlining services and storing data and documents within the cloud.

► **Budget Monitoring Reports (General Fund)** were monitored on a quarterly basis by the Select Committee. The quarter 1 report presented by the interim Chief Finance Officer, Christopher Hartgrove was for the first four month's (till the end July 2020) and reported on the first four months of the pandemic and the financial impact of that. The full position was summarised in appendix A of the committee report.

1st virtual meeting – 14 July 2020

► **ICT Strategy** quarter 1 update by the Business Services Director outlined a 12-theme structure that ranged from the restructure of the service to supporting the customer strategy, members and the accommodation programme. It was wide ranging in the areas it covered. Covid had an impact on the delivery of some of the work as they had focused on enabling staff to work from home. The team were making progress on their own restructure. The ICT reporting tool, HOTH, went live in July. They were also supporting the accommodation project particularly the procurement of the audio-visual equipment, the disaster recovery system and the new housing system.

► **Finance update** on the financial position of the Council in July 2020 showed that things were moving quickly in terms of the cost of Covid, and its impact on Council finances was being monitored closely, although up to July, £1.36 million in Government grant support had been provided to the Council. The Strategic Director, Andrew Small, was pleased to announce that the final accounts for 2018/19 had been signed off on 18 June 2020 and they were now finalising the accounts for 2019/20. The Government had recognised that because of the impact of the Covid outbreak there had been less capacity for local government to complete the normal end of year tasks and had given councils an extended timetable for closing the end of year accounts.

► **Revenue and Capital Outturn 2019-2020** was reported to the Select Committee by the Interim Chief Finance Officer, Christopher Hartgrove. It was a good news story for 2019-20, as the Council had ended the year with an overall positive revenue variance on General Fund service budgets of £908,000, whereas the ring-fenced Housing Revenue Account (HRA) recorded a negative revenue variance of £285,000, for which Covid had played a part. The minimum contingency balance requirements adopted by the Council had been met at year-end on both the General Fund and the HRA.

► **Unacceptable Customer Behaviour Policy** was introduced by the Customer Service Manager, S Lewis. This policy set out the Council's approach to dealing with unacceptable behaviour by service users and members of the public. The Council had a duty to safeguard its employees from unacceptable behaviour which might otherwise cause it to breach legislation unless appropriate action was taken. The policy was to protect Council staff whilst dealing with unacceptable behaviour both internally and externally by customers.

► **Service Plan objectives quarter 1** report referenced the capacity and Covid-19 restriction impact on each service and the subsequent impact on the delivery of the quarter 1 Service Plan objectives. The Strategy, Delivery and Performance Service Director provided an overview of the services areas, of the activities they had been involved in and also the impact that Covid had on the work that would otherwise have been completed, had it not been for this emergency.

2nd virtual meeting – 13 October 2020

Ongoing cyclical scrutiny of the Accommodation Strategy, People Strategy, and quarterly reviews of the Corporate Plan Action Plan KPIs were as detailed above.

3rd virtual meeting – 19 January 2021

► **Draft Budget proposals 2021/22** were detailed in the report by the 151 Officer and Strategic Director, A Small, and the Interim Chief Finance Officer. This was an opportunity for members to pre-scrutinise the proposals which would be reported to Cabinet at its meeting on 11 February 2021. Covid-19 had, and would continue to have, a huge impact on many areas of the Council's income and expenditure. This was making the preparation of robust budgets exceptionally challenging. Therefore, many significant assumptions had to be made at this stage, such as for Leisure and Car Parking in the short term, impact on Council tax and rents in the medium term, and how the high streets would recover, the survival of businesses and other longer term impacts on the community and economy. The report reflected the emerging budget proposals (appendix a) and the outline budget for the Housing Revenue Account. The HRA was in a stable position compared to the general fund where there had been a small deficit as the Government had announced the Local Government Settlement for 2021/22 in December 2020.

4th virtual meeting – 13 April 2021

Ongoing cyclical scrutiny of the Accommodation Strategy, People Strategy and quarterly reviews of the Corporate Plan Action Plan and KPIs are detailed within the relevant sections above.

► **ICT Update** at the meeting on 13 April 2021, introduced the updating ICT report, which disclosed that over the past year the focus had been on completing the ICT restructure and improving the basic ICT service that the team delivered. ICT Manager, M Hassall, reported that 17 had left the team, and 10 had joined, which meant that the team was now at capacity. Better alignment of ICT services had been facilitated by implementing a business partner model with meetings held monthly with each services area. ICT had installed a service desk management tool to provide better visibility and management of incidents, changes and problems. Covid restrictions had imposed mandatory homeworking on most of the staff from March 2020 which ICT had been central in enabling. The accommodation project had further required significant ICT resourcing. Security of the system had remained good and ICT had a new Disaster Recovery Solution that allowed services to be run from the cloud in case of total loss of on-site solutions. It was now time to move IT services to the Azure cloud and the initial assessments completed supported the business case of moving to a hybrid cloud model initially. Members' questions centred on the high staff turnover and costs for the cloud. Concerns were also raised about the various problems that members had experienced with their Council iPads and delays in these being rectified. Members were informed that ICT were working on a simpler process to access IT help.

► **Qualis Quarterly Monitoring Report** for quarter 1, 2020/21 was introduced by Strategic Director, A Small. This report presented the Qualis first Quarter's monitoring report for the Qualis trading year 2020/21 and covered the period from 1 November to 31 January 2021. With Housing Maintenance services having transferred to Qualis in quarter 4 (end of September 2020) of the previous trading year, this quarter represented the first whole quarter of both service delivery activity, commercial investment and regeneration work. In reply to a query on Qualis' cashflow, the Select Committee was advised that for the next two years Qualis would be concentrating on development but as for the financial assumptions, these would be updated in the next quarter's report. In response to a question on major risks to the expected outcomes and had the pandemic affected the assumed projected value of the projects, the Select Committee was advised that the major risks were the planning permissions for the sites. As for the pandemic, house prices had remained buoyant throughout, though there was a slight risk at the end of the stamp duty holiday.

Full details of the agendas and minutes of Stronger Council Select Committee can be accessed on the Council website at:

<https://rds.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=810&Year=0>

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2020/21

Stronger Place Select Committee

Members for 2020/21:

The Stronger Council Select Committee held four virtual meetings this municipal year. The membership was approved at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its first meeting on 22 June 2020, which was held virtually.

Councillor Steven Heather (Chairman)

Councillor Richard Morgan (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors:

Richard Bassett

Les Burrows

Ian Hadley

Simon Heap

Judy Jennings

Sue Jones

Howard Kauffman

Cherry McCredie

Jaymey McIvor



Councillor Steven
Heather



Councillor Richard
Morgan

► Change of Chairman

Although Councillor R Bassett was elected Chairman at the beginning of the municipal year, he resigned in the autumn, following his appointment as a Non-Executive Director to the Qualis Board. At the select committee meeting on 19 November 2020, Vice-Chairman Councillor S Heather was elected to be the Chairman, while Councillor R Morgan was elected to be the Vice-Chairman.

The lead officer was Nick Dawe, Chief Operating Officer.

Terms of Reference

Core areas of responsibility were:

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

◆ Local Plan delivery

◆ St John's Road

◆ North Weald (including master planning)

◆ Council Housebuilding

◆ Economic growth, skills and employment

- (2) To have overview of the performance of the Waste Management Contract and Leisure Management Contract and provide scrutiny of services that are not performing to standard and develop proposals for their improvement; and
- (3) To have overview of the green agenda helping to inform policy and future proofing the place.

The scrutiny role incorporates the following:

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

Committee workload

As the last meeting in the municipal year 2019/20 in March 2020 had been postponed by the Covid crisis, outstanding work items carried over into the 2020/21 municipal year. At each meeting members had the opportunity to review the Terms of Reference and the work programme.

► **Covid-19 – Place – on Business Support grants** the Customer Services Director, R Pavey, reported at the 9 July meeting that the Government had been keen for the quick distribution of the small business support grant and retail, leisure and hospitality grant, subject to the mandatory requirements, which amounted to £29 million - £30 million for the Epping Forest District. The Council had distributed 90 per cent of the grant within two weeks to businesses in the Epping Forest District.

Safer spaces – the Interim Assistant Director (Planning Policy and Implementation), A Blom-Cooper, reported that safer spaces had been set up in response to Covid-19 to support the reopening of the high streets and to support active travel. Essex County Council (ECC) had been awarded up to £1.9 million to support this scheme. The Council had submitted bids to ECC for Epping and Waltham Abbey but only one bid was forwarded to Central Government. ECC had received less than half of the total value of the bids as many of the ECC schemes put forward had not met the criteria. The scheme supported social distancing restrictions by extending pavements etc. The Business and Planning Bill was going through Parliament, which would licence tables and chairs on pavements. Many meetings were being organised with business leaders in the District to identify where improvements could be made. Meetings had been held with the Federation of Small Businesses, Town Centre Partnerships and also with tourism attractions to ensure the Council was reaching out.

General economic measures and support, and local economic business recovery – J Houston, Partnerships and Economic Development Specialist, reported that the Council's economic strategy, agreed before Covid had showed the District was well placed to cope with an economic contraction, but the unprecedented impact of Covid-19 on every economic sector could not have been predicted.

Digital platform – the Council had managed to bring in some £20 million of investment on the digital infrastructure, which would enable 99 per cent connectivity across the District by the end of next year so that GP surgeries could benefit from ultrafast broadband.

Covid-19 recovery update in September 2020 highlighted to members that there were three phases to the Covid-19 pandemic – the Council’s initial response, restoration and the longer-term recovery. The continued national coronavirus resurgence that was also being seen in the Epping Forest District, might cause the Council to move back to a response phase if asked to by the County Public Health lead. The Strategic Director’s (A Small) report set out the Council’s response to the initial outbreak in March 2020 that was largely supportive of those shielding and its impact on business and relief. The Council was reorganised to focus on its Covid-19 response. As a consequence, a much better infrastructure was in place with better support lined up. Although the restoration was at the end of June / beginning of July, Council services, as well as the hospitality and high street business sectors, were moving to a more restricted phase to facilitate safe access for individuals in high streets. Community wellbeing was being monitored. The ongoing progress and longer-term outlook for local high streets of the schemes was regularly being monitored by Cabinet.

► **Economic Development: Growth/skills/employment programme** – was updated verbally on 29 September 2020 by the Chief Operating Officer, N Dawe, as officers were mostly focussing their time on providing detailed updates on project briefs for the Cabinet meeting in early October. Dynamic plans were being prepared for the high street areas including Loughton, and for other economic recovery issues, such as building on the Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ) initiative and having a better digital communications platform.

► **Planning Development and Improvement programme – North Weald Airfield masterplan** with new employment opportunities was a requirement in the emerging Local Plan. The Planning Services Director, N Richardson, reported in July 2020 that the appointed consultants, Turner and Townsend and RPS Group, had been instructed to undertake survey work, and a viability report was being prepared. The masterplan was for non-residential use. As a designated employment area, this would create new jobs as part of the Council’s Covid-19 recovery plan in the long term. At various stages as the masterplan progressed, the proposals would go through the Quality Review Panel. Therefore, the masterplan would be in place for the site before the submission of planning applications, and all the NWA development proposals must be in accordance with the masterplan.

Local Plan implementation progress updates were reported quarterly to the select committee by the Interim Assistant Director (Planning Policy & Implementation), A Blom-Cooper. In July 2020 updates were received on the strategic masterplans, concept frameworks, other sites within the emerging Local Plan and the schemes that would be going before the Quality Review Panels. Consultation on the draft Green Infrastructure Plan ended in mid-July 2020 and the final version was approved by Cabinet in October 2020.

Main Modifications (MMs) – work continued to be progressed by officers, as reported at the meeting on 29 September, and the third tranche had been submitted to the Inspector in early June 2020. As completion of the MMs was scheduled for the end of September, the consultation was expected in October. Further information submitted to the Inspector included the revised mapping in relation to changes of the Local Plan and the draft Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy. The Council had submitted further information and the sustainability appraisal was due to go to the Inspector.

An updated **Habitats Regulations Assessment** and **Air Pollution Mitigation Strategy** was being finalised to take account of initial comments received from Natural England and the Conservators of Epping Forest that would be part of the MM consultation later this year. The Council was expecting the Inspector’s timetable next week. However, the schedule for the main plan documentation was some 300 pages, and other documents were also over 300 pages.

White Paper ‘Planning for the Future’ was published by the Government on 6 August 2020. A report on the Council’s proposed response would be considered by Cabinet on 19 October 2020. It would significantly change the current planning system for both the nature and content of Local Plans, and the operation of the development management process. If implemented, the White Paper would introduce new planning legislation into the system to streamline the plan making process.

Interim Air Quality Mitigation Strategy (AQMS) – an update was provided by Councillor N Bedford, Planning and Sustainability Portfolio Holder (PFH) at the meeting on 12 January 2021. The PFH’s decision had been the subject of a call-in but the Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to confirm the PFH’s decision in December at an extra meeting on 7 January 2021. The PFH clarified that several mitigation measures including the potential for a Clean Air Zone (CAZ) from 2025 had been included as part of the AQMS. No charges or decisions on the form of CAZ had been agreed.

The adoption of the AQMS was a way to enable the Council to determine planning applications that had been held in abeyance since June 2018.

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government consultation on further permitted development rights – the Interim Assistant Director, Planning Policy and Implementation advised members the consultation was open until 28 January 2021. The proposals would give a new national permitted development right for a change of use from commercial, business and service use class to residential use. It would go significantly beyond existing rights, allowing for restaurants, indoor sports, and creches to benefit from the change use to residential under permitted development rights for the first time and would have implications for High Streets including those in conservation areas. Other proposals included a streamlined planning application process for public service infrastructure projects and simplification and consolidation of existing permitted development rights.

Green Infrastructure Strategy – the Council's emerging Local Plan set out policies in relation to the provision and enhancement of Green and Blue Infrastructure, the protection of the District's ecological assets and achieving high quality design. To support these policies and address the requirement to provide suitable avoidance or mitigation measures to manage any potential impacts of growth on protected sites, including the Epping Forest SAC, the Council had developed a Green Infrastructure Strategy ('the Strategy'), which was detailed by the Interim Assistant Director on 31 March 2021. The Strategy would ensure that high quality Green and Blue Infrastructure, including the provision of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANG) and Infrastructure Enhancement Projects, would be delivered alongside the growth proposed in the District as part of the emerging Local Plan. The principle purpose of the Strategy was to act as a practical guide in the design, development management and implementation processes to ensure the creation of a sustainable network of high quality, multifunctional spaces that provided greater connections between existing and new communities, other amenity spaces and the local countryside. There had been over 900 responses to the consultation on the draft Strategy carried out in June and July 2020. Details of the comments and how they had been dealt with formed an appendix to the report. In response to the consultation and the quality review panel, the structure of the document had changed and new information for site specific enhancements was detailed in part 4 of the Strategy. The Strategy proposed for adoption had the following five parts:

- Primer: Introducing Green and Blue Infrastructure
- Part 1: Implementation – Enhancing Our Existing Network (focus for community, Town and Parish Councils, authority officers)
- Part 2: Implementation – Landscape Led Design (focus for planning applicants, designers and authority officers)
- Part 3: Implementation – Strategic Allocations and Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) (focus for strategic site developers, designers, authority officers and policy makers)
- Part 4: Implementation – Infrastructure Enhancement Projects (focus on projects in Debden, Loughton, Theydon Bois and Buckhurst Hill to mitigate the effects of development on the Epping Forest SAC).

The strategy would provide the Council's response to the Local Plan Inspector's Advice in relation to mitigating the effects of recreational pressure upon the Epping Forest SAC.

► **District Sustainability programme – Travel and Climate Change officers** were appointed respectively in June and September 2020. There was a lot of work to be undertaken around the Epping Forest SAC, air quality issues including the draft Mitigation Strategy, as well as building on the post-Covid-19 recovery and safer spaces project.

Sustainability guidance was supported by several policies of the emerging Local Plan. It followed EFDC's climate emergency declaration in September 2019 to become carbon zero by 2030, as data from 2017 showed that on road vehicles and residential housing contributed to some 80 per cent of all carbon emissions across the District. At the September 2020 meeting, the Planning Policy Implementation Team Projects Officer, M Anil, recounted that the draft guidance also expanded on the work done for the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT) and aligned with other key documents, such as the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Green Infrastructure Strategy. The select committee pre-scrutinised this document that was split into two sections environmental sustainability and socioeconomic sustainability. Its purpose was to support planning proposal considerations and

provide practical and technical guidance on how relevant sustainability indicators and policies in the Local Plan would be applied to new residential and non-residential developments across the District. A suite of three sustainability documents covered Major Developments (10+ units), Minor Developments (1-9 units) and Extensions and Refurbishments. The Major Developments document was similar to HGGT, but there were changes to case studies, reference to specific policies and documents, air quality and its impact on the Epping Forest special area of conservation (SAC) as well as socio-economic sustainability, which was key for EFDC. Whilst the HGGT document focused on integration of new development with existing communities, key goals for EFDC were community resilience and social equity, especially in terms of access to facilities, health and wellbeing, public health etc. A Members Workshop was held in August, and the draft sustainability guidance would be submitted to Cabinet in October 2020 for approval for more formal public consultation. The six-week public consultation should be completed in November 2020. The final guidance draft for endorsement for material planning consideration (1) and the sustainability guidance for Extensions and Refurbishments (3) would be submitted to Cabinet by early 2021.

Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) – a three-month trial had been approved by Cabinet with funding in December 2020. The Contracts and Technical Services Director advised the select committee that the DRT scheme was launched on 2 January 2021 in partnership with Epping Forest Community Transport and ran along the old bus route 87. This service had passengers primarily from the NHS on every journey. People were able to register an expression of interest in the service through an on-line form and there had been interest from residents in the rural areas along the route. Covid restrictions had limited the number of passengers on the vehicle and this could present a viability challenge for the service. Usage data would be collected and a report on the outcome of the trial would be reported to Cabinet.

► **Town Centre Development** – the Interim Qualis Board and the group of companies had been established. Select Committee member, Councillor H Kauffman was also a non-executive director, as were Councillors N Avey and J Philip. The transfer to the permanent Board was scheduled to take place between September and October 2020. Qualis Commercial was involved with the development of Council owned land. In April 2020, Cabinet approved the transfer of the land ownership into Qualis Commercial for the five **Epping Town sites** and the Roundhills site. Qualis Management expected the delivery of the Council's repairs service, and work on the Epping Town Council sites to go live in September 2020. Qualis Commercial and the Design Team were working to develop the strategic options for the five Epping Town sites, which included St John's Road, Bakers Lane and Cottis Lane car parks, land by the Civic Offices and Epping Sports Centre. The Planning performance agreement that set out the approach through the pre-planning stages up to the submission of a full planning application had been agreed. To ensure stakeholder engagement throughout the planning process, a detailed communications plan would be established, to include consultation through the Commonplace online community platform. A detailed appraisal process would be followed to assess the suitability of each site to achieve a policy compliant scheme.

► **Community Health and Wellbeing Programme** – the **Sheltered Housing Review** was presented by the Service Manager, J Gould, on 9 July 2020 and provided progress on the Council's sheltered housing. Ark had been commissioned to review the Council's 12 sheltered housing schemes. As life expectancy increased, the demographic of an ageing population changed in relation to the needs for health, social care and housing. By building a comprehensive picture of performance and sustainability and taking into consideration the likely future demand for accommodation, it achieved a clear direction for accommodation to make best use of the stock to meet residents' needs.

Review of service charges – an update on the was presented to the select committee on 29 September 2020. The HRA Service Director explained that these charges were for additional tenant services, such as maintenance of lifts and cleaning etc, which were charged separately to the rent, and were taking place across the District. However, this had become challenging as some costs had risen above the rate of CPI. A recent cost analysis had revealed that the Council was in deficit to around £600,000 for 2019/20 through the under recovery of service charges. A report to Cabinet in July 2020 had recommended a review of these service charges. Housing now had a comprehensive list of these additional services and the service charges. Also, the regulations clearly stated that social housing providers needed to charge for services in a fair and consistent way that could be

accounted for. This equated to charging the actual cost for the services broken down to each individual property. A final report on the options available would go to Cabinet in December 2020.

Furniture Leasing Scheme – for Older Persons Sheltered Housing Schemes was reported to the Committee by the Service Director HRA Functions, D Fenton, at the meeting on 29 March 2021. The furniture would be leased for 5 years from Buckingham Interiors, a specialist provider and part of the social enterprise FRC Group, when ownership of the furniture could be taken, or further refurbishment agreed. There would be no capital outlay and the scheme would be financed through a new component of the service charge, there would be no financial detriment to current residents. This leasing scheme had been effective with other local councils and social housing providers. The effectiveness of the pilot would be assessed and if successful the scheme could be rolled out across the remaining sheltered housing schemes.

Action plan related to the review of the Council's sheltered housing team – the Director of HRA Functions detailed the key elements at the 29 March meeting. The warden call system needed to be upgraded from analogue to digital by 2025, the tender process would begin in due course and would be reported to Cabinet. The impact of reducing the minimum age to the schemes would be considered after the schemes had been upgraded and a scope of works had been produced for the redevelopment of smaller second lounges into accessible accommodation. However, a review of the accessibility of entry doors was required. Although, Wi-Fi was not currently viable in the schemes, it remained on the plan for the potential inclusion of Wi-Fi as part of the digital warden call system.

► **Council Housebuilding programme quarterly progress reports** were made by the HRA Service Director, D Fenton. Phases 1 to 4 had largely been located on garage sites where there had been anti-social behaviour and they were not economically viable to continue with. At the 9 July meeting on phase 2 of the housebuilding programme for 51 properties, six units been delayed due to a gas supply problem but were completed and handed over on 19 March 2020. On phase 3, the original start had been delayed with the discovery of asbestos, there was a service utility delay by the contractor of some four weeks behind schedule, and there was the potential for further delays caused by Covid-19 restrictions. Handover of 14 properties in phase 4.1 was forecast for June 2021. Phase 4.2 for 22 properties and phase 4.3 for 21 properties had gone out to tender. Properties in phase 4.4 had undergone a detailed design review to potentially increase affordable units by 12 to a total of 27. A detailed review to identify future development sites for phase 5 had almost finished and engagement by officers with members to address local issues at these sites would be organised including a Members Briefing.

The select committee was informed at the meeting on 29 September 2020 that phases 3 and 4 of the Housebuilding programmes had either been completed, were on-site and were currently being procured, as well as its approach to phase 5. Future housing delivery within phase 4 stood at 84 units up to 2021/22, subject to the necessary planning consents. The Council's retained consultant (Metaplan) was reviewing two additional sites. One was a partnership arrangement with St John the Baptist Church, Epping, that comprised 9-10 residential units for key workers and a community building, subject to planning consent. The other was an opportunity to purchase some land at below market value in Waltham Abbey to provide up to 10 affordable units, subject to planning consent.

'More than bricks and mortar' the Council's proposed scheme had moved by September to the development stage following Cabinet approval in July 2020. In phase 5, a different approach was being taken in terms of what local members and local residents wanted. This would include additional environmental options and how the area could be improved for the community. The scheme proposed that additional income raised in the first four years was ringfenced to pay for estate improvements, which would help achieve its mission to 'create great places where people wanted to live'.

1st virtual meeting – 9 July 2020

► **Environmental enhancements and tree planting initiatives** update was given by the Contracts and Technical Services Director, Q Durrani. The report listed the types of work that the Council's Countrycare Team was involved with. This covered over 3,600 Veteran Trees (trees over 300 years

old), plus over 1,200 'notable' trees that weren't old enough to be classed as veteran yet. The Council also managed around 15,000 public realm trees on open spaces and the public highway, but this did not include woodland. A further 119 semimature trees had been planted in safe locations in Chigwell Row and Epping. Tree planting was being organised for the Loughton Recreation area and the Thornwood Nature Reserve this financial year. The Green Infrastructure Strategy would help to plan and facilitate the integration and expansion of tree planting in the District. Volunteers did a lot of work as did Tree Wardens, who monitored the health of trees. The Essex Forest Project to plant 375,000 trees by 2025 including flood alleviation tree planting schemes was likely to form part of this strategy, as well as the 'Green Arc'. This was an initiative where London met the countryside (from Thames Chase through to the Lee Valley area) with the aim to plant a million trees. There would also be more tree planting opportunities in the Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANG) being delivered alongside the proposed growth in the District.

2nd virtual meeting – 29 September 2020

► **Corporate programme governance** was reported to members by the Strategy, Delivery and Performance Service Director, L Wade. This enabled the select committees to undertake and deliver their programmes to be scrutinised, and better aligned the Stronger ambition objectives to the relevant select committee. There would be additional projects coming along and those aligned to the Covid-19 recovery. Thus, Stronger Place had a clear project brief which would be used for the performance management accounting that went to Stronger Council. This internal governance would allow management to focus the work alignment of the individual employee, which was on the road map of the people programme. The opportunity to add additional areas of scrutiny within the work programme delivery was also an option open to members. There were six corporate programmes for Stronger Place – economic development, District sustainability, community health and wellbeing, town centre development, planning development and improvement and council housebuilding.

3rd virtual meeting – 12 January 2021

► **Leisure Management Contract** – an update by the Contract and Technical Services Director apprised the select committee on the challenges associated with the Leisure Contract through the Covid restrictions and leisure centre closures. He advised on the revenue pressure associated with the loss of income and payments to the contractor to ensure the viability of the leisure centres and support the Council's commitment to health and well-being.

► **Waste Management Contract** – an update by the Contract and Technical Services Director informed members that Biffa, the waste contractor, had managed the operations effectively through the Covid pandemic and had addressed operational issues, maintained safe working practices for its staff and used its commercial wing to support the waste collection service. Waste and recycling had increased, and the larger volumes of cardboard had increased the number of trips. The Service Director advised that additional costs linked to the pandemic had been claimed. He also reminded the select committee that the contract was a 10-year contract with the potential to extend for a further 10 years and there would be changes to the contract in due course. The Committee congratulated Biffa on delivering an effective waste and recycling collection service through the pandemic and acknowledged the issues relating to increased cardboard and packaging.

4th virtual meeting – 29 March 2021

► **Local Enforcement Plan** – the Development Manager Service Manager, A Marx, advised on the changes to the Local Enforcement Plan (LEP) which had been adopted by Council in 2013 and reviewed in 2018. The enforcement categories had changed to:

- Category 1 - an allegation of a case that requires immediate attention, site inspection within 7 working hours.
- Category 1A - an allegation of ongoing works, site inspection within 3 working days.
- Category 2 - an allegation of ongoing significant works to buildings that are not yet complete, site inspection within 10 working days.

- Category 3 - an allegation covering all other cases that do not cause significant harm to amenity, site visit within 15 working days.

A performance monitoring process had been introduced for the management of enforcement cases. The LEP provided a single reference point for all interested parties involved in enforcement and a service charter had been published on the website.

Full details of the agendas and minutes of Stronger Place Select Committee can be accessed on the Council website at:

<https://rds.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=811&Year=0>

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Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2021/22

Chairman: Councillor M Sartin

#	ITEM	REPORT DEADLINE	PROGRESS/COMMENTS
1.	Cabinet Business	Ongoing	To review the Executive's programme of Key Decisions at each meeting, to identify appropriate matters for the work programme and provide an opportunity for the overview of specific decisions. To consider any call-ins, as and when they arise.
2.	Group Company Structure	Ongoing ♦ Added to work programme by Agenda Planning Group (29-Oct-20)	To review progress regarding the establishment and operation of the Council's Group Company Structure at each meeting of the Committee. ♦ <i>NB: At O&S Agenda Planning Group 21.01.21, it was queried if Qualis needed to be a standing item but as all the scrutiny committees would have the opportunity to review their work programmes, this could be revisited in the new municipal year.</i>
3.	Covid-19 Response and Recovery	Ongoing Added to Work Programme by OSC (22-Jun-20)	To review progress of the Covid-19 Response and Recovery Plan.
4.	Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2021/22	3 June 2021	To agree the work programmes for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and each of the select committees for 2021/22. (First meeting of each municipal year)

5.	Select Committee Memberships	3 June 2021	To consider nominations for membership of and appoint the Chairman & Vice-Chairman for each Select Committee. (First meeting of each municipal year)
6.	Corporate Priorities 2021/22	3 June 2021	Leader of Council to present the Council's corporate priorities for 2021/22 to the Committee. (First meeting of each municipal year)
7.	New Policy (Trees)	3 June 2021	To pre-scrutinise the new Policy on the Council's approach to trees which are impacting on the safety of its assets. (Cabinet decision due on 21.06.21).
8.	Town Centre Regeneration	8 June 2021 (extra)	To pre-scrutinise town centre regeneration for Loughton, Epping and Buckhurst Hill. (Cabinet decision due on 21.06.21).
9.	Pyrles Lane (Loughton) site	8 June 2021 (extra)	To pre-scrutinise Qualis' acquisition and development of the Pyrles Lane site. (Cabinet decision due on 21.06.21).
21	Qualis Monitoring Report	8 June 2021 (extra)	To pre-scrutinise the Qualis 2020/21 Q2 monitoring report (due to timing issues, as progress reports go to Stronger Council Select Committee).
10.	Qualis Four-Year Business Plan	1 July 2021 Agreed at Agenda Planning Group (08-June-21)	To pre-scrutinise the Qualis four-year business plan for 2021-2025. (Cabinet decision due on 12.07.21). <i>(NB: Incorporated into Four-Year Business Plan = work programme item (11) Business case for the transfer of Corporate Asset management service).</i>
12.	Overview and Scrutiny 2020/21 Annual Report	1 July 2021	To approve the final draft of the Annual Report.

13.	Local High Streets – Viability and Regeneration	30 September (TBC) (Carried forward from 2020/21 work programme)	To consider resuming the Local High Streets Task and Finish Panel which was postponed during 2020/21 until after the Covid crisis.
14.	Corporate Plan Year 4 2021/22: Q1 Performance	30 September 2021	To review Q1 performance by exception in relation to the Key Performance Indicators & Work Programmes within the Corporate Plan.
15.	Transfer of Services to Qualis	(TBC)	To pre-scrutinise the business case for the transfer of MOT, Fleet and Grounds maintenance. (Cabinet decision 13.09.21).
16.	Corporate Plan Year 4 2021/22: Q2 Performance	18 November 2021	To review Q2 performance by exception in relation to the Key Performance Indicators & Work Programmes within the Corporate Plan.
17.	Corporate Plan Year 4 2021/22: Q3 Performance	27 January 2022	To review Q3 performance by exception in relation to the Key Performance Indicators & Work Programmes within the Corporate Plan.
18.	Epping Forest Youth Council	31 March 2022	Annual Report from the Epping Forest Youth Council on completed and proposed activities.
19.	Elections Planning Progress Report	31 March 2022	To provide update on planning for the Elections scheduled to be held in May 2022.
20.	Environmental Information Requests	TBC	To pre-scrutinise charging for EIRs. (Cabinet decision TBC)

RESERVE PROGRAMME ITEMS

ITEM	REPORT DEADLINE/PRIORITY	PROGRESS/COMMENTS
Essex County Council (Children's Services) (Scrutiny of External Organisation)	Carried forward from reserve work programme for 2017/18 and 2018/19. Re: Agenda Planning Group (12-Jan-21)	Recommendation arising from Children's Services Task and Finish Panel requires the Committee to meet with Essex County Council in respect of children's services on an annual basis. The Director of Children's Commissioning attended the meeting in April 2016. To be considered further at a later date. Scope/focus of scrutiny activity and appropriate lines of questioning to be agreed if/when added to ongoing work programme; <i>Members to consider moving this item up a level in relation to children and Covid in the municipal year 2021/22.</i>

Stronger Communities Select Committee

Work Programme 2021/22

Chairman: Cllr J Lea

Stronger Communities Corporate Programme Alignment focuses on People living longer, healthier and independent lives; Adult and Children were supported in times of need; and People and Communities achieve their potential.

No.	Item	Deadline	Progress and Comments	Owner (Officer)	Programme of Meetings
1.	The Social Housing White Paper	15 June 2021	COMPLETED	D Fenton	15 June 21 21 Sept 21 11 Jan 22 1 Mar 22* (meeting solely for Ch/Inp Annual reports) 22 Mar 22
2.	Our new approach to resident's involvement	15 June 2021	COMPLETED	D. Fenton	
3.	Waltham Abbey Community & Cultural Hub (Feasibility on Epping Forest culture and community hub)	15 June 2021	COMPLETED Detailed proposal to be considered	J. Gould	
4.	"What are our customers telling us?"	15 June 2021	Quarter 1 Report – Committee was updated. The figures for Q1 would not be available until 30 June.	S. Lewis/ R. Pavey	
			Quarter 2 Report		
			Quarter 3 Report		
			Quarter 4 Report		
5.	Six-month report on the work of the Council-funded Police Officers	21 Sept 2021		C. Wiggins	

6.	Presentation from the District Police Commander	March 2022	Annual Report	C. Wiggins
7.	Community Safety Partnership annual report and review of the district Strategic Intelligence Assessment	March 2022	Annual Report	C. Wiggins
8.	Customer Service Strategy	TBC	Key Objectives	R. Pavey
		TBC	6 Monthly Report	
9.	Digital Inclusion	TBC		S Lewis
10.	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy	TBC	EFDC's current Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy reaches end of life in March 2022. A revised strategy will need to be taken through governance structure ahead of formal adoption in March 2022.	J Gould
11.	Data insight led review of customer service outlets	TBC	Options and recommendations for short, medium and long-term options	
12.	EFDC Museum Collections	TBC	To consider the high-level action Plan for the programme of work over 3 years, sent out in the Corporate performance Reporting Q3 and requested at O&S on 19.11.20.	J. Gould
13.	Allocation Policy	TBC	Current allocations policy due to expire March 2022. A revised Policy will need to be drafted, consulted on and be taken through governance structure ahead of agreement by Cabinet ready for implementation of new policy in April 2022.	J Gould
14.	Tenancy Policy	TBC	Current tenancy policy due to expire March 2022. A revised Policy will need to be drafted, consulted on and be taken through governance structure ahead of agreement by Cabinet ready for implementation of new policy in April 2022.	J. Gould
15.	Housing Strategy	TBC	EFDC's current Housing Strategy reaches end of life in March 2022. A revised strategy will need to be taken	J. Gould/ D. Fenton

			through governance structure ahead of formal adoption in March 2022.		
16.	Housing Associations	TBC	To consider how the Council could scrutinise housing associations. Requested O&S 3.06.21		

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**Stronger Council Select Committee
Work Programme 2021/22
Chairman: Councillor P Bolton**

No.	Item	Deadline	Progress and Comments	Programme of Meetings	Lead Officers
1.	Corporate Plan Action Plan (KPI's by exception) – performance scrutiny	Corporate Action Plan KPI's, Q1 Apr, May, Jun – 20 July 2021 meeting Q2 Jul, Aug, Sept - 16 Nov 2021 meeting Q3 Oct, Nov, Dec - 18 Jan 2022 meeting Q4 Jan, Feb, Mar – 14 Apr 2022 meeting Live system reporting – by exception. No pre- distributed reports, projection of live data on the night.		20 July 2021 14 Sept. 2021 16 Nov. 2021 18 January 2022 03 March 2022 14 April 2022	?James West?
2.	People Strategy	20 July and 14 Sept. 2021 – 18 January 2022 & 14 April 2022 Project reporting, issues focussed.			Paula Maginnis Jo Budden
3.	Digital Enablement	Prioritisation of Council Technology strategy.			Paula Maginnis Maryvonne Hassall
4.	Accommodation	20 July and 14 Sept. 2021 - & 18 January 2022 Project reporting, issues focussed			Maryvonne Hassall

5.	Financial Plan	20 July 2021 Scrutiny of MTFS 21/22 onwards	Revenue and Capital Outturn report		Andrew Small Christopher Hartgrove
6.	Draft budget scrutiny	Qtr. 1 Budget Monitoring Rtp. 2021/22 – 14 September 2021; Qtr. 2 Budget Monitoring Rtp. 2021/22 – 16 November 2021; Qtr. 3 Budget Monitoring Rtp. 2021/22 – 3 March 2022 2022/23 budget setting 18 January 2022	Budget Monitoring Reports		Andrew Small
7.	Asset Management Strategy	Council asset strategy (new)	Approved by the Cabinet 13/06/19 and referred to Council 30/07/19 for adoption.		Andrew Small
8.	Review of Local Elections 2019	September 2021			Gary Woodhall

**Stronger Place Select Committee
Work Programme 2020/21
Chairman: Cllr S Heather**

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

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

4.	Climate Change (previously)	July 2020	COMPLETED (a) Climate Change and Sustainable Travel update including recruitment (b) Update on tree planting initiatives
	District Sustainability programme	September 2020	COMPLETED (a) Draft Sustainability Guidance for the District and Harlow Garden Gilston Town
5.	Epping Town sites (previously)	July 2020	COMPLETED - Progress / update
	Town Centre Development	September 2020	(a) Progress Report (re. Council as the landowner)
		January 2021	COMPLETED (a) Leisure Management Contract - performance and progress update (b) Waste Management Contract - performance and progress update
6.	Sheltered Housing Review (previously)	July 2020	COMPLETED - Report and update
	Community Health and Wellbeing Programme	September 2020	COMPLETED - (a) Service charges review
		March 2021	COMPLETED (b) Sheltered Housing
7.	Council Housebuilding programme	July 2020	COMPLETED - Provide plan for 2020/21
		September 2020	COMPLETED - (a) Council housebuilding progress report (and link to creating Great Places programme)
		January 2021	Draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme 2021/22 to 2025/26