



NOTICE OF COUNCIL MEETING

You are hereby summoned to a meeting of the EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL to be held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER - CIVIC OFFICES at 7.00 pm on Tuesday, 4 April 2023 for the purpose of transacting the business set out in the agenda.

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

Georgina Blakemore
Chief Executive

**Democratic Services
Officer:**

Gary Woodhall Tel: (01992) 564470
Email: democraticservices@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

WEBCASTING/FILMING NOTICE

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

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

Therefore by entering the Chamber and using the lower public seating area, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for web casting and/or training purposes. If members of the public do not wish to have their image captured they should sit in the upper council chamber public gallery area or otherwise indicate to the Chairman before the start of the meeting.

If you have any queries regarding this, please contact the Public Relations Manager on 01992 564542.

BUSINESS

1. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

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

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

If you are seated in the lower public seating area it is likely that the recording cameras will capture your image and this will result in the possibility that your image will become part of the broadcast.

This may infringe your human and data protection rights and if you wish to avoid this you should move to the upper public gallery.”

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To be announced at the meeting.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To declare interests in any item on the agenda.

4. MINUTES (Pages 7 - 20)

To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2023 and the Extraordinary Council meeting held on the 6 March 2023, as attached.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Chairman's Announcements

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY) (Pages 21 - 24)

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

(a) to the Leader of the Council;

(b) to any Portfolio Holder; or

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

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

(1) Question from Mr Jon Nutton, of Brook Road, Epping to Councillor N Avey, Contracts and Commissioning Portfolio Holder and wider Council Members.

'Despite having first brought this to the Council's attention prior to Covid Lockdowns - the state of the pathway between Centre Drive and Epping Tube Station is worsening and little, if anything, was being done to clear the litter or remove the graffiti (see attached pictures).

I would appreciate your views on this matter and some help in getting the problem resolved asap.

I would also like to ask the Council for an update on their 'Litter Strategy' that was passed last year, as there doesn't seem to have been any movement on this since. In the meantime, Epping and the surrounding streets are becoming a dumping ground.'

7. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS UNDER NOTICE

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

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

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

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

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

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

8. REPORTS FROM THE LEADER & MEMBERS OF THE CABINET (Pages 25 - 58)

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

- (a) Report of the Leader of Council (verbal);
- (b) Report of the Place Portfolio Holder (attached);
- (c) Report of the Finance Portfolio Holder (attached);
- (d) Report of the Housing & Community Portfolio Holder (attached);

- (e) Report of the Wellbeing & Community Partnerships Portfolio Holder (attached);
- (f) Report of the Customer Portfolio Holder (attached);
- (g) Report of the Contracts & Commissioning Portfolio Holder (attached);
- (h) Report of the Technical Services Portfolio Holder (attached); and
- (i) Report of the Internal Resources Portfolio Holder (attached).

9. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS WITHOUT NOTICE

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

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

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

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

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

10. MOTIONS

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

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

11. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2023/24 AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE RESTRUCTURE (Pages 59 - 66)

(Internal Resources Portfolio Holder) The Cabinet recommends to the Council:

- (1) To approve the proposed changes from the Constitution Working Group to the Council's Scrutiny Committee structure; and

(2) To adopt the Calendar of Meetings for 2023/24.

12. GAMBLING ACT 2005 - STATEMENT OF LICENSING PRINCIPLES (Pages 67 - 94)

(Chairman of the Licensing Committee) Presents a report to recommend to Council that they adopt the revised statement of licensing principals.

13. AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22 (Pages 95 - 102)

(Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee) That the annual report of the Audit & Governance Committee 2021/22 be noted.

14. ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION STRATEGY (Pages 103 - 132)

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

15. JOINT ARRANGEMENTS & EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

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

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

16. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

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

Agenda Item No	Subject	Exempt Information Paragraph Number
Nil	Nil	Nil

The Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, which came into effect on 1 March 2006, requires the Council to consider whether maintaining the exemption listed above outweighs the potential public interest in disclosing the information. Any member who considers that this test should be applied to any currently exempted matter on this agenda should contact the proper officer at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.

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

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

(b) have been relied on to a material extent in preparing the report and does not

include published works or those which disclose exempt or confidential information and in respect of executive reports, the advice of any political advisor.

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

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Council **Date:** Tuesday, 28 February 2023

Place: Council Chamber - Civic Offices **Time:** 7.00 - 9.00 pm

Members Present: Councillors M Sartin (Chairman), D Sunger (Vice-Chairman), I Allgood, C Amos, N Avey, R Balcombe, D Barlow, R Baldwin, N Bedford, P Bolton, H Brady, R Brookes, L Burrows, E Gabbett, S Heap, S Heather, J Jogia, H Kane, S Kane, H Kauffman, P Keska, J Lea, J Leppert, J Lucas, T Matthews, C McCredie, J McIvor, L Mead, R Morgan, S Murray, C Nweke, J Parsons, A Patel, J Philip, Caroline Pond, C C Pond, R Pugsley, S Rackham, K Rizvi, P Stalker, D Stocker, B Vaz, C Whitbread, H Whitbread, J H Whitehouse, J M Whitehouse, K Williamson, D Wixley and S Yerrell

Apologies: R Bassett, P Bhanot, I Hadley, R Jennings, J Jennings, A Lion and M Owen

Officers Present: G Blakemore (Chief Executive), A Small (Section 151 Officer), J Gould (Interim Strategic Director), G Woodhall (Team Manager - Democratic & Electoral Services), J Leither (Democratic Services Officer), C Hartgrove (Interim Chief Financial Officer), T Carne (Corporate Communications Team Manager) and P Seager (Chairman's Officer)

Officers Present (Virtually): L Kirman (Democratic Services Officer)

60. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

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

61. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct.

62. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 20 December 2022 and 17 January 2023 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

63. ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Announcements by the Chairman of the Council

Councillor Brian Rolfe

It was with much sadness that the Chairman informed the Council of the death of Councillor Brian Rolfe.

Councillor Brian Rolfe had been a District Councillor since 2007, representing the Lambourne Ward of the District as a Conservative Councillor. He had served on the Cabinet as the Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder for the 2010/11 municipal year and had been Chairman of Council for the 2012/13 municipal year. During his time on the Council, he had served on many of the Council's member bodies.

Members stood for a minute's silence then paid tribute to the memory of Councillor Brian Rolfe.

64. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY)

The Council noted that no public questions had been received for consideration at the meeting.

65. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS UNDER NOTICE

The Council noted that there were no questions by members under notice that had been submitted for consideration at this meeting.

66. REPORTS FROM THE LEADER & MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

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

(a) Leader of Council

Councillor C Whitbread advised that he had been busy attending meetings covering a range of issues. He advised he had attended a meeting in Westminster regarding East of England Leaders followed by an all-party group meeting looking at levelling up and thereby making sure that the Epping Forest District was being heard in all the right places.

He stated that he had also been actively engaged in discussions around devolution. This decision was mainly for the upper tier authorities who had to agree any devolution ask of government, he believed it was a way of getting more for the County and the Districts and was keeping Epping Forest actively engaged in the discussions.

It was now known that the Inspector had found the Epping Forest District Local Plan to be sound and an important part of the Local Plan was the Harlow and Gilston Garden town communities, to which he advised that he had also been attending regular meetings on behalf of the Council, making sure that he was looking after the interests of Epping Forest first and foremost.

He stated that there were a lot of meetings going on at this time which would shape the future and it was important that Epping Forest District Council was heard at every level.

67. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS WITHOUT NOTICE

The Chairman informed members that as this was the budget meeting and would like to give emphasis to the budget she would therefore allow only 30 minutes for questions.

(a) Dangerous Structures

Councillor R Brookes referred to the Technical Services Portfolio Holders report and asked under the heading 'Dangerous Structures' why the Chigwell Lane to Torrington Drive path had been closed for over a year and could he give an update as to the way forward and when this path might be opened again.

Action: Councillor K Williamson advised that he could not give any further updates this evening and that he would speak to officers and report back to Councillor Brookes.

(b) Council Housebuilding and Regeneration Programme

Councillor J Parsons asked if there were any updates to the Council Housebuilding and regeneration programme around the district.

Councillor H Whitbread stated that members would be aware from previous Cabinet meetings that they were reviewing the Councils Housing Revenue Account (HRA) business plan to meet the present climate. We were facing new challenges in terms of the cost of living crisis and the cost of building, as a result of inflation, due to the war in the Ukraine.

She went on to assure members that the Council was committed to both Council house building and regeneration in the district. Recently, Harveyfields in Waltham Abbey, had £114,000 investment into regenerating that estate which included, also work was being undertaken in Limes Farm, Chigwell and Shelley in Ongar.

(c) Progress update on the waste management collections

Councillor J McIvor asked if the Leader of Council could give an update on the disruption to the waste management collections and to thank the residents of the district for their patience.

Councillor C Whitbread apologised to the residents of the district for the disruption that had been experienced over the winter months. Council officers and members have had constructive discussions with Biffa, and improvements were being introduced. He took this opportunity to pay tribute to the Council officers who had been instrumental in the discussions and had put in a lot of hard work into getting these issues addressed as quickly as possible. He also thanked the call centre staff have been inundated with complaints during this time and had put so much effort into trying to resolve issues for residents.

He advised, going forward, the Council were looking at finding a place to park the waste lorries with a view to making plans for the future.

(d) New Chairman of Qualis

Councillor S Heap stated that at a recent meeting of Overview and Scrutiny he requested that the new chairman of Qualis be invited to the next Full Council meeting and asked when this would happen.

Councillor J Philip advised that he was not in charge of Overview and Scrutiny and therefore not the correct person to ask. There was a procedure to get things onto the Overview and Scrutiny agenda, by filling in a pick form and Councillor Heap should follow that process.

(e) Ulez Charge

Councillor K Rizvi asked in the Leader of Council agree with him that the London Mayor, Sadiq Khan's Ulez charge was a tax without accountability on the residents of Epping Forest.

Councillor C Whitbread stated that he was opposed to the Ulez charges that were being proposed and wanted it noted that Essex will have no Ulez signage on any Essex owned highway land. It was a positive stand to take and he would also take that stand in Epping Forest.

(f) Structural refurbishment of the shops and flats in Loughton Broadway

Councillor Chris Pond asked for an update regarding the structural refurbishment of the shops and flats in Loughton Broadway, how was it going and what was the likely timescale. He also asked for an update on the state of the commercial lettings both in Loughton Broadway and the western side of Loughton High Road.

Action: Councillor H Whitbread advised that Loughton Broadway and Limes Farm were two key projects being looked at and that she would put an update in the Members Bulletin.

Action: Councillor J Philip advised that he did not have those details to hand and this question could of have had some prior notice. He would put an update in the Members Bulletin.

(g) Reviews and Efficiency Portfolio

Councillor J Whitehouse asked Councillor L Burrows to update her on the projects that he was involved in and could he advise why he did not provide a report to Council, like the other portfolio holders did.

Councillor L Burrows advised that he was involved with various projects, the museum and grants therefore there wasn't much to report back to Council because it was ongoing.

Councillor C Whitbread added that much of what Councillor Burrows did was across all of the other Portfolio Holders reports and that information was therefore integrated into their reports.

(h) DaRT 87 Demand Responsive Transport Bus Service

Councillor C Amos asked in the DaRT 87 bus service could be more widely publicised as he hadn't seen much advertisement of this service. There were a number of community groups in Theydon Bois and this bus service should be brought to their attention.

Councillor N Bedford advised that in his report on page 39 of the agenda there was an update. This service was widely used during the pandemic when people had to go to the hospital but only six people at a time were allowed on. A new £2 flat fare was recently introduced for a limited time and he was happy to announce some improvements in the service. There had been 400 extra passenger trips between April and December 2022 which had been detailed in his report.

(i) Refuse lorries parking at North Weald

Councillor H Brady asked if the proposed depot for the refuse trucks in North Weald was only for parking of the refuse trucks or would there be any rubbish sorting on site.

Councillor N Avey stated that he had recently had a meeting with North Weald Parish Council to discuss the same issue. The official title of the site was a 'Waste Depot' but in reality, it was going to be used only as a vehicle park and there would be no waste stored at that site, it was purely for the parking of waste vehicles and an administration function that went with it.

The depot would be important for our procurement process in attracting a new waste contractor as we have been advised that otherwise the Council would be at a disadvantage and would unlikely to get any bidders in the procurement exercise.

(j) Ownership of the Refuse Vehicles

Councillor D Wixley thought the refuse lorries used by Biffa were owned by the Council but in the Portfolio Holders report on page 55 of the agenda it stated that Biffa were continuing to make progress on replacing and repairing their waste vehicles'. Could the Portfolio Holder advise on who owned the vehicles.

Councillor N Avey advised that all of the refuse lorries were owned by Biffa and they were responsible for replacing and repairing them. The problems which have occurred are finding people to repair the vehicles and obtaining the spare parts.

68. MOTIONS

The Chairman reported that there were no motions to be considered at the meeting.

69. REPORT OF THE CABINET - COUNCIL BUDGET 2023/24

Mover: Councillor J Philip, Finance Portfolio Holder

Councillor J Philip presented a report of the Budget for 2023/24 (including Medium-Term Financial Plan, Capital Programme and Fees and Charges). He thanked Mr A Small, Strategic Director and S151 Officer and Mr C Hartgrove, Interim Chief Financial Officer for an excellent budget and for their sound financial advice. He also thanked members of the Audit and Governance Committee.

There voted for the recommendations (42) namely: Councillors I Allgood, N Avey, R Balcombe, R Baldwin, N Bedford, P Bolton, H Brady, L Burrows, E Gabbett, S Heap, S Heather, J Jogia, H Kane, S Kane, H Kauffman, P Keska, J Lea, J Leppert, J Lucas, T Matthews, J McIvor, L Mead, R Morgan, C Nweke, J Parsons, A Patel, J Philip, C C Pond, C P Pond, R Pugsley, S Rackham, K Rizvi, M Sartin, P Stalker, D Stocker, D Sunger, B Vaz, C Whitbread, H Whitbread, K Williamson, D Wixley and S Yerrell.

There voted against the recommendations (5) namely: Councillors C Amos, C McCredie, S Murray, J H Whitehouse and J M Whitehouse.

Abstentions (1) namely: Councillor R Brooks.

Report as first moved **ADOPTED**.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the draft General Fund Revenue and Housing Revenue Account budgets for 2023/24 as presented in *Attachment 1a*, be approved.
- (2) That the draft General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital programmes for 2023/24 to 2027/28 presented in *Attachment 1b*, be approved.
- (3) That the proposed Fees and Charges for 2023/24, including an average Housing Rent increase of 7.0% on Council Dwellings, presented in *Attachment 1c*, be approved.
- (4) That the updated General Fund Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2023/24 to 2027/28 presented in *Attachment 1d*, be approved.
- (5) That the Section 151 Officer's report – in accordance with Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 – on the robustness of the estimates for the purposes of the Council's 2023/24 budgets and the adequacy of the reserves, presented in *Attachment 2*, be noted.
- (6) That the Section 151 Officer's recommendation to maintain a minimum £4.0 million contingency balance in the Council's General Fund Reserve in the medium-term, including a contribution to the Reserve as part of the General Fund revenue budget proposals for 2023/24, be approved.
- (7) That the Treasury Management Outturn report 2021/22 considered by the Audit & Governance Committee on 29th September 2022, presented in *Attachment 3*, be noted.
- (8) That the Treasury Management Mid-Year Update report 2022/23 considered by the Audit & Governance Committee on 28th November 2022, presented in *Attachment 4*, be noted.
- (9) That the draft Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24 considered by the Audit & Governance Committee on 13th February 2023 and recommended for Council approval, presented in *Attachment 5*, be approved; and
- (10) That the draft Capital Strategy 2023/24 to 2025/26, considered by the Audit & Governance Committee on 13th February 2023, presented in *Attachment 6*, be approved.

70. REPORT OF THE CABINET - COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2023/24

Mover: Councillor J Philip, Finance Portfolio Holder

Councillor J Philip submitted a report regarding the Council Tax Setting for 2023/24. he advised that the Cabinet had recommended a District Council Tax increase based on Band D properties of £4.69 (2.98%) a year. The report on page 225 of the agenda also included the Town and Parish precepts and the Essex precepts for Essex County Council, Essex Police and Crime Commissioner and Essex County Fire and Rescue Service.

It was noted that Appendix C on page 232 of the agenda was incorrect and a supplementary agenda with the correct Appendix C on page 10 had been published.

Report as first moved **ADOPTED**

RESOLVED:

That the revised Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2023/24 recommendations be approved.

- (1) To note that under delegated authority, the Strategic Director and Section 151 Officer, has calculated the Council Tax Base for 2023/24 for the whole Council area as 54,883.6 (Item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended) and for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish Precept relates as set out in Appendix A
- (2) That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2023/24 in accordance with sections 31 to 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:
 - (a) £116,839,907 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils
 - (b) £103,758,904 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act
 - (c) £13,081,003 being the amount by which the aggregate at 2(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 2(b) above, calculated by the Council in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act)
 - (d) £238.34 being the amount at 2(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (the amount at (1) above, the tax base), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts)
 - (e) £4,181,627 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish Precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act
 - (f) £162.15 being the amount at 2(c) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 2 (e) above by Item T (1) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates
 - (g) That it be noted that Essex County Council, Essex Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner and Essex Fire & Rescue Service have issued precepts to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for each of the category of dwellings in the Council's area
 - (h) That the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts in Appendix C as the amounts of Council Tax for 2023/24 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings; and
 - (i) That in accordance with section 52ZB of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the Council determines that the amount of Council Tax shown at 2 (f) of £162.15 for 2023/24, representing an increase

of £4.69 (2.98%) compared to 2022/23 is not excessive and therefore there is no requirement to hold a local referendum.

71. REPORT OF THE CABINET - LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2023/24

Mover: Councillor J Philip, Finance Portfolio Holder

Councillor J Philip submitted a report regarding the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2023/24, which remained unchanged.

Report as first moved **ADOPTED**

RESOLVED:

That the revised Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2023/24 be approved.

72. REPORT OF THE CABINET - PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2023/24

Mover: Councillor S Kane, Internal Resources Portfolio Holder

Councillor S Kane presented a report regarding the Council's Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24, which was required by Section 38 (1) of the Localism Act 2011 and set out details of the Council's current practices and policies. This specifically included the Council's approach to its highest and lowest paid employees.

Report as first moved **ADOPTED.**

RESOLVED:

That the Council's Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24 be adopted.

73. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Councillor H Kane presented her progress report for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 31 January 2023. She advised members that this had been omitted, in error, from the Council agenda but was published as a supplementary document.

RESOLVED:

That the progress report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on the 31 January 2023 be noted.

74. JOINT ARRANGEMENTS & EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

The Chairman noted that there were no verbal reports for this meeting.

Councillor Janet Whitehouse requested that members who served on outside bodies brought regular reports to Council to update members on the work that these organisations were doing.

CHAIRMAN

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Council **Date:** Monday, 6 March 2023

Place: Council Chamber - Civic Offices **Time:** 7.00 - 8.14 pm

Members Present: Councillors M Sartin (Chairman), D Sunger (Vice-Chairman), I Allgood, C Amos, N Avey, R Balcombe, D Barlow, R Baldwin, N Bedford, P Bhanot, P Bolton, H Brady, R Brookes, L Burrows, S Heap, S Heather, H Kane, S Kane, H Kauffman, P Keska, J Lea, J Leppert, A Lion, T Matthews, J McIvor, L Mead, R Morgan, S Murray, C Nweke, M Owen, J Parsons, A Patel, S Patel, J Philip, Caroline Pond, C C Pond, R Pugsley, S Rackham, K Rizvi, P Stalker, D Stocker, B Vaz, C Whitbread, H Whitbread, J H Whitehouse, J M Whitehouse, K Williamson, D Wixley and S Yerrell

Members Present (Virtually): Councillors C McCredie

Apologies: R Bassett, E Gabbett, I Hadley, R Jennings, J Jennings, J Jogia and J Lucas

Officers Present: G Blakemore (Chief Executive), A Small (Section 151 Officer), J Gould (Interim Strategic Director), N Richardson (Service Director (Planning Services)), V Willis (Principal Planning Officer), G Woodhall (Team Manager - Democratic & Electoral Services), J Leither (Democratic Services Officer), T Carne (Corporate Communications Team Manager), P Maginnis (Service Director (Corporate Services)), S Mitchell (PR Website Editor) and R Moreton (Corporate Communications Officer)

Officers Present (Virtually): R Perrin (Democratic and Electoral Services Officer)

75. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

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

76. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(a) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor S Murray declared a non-pecuniary and non-prejudicial interest on item 4, Adoption of the Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011-2033, by virtue of being an ambassador of the Epping Forest Heritage Trust.

77. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Councillors and members of the public who were seated in the public gallery and watching via webcast. She advised that before we moved to the substantive part of the meeting that she would like to make some opening remarks.

Local Planning Authorities were required by legislation to develop local plans, and the Government had stated that Local Planning Authorities should have an up-to-date local plan in place by the end of 2023.

The Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011–2033 has been found ‘sound’ following independent examination subject to a number of Main Modifications. The Local Plan formed part of the Council’s Statutory Policy Framework. The spatial strategy and housing requirement established through the Local Plan accords with the approach agreed by way of Memorandums of Understanding entered into by the Council through the ‘Duty to Cooperate’.

The Council wrote to the Inspector requesting that they recommended such modifications to the Submitted Local Plan as may be necessary to make the Plan sound and legally compliant. The Inspector has found the Plan Sound subject to a number of modifications.

Those modifications now needed to be accepted in their entirety and no further changes could be made to the Plan as now proposed to be modified. This meant that it would not be appropriate to discuss the contents of the Plan.

78. ADOPTION OF EPPING FOREST DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN 2011-2033

Mover: Councillor N Bedford, Place Portfolio Holder and Deputy Leader

Councillor N Bedford stated that after a considerable amount of time that he was pleased that Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) had been given the green light, by the Independent Planning Inspector, to adopt the Epping Forest District Local Plan.

Councillors will see from the report there were two choices; (1) to agree to adopt the plan with the incorporation of all of the recommended modifications, or (2) not to adopt the plan. It was important that we have an up-to-date policy framework to enable the Council to properly manage and control development in the district and to ensure that we can fully protect our natural resources and environment.

Once the plan had been adopted, the Council would have a clear and robust strategy against which planning decisions for new homes could be made (including affordable homes), jobs and community facilities required over the next few years supported by the new infrastructure and, at the same time, protecting the environment. The new plan provided certainty for our communities as to what development would happen and where it would happen and this made it clear to developers the high standard that we expect from development within this District.

On 14 December 2017 EFDC agreed to publish, for comment, the Submission Version of the Epping Forest District Local Plan covering the period 2011-2033 and to submit the Plan to the Secretary of State for Examination. The submission plan was also endorsed as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and enforcement decisions to which the Council have been able to use it for that purpose. At that same meeting the Council gave authority to officers to write to the independent Inspector appointed to carry out the Examination requesting recommendations of any modifications as may be necessary to the submitted Local Plan, to make the Plan sound and legally compliant, in accordance with section 20(7C) of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act.

The plan that was recommended to adopt was a modified version of that same plan. Those modifications have been identified by the Inspector as being necessary in

order for the submission plan to be found sound. Importantly, the modifications do not change the spatial strategy agreed by this Council or the housing requirement established for the District, which was based on our own assessment of need, not a nationally derived figure. The requirement can be met from the reduced number of allocated sites and reduced capacity of some sites within the final Plan. The modifications do not change our approach to a provision for jobs within the District through the protection and expansion of our employment floorspace or the approach to protecting our valuable natural assets including Epping Forest and the Lee Valley. Nor, crucially, do they change our approach to securing the infrastructure and services needed to support the development proposed.

This Council, by agreeing to publish and submit the plan, accepted that part of the plan's strategy allowed for the release of Green Belt land. That was the Council's choice as it became clear, having undertaken a considerable amount of work to maximise development within our existing towns and villages, including on brownfield land, that the only way we could meet the development needs of our District was to make that difficult decision. We had to demonstrate to the Inspector that exceptional circumstances existed and the Inspector was satisfied that this was the case.

Approximately 31,675ha of the District was designated as Green Belt. The amount of land currently in the Green Belt which will be removed in order to provide for new homes was just under 590ha (of which some 400ha was for the Garden Communities and just over 130ha for the North Weald Bassett, South of Epping and Waltham Abbey North Masterplan Areas) which equated to 1.86% of the District's Green Belt.

It was important that this figure was put into some context. A large amount of the Green Belt land to be released for new homes related to the strategic masterplan sites. As such the figure included land which was needed, for example, to provide for Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace on a number of the sites (for example nearly 30ha of Green Belt land will be used for this purpose at Latton Priory), other large areas of green space (including within the East of Harlow and Waltham Abbey North Masterplan Areas), a number of primary schools (and in the case of Latton Priory a secondary school) as well as the provision of community facilities such as shops and health facilities. In the case of East of Harlow the allocation includes the land needed to support the relocation of the Princess Alexandra Hospital.

Some further land within the Green Belt will also be removed to provide new employment floorspace and to reflect the fact that there were some sites such as the Meridian Business Park and Distribution Centre and the residential estate immediately to the south at Waltham Abbey which are still technically within the Green Belt but were fully developed sites.

The implications of not adopting the Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011-2033 are set out in the officer's report on pages 7 and 8 of the agenda. Councillors may also wish to know that the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has discretionary powers to direct the Council to adopt the plan if he felt it necessary and appropriate to do so.

Councillor N Bedford therefore recommended to Council that the Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011 – 2033 be adopted in accordance with recommendations 1 to 4 as set out in the officer's report on page 5 of the agenda.

Five Councillors stood up and requested a recorded vote namely: Councillors C Whitbread, N Bedford, J Philip, H Whitbread and S Kane.

There voted for the recommendations (37) namely: Councillors I Allgood, N Avey, R Balcombe, R Baldwin, N Bedford, P Bhanot, P Bolton, H Brady, R Brookes, L Burrows, S Heather, H Kane, S Kane, H Kauffman, P Keska, J Lea, A Lion, T Matthews, J McIvor, L Mead, R Morgan, J Parsons, A Patel, S Patel, J Philip, C P Pond, R Pugsley, K Rizvi, M Sartin, P Stalker, D Stocker, D Sunger, B Vaz, C Whitbread, H Whitbread, K Williamson and S Yerrell.

There voted against the recommendations (9) namely: Councillors C Amos, D Barlow, S Heap, J Leppert, S Murray, M Owen, S Rackham, J H Whitehouse and J M Whitehouse.

Abstentions (3) namely: Councillors C Nweke, C C Pond and D Wixley.

Report as first moved **ADOPTED**.

RESOLVED:

That the Council agreed to Adopt the Epping Forest Local Plan 2011-2033 as detailed below:

- (1) Note the content of the Inspector's Report on the Examination of the Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011–2033 alongside the appended Schedule of Main Modifications (Appendix A and B to this report) and his conclusion that the Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011–2033 provides an appropriate basis for the planning of the District provided that a number of Main Modifications are made to it.
- (2) Adopt the Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011-2033 submitted to the Secretary of State for examination as amended by the Main Modifications and Additional Modifications (as identified in Appendix B and Appendix C to this report) as the statutory development plan for Epping Forest District (in accordance with Section 23 (3) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended)) and use the Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011-2033 as the basis for planning decisions across the District (together with 'made' neighbourhood development plans where relevant).
- (3) Note that on adoption of the Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011–2033 and following the end of the six-week period for legal challenge that the following Development Plan Documents and associated Proposals Maps are revoked and should not be used for decision-making:
 - a) Those policies of the Epping Forest District Local Plan adopted January 1998 that had not previously been replaced; and
 - b) Epping Forest District Local Plan Alterations adopted July 2006.
- (4) Delegate to the Director of Planning, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Place, authorisation to make changes to text, graphics and layout of the Plan of a minor or inconsequential nature or in order to ensure consistency with the Main Modifications and Additional Modifications Schedules attached at Appendix B and C to the agenda report, as considered appropriate and necessary prior to the publication of the final version of the adopted Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011-2033 and associated Policies Map in accordance with the Town and

Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

CHAIRMAN

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Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 4 April 2023
Subject: Place Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Nigel Bedford

Recommending:

That the report of the Place Portfolio Holder be noted.

1. Local Plan

Adoption

At long last, the Epping Forest District Local Plan 2011 to 2033 was adopted at an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council on 6 March 2023. This is now the statutory development plan, which means it has full weight in determining planning applications (together with 'made' neighbourhood development plans where relevant). The newly adopted Local Plan supersedes the Local Plan which comprised the policies within the Epping Forest District Local Plan adopted January 1998 that had not previously been replaced and the Epping Forest District Local Plan Alterations adopted July 2006.

The Local Plan sets out a housing requirement of 11,400 new homes for the whole period, which started in 2011 and therefore homes that have already been built since 2011 are included. The last figures we have that were taken in March 2022, show that over 3,000 homes have already been built and around 1800 additional homes were either being built or had planning permission.

A significant proportion of the remaining new homes to be built will be located will be in new Garden Town Communities at Latton Priory, East of Harlow and Water Lane, close to Harlow as well as at North Weald Bassett and Waltham Abbey, which in total will accommodate a minimum of 5,660 of the remaining new homes to be built.

The adopted Local Plan along with the associated Policies Map, Adoption Statement, Habitats Regulations Assessment Adoption Statement, Sustainability Appraisal Adoption Statement and associated Sustainability Appraisal Reports were published on the Council's website on 14 March 2023. The adopted Local Plan is subject to a legal challenge period of six weeks from this date.

North Weald Airfield Strategic Masterplan

Cabinet on 13 March 2023 agreed that the North Weald Airfield Strategic Masterplan be formally endorsed following public consultation between December 2021 and

February 2022 and review. North Weald Airfield has been allocated in the Local Plan as a Masterplan area under P6 North Weald Bassett and requires the provision of 10ha of additional employment floorspace together with the protection and intensification of existing employment floorspace on the eastern side of the airfield land, which is achieved by this masterplan. It also provides new and improved public walking and cycle links and the preservation and enhancement of the Grade II listed Control Tower and its setting. The Masterplan has been developed to ensure that airfield activities are not unacceptably impacted by any future development.

This is the first of the Council's proposed Masterplans to be approved and will be an important material consideration in the determination of future planning applications, and to inform pre-application advice, assessing planning and any other development management purposes relating to the site.

2. Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT)

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

Key updates in terms of the Garden Town are:

- The draft Latton Priory Strategic Masterplan Framework (SMF), a masterplan area which is within Epping Forest District and the Garden Town, is being progressed and updated following public consultation. There will be a Member Briefing arranged in May/ June, with endorsement of the SMF programmed for June/ July 2023.
- The Latton Priory Design Code is being undertaken in-house by the EFDC Implementation Team, funded as part of the Dept For Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Pathfinders Programme. Community engagement through design workshops has taken place with local schools, youth councils and Voluntary Action Epping Forest with older people, to talk about design coding.
- 'Your Quality of Life', funded by DLUHC PropTech Round 2, enabled large scale digital and on-digital engagement across the garden town on people's quality of life. The 'Your Quality of Life Community Feedback Report' and 'Reflections and Recommendations Report' have been published online and are available on HGGT website.
- HGGT is currently engaging local businesses and shoppers in travel surveys to understand their travel patterns across the Garden Town area, as part of the HGGT Mode Share Monitoring. This surveying work is taking place throughout March 2023.

- On 28 February the outline planning application for the Gilston Area Villages 1-6 (8,500 homes) was given a resolution to grant permission by East Herts District Council planning committee. This is the first of the new HGGT communities to reach this milestone.

3. Sustainable Transport

DaRT87 Demand Responsive Transport

The Flexiroute app had been a key requirement to help increase and widen usage of DaRT87 with 123 downloads to end in January 2023. Around 400 individual passenger trips were made between April and December 2022 on DaRT services with fare revenue returned to EFDC rarely exceeding £300 per month. The introduction of a £2 flat fare ahead of DfT's national £2 fare offer, now extended to June, has not had quite the desired effect on usage in pure financial terms, but it has been important in pure social value terms, running throughout the pandemic and beyond, helping key workers and others without easy access to cars make important trips.

4. Climate Change

Climate Change Action Plan Scoping Exercise

Following the Climate Change Officer returning to work, a scoping exercise is taking place to map climate related activity and policy across the organisation. Following this exercise, we are looking to set up a task group to oversee the implementation of the Climate Change Action Plan and include in the PMO reporting to ensure corporate oversight and governance.

Climate Change in Council Policies and Decision Making

The following key objective is included in the updated Corporate Plan 2023-27:

“We will strive to reduce pollution and protect our environment, encouraging jobs, housing, and infrastructure that complements, rather than competes with the natural world.”

This aims to embed the Council's pledge to be net zero by 2030 into key policy and establish climate change as a priority.

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Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 4th April 2023
Subject: Finance Portfolio Holder
Portfolio Holder: Councillor J Philip

Recommending:

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

Finance

Budget for 2023/24 and 2024/25

With the Budget for 2023/24 approved and Council Tax Bills having been dispatched there is now a small lull in the Finance calendar in which to undertake some tidying up and to commence some preparation for Year End and the new Financial Year.

The Budget was definitely one of the most difficult to balance in recent years and it required some tough choices in order to protect core and highly valued services. As costs increased rapidly and income didn't keep pace the squeeze was inevitably going to be concentrated on those costs we could control. This year, for the first time in a while, it was necessary to make redundancies. I said that we would do all in our power to minimise the number of compulsory redundancies and we achieved this by working with and supporting our officers through this difficult time. The final number of compulsory redundancies was 6 posts, and even then, most of the postholders affected supported their redundancy. With another savings target to achieve for 2024/25 we will immediately commence the search, looking to income generation and efficiency with the aim of avoiding any further compulsory redundancies next year. I will keep you updated as work progresses in this area.

Audit

The long, drawn-out, Audit of the Accounts for 2020/21 is hopefully now approaching close, still with no significant concerns having been raised by our Auditors. The national technical issue which I reported in December as delaying final sign-off has been temporarily resolved and so we are now waiting on the Auditors to complete their final review work. The Government has recently written to all councils and Audit firms asking for a concerted effort to move the long delayed sign-offs forward. In response, I shall be working with the Finance Team and our Auditors to bring additional focus to completing 2020/21 and 2021/22. It is hoped that the sign-off of 2020/21 will be swiftly followed by sign-off of 2021/22 and that we will be back on track for the closure and sign-off of 2022/23 by the end of 2023 or early 2024.

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

Qualis

The financial performance of Qualis continues to be regularly reported to the Cabinet and Stronger Council. The first quarter's results from their fourth year of trading were reported to Cabinet in March using a new Board report format presented by Qualis which is designed to show a clearer consolidated position.

Unfortunately, the same financial conditions that are so heavily impacting on the Council are also still enormously impacting Qualis. These were drawn out in the single year Qualis Business Plan that was presented to Overview and Scrutiny and to Cabinet last year. Qualis continues to report a loss in the 1st Quarter's trading due to a number of factors in their development and commercial activities businesses.

I continue to meet with Qualis regularly to consider their actions to address this and their trading performance in the current economic circumstances and I will update all members on progress.

Revenues and Benefits

Following the 2023/24 Budget Setting the Revenues and Benefits Team were immediately in action to send the Council Tax and Business Rates bills and Benefit notification letters for the new financial year. In total around 64,000 documents were sent to residents and businesses and the exercise was completed on time to meet the notice period required for April payments. This was a particularly impressive achievement as this year's budget meeting was the latest it has been for many years which greatly constricted the timetable for the production deadline of the bills and letters. My thanks to the Revenues and Benefits team for their hard work.

I would like to update Members on the Energy Bill Reliefs provided by Government which the Revenues and Benefits team are administering on their behalf. In both instances below the resident applies via a government portal. The application is then passed to the Council for verification and payment.

Energy Bills Support Scheme – Alternative Funding (EBSS AF) – this scheme is for those households who were not eligible for the £400 automatic reductions from their energy bills as they pay for their electricity by other methods such as alternative commercial intermediaries or supplies such as park homes. The scheme went live on 6th March 2023 and applications are being received by the Council for processing. Payments for this scheme are a one-off payment of £400. The Council has been given just under £1.1 million to fund this scheme. In the first week the council received 160 applications from the Government.

Energy Bills Support Scheme – Alternative Fuel Payment (EBSS AFP) - the scheme provides a payment of £200 for households that use alternative fuels, such as heating oil, biomass or Liquefied Petroleum Gas as their main source of heating. The Council has been allocated £184,400 to fund this scheme. In the first week the Council received around 100 applications from the Government.

Councils are required to make payment within 30 days of receiving an application. These schemes close on 31st May 2023.

Economic Development Programme:

Epping Forest District Council is developing a new website aimed at businesses of all types and sizes looking to start up, expand or relocate into the district. Invest Epping Forest contains all the information businesses need to discover the benefits and opportunities of doing business in and from the district, and why this is a great place to live, work, study and do business. At the heart of the UK Innovation Corridor, Epping Forest District offers a range of business sites all with easy access to two motorways, Stansted Airport and rail and tube links directly into London. As well as listing the district's major business and industrial parks, Invest Epping Forest includes a business property search function showcasing units and sites currently available. The site also contains information on help for businesses, local skills, education and training. Find out more by visiting Invest Epping Forest at www.investeppingforest.co.uk or contact economicdevelopment@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Officers are continuing to work at procuring packages of business support, a key focus of year one UKSPF (UK Shared Prosperity Fund) spending. It is expected that the majority of year one intended business support programmes will be initiated before the end of the financial year. Some flexibility has now been built into new UK Shared Prosperity Fund reporting frameworks to enable some year-one allocations to be rolled over into the next financial year if there are underspends. Officers are at the time of writing completing the first UKSPF quarterly report for the UK Government, which summarises spend to date on projects.

Epping Forest District Council, in common with councils across the UK, has still not received approval for its Rural England Prosperity Fund investment plan, which aims to secure a further £437,136 to invest in rural areas.

Monthly Business E-Newsletter:

The Economic Development Team has released the February edition of the 'Business Matters' e-newsletter with topics focusing on Create South East's support programme, the creation of the Prosperity Network, Rebel Business Schools' entrepreneurship courses, RideLondon 2023 and information from Essex Police on business crime prevention. If you would like to receive a copy of the monthly e-newsletter please contact Matteo Pesci at mpesci@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

General Economic Briefing:

The Economic Development team has begun work on an economic digest for the district, this will include key information from the 2021 Census and other information sources outlining the latest information on local economic indices. This will provide information on economic activity rates, changes in travel to work, skills and the main economic sectors in the district.

The latest statistics for unemployment in the district from January 2023 show unemployment continuing to decline and it now stands at 2,205.

Visitor Economy:

The newly launched Visit Epping Forest website continues to attract over 3,000 viewers a week and the 'What's On' page continues to record a high number of events occurring across the district.

The Marriott Hotel at Waltham Abbey has recently been placed within the Delta brand and rebranding and refurbishment is now underway. The new management have indicated that they are happy to continue the support previously afforded to the Tourism Board once the current upheavals are over, including sponsoring a conference.

The changing face of our visitor economy, staffing problems within hospitality and new challenges faced by a shortage of volunteers, will be central themes discussed at the next Tourism Board meeting on the 20th March.

The work of the new Essex Film Office has produced a number of filming enquiries for the district. Currently moving beyond the enquiry stage are advertising for a famous crisp brand and possible locations for a major TV action series. Additionally, being in close proximity to London gives the district an edge when a choice of locations across the county are being considered.

Essex + Herts Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ):

The Digital Innovation Zone has been invited by the Local Government Association to participate in a digital showcase event on Tuesday 21st of March, exhibiting case studies and generating discussion on local government digitalisation across 12 digitalisation outcome frameworks launched by the LGA in partnership with Solace and Socitm.

The session will focus on the role of digital innovation and data in supporting local residents and businesses. The DIZ has been invited to deliver a presentation as an interesting example of how the Digital Innovation Zone maximises digital investment to support local businesses. The presentation will then be followed by a panel discussion.

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 4 April 2023
Subject: Housing and Communities Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Holly Whitbread

Recommending:

That the report of the Housing and Communities Portfolio Holder be noted.

Homelessness prevention and relief

The team took a total of 50 applications in the month of February and the reduction can probably be attributed to half term (we usually average approximately 95 approaches per month). We assisted a total of 4 households in to privately rented accommodation which is a brilliant achievement given the challenging market and current demand.

Job Coach

Embedded within the homelessness team since October 2022 has been a Job Coach employed by Open Road. The job coach takes referrals from the homelessness team from customers with both a housing and employment need and/or desire. As of this month, there have been a total of 21 referrals made to the job coach. There are five clients actively engaging, several others at varying levels of engagement and two individuals who have secured long-term employment. The job coach works with customers to enhance their CVs, prepare them for interviews and support them into meaningful employment or apprenticeships. It's a brilliant partnership which is already demonstrating such value.

Neighbourhoods

Dealing with misuse of tenancies

We have had a closure order obtained on a property at Copperfield. We also we won a case last week relating to fraud and obtained an outright order on a property in Epping. These two cases represent a huge amount of work done by the team with assistance across the Council.

Housing Development Update

Local Authority Housing Fund

I am pleased to report that the Council has been successful in obtaining funding from Government from the Local Authority Housing Fund. This funding allows us to refurbish existing empty council properties with government funding. Using this funding enables us to spread our own housing resources further. It also enables us to re-house Ukrainian families who are homeless in the district. We will be putting 6 homes through the scheme and will receive up to £1,186,322 to deliver the improvements.

Independent Living Service

Start date for the new Independent Living Service

We have extended the date by which the new service (replacing our Sheltered Housing Service) will be in operation to the 24th April 2023 to ensure that full consultation is carried out with staff.

Assets

Lime Farm Estate Regeneration Project

Work on the Lime Farm Estate blocks has begun in earnest, with scaffolding erected on both the Yellow and Green Blocks and key preliminary works underway. The pilot window installs began last week with all relevant parties present to ensure the standard can be agreed.

Social Housing Decarbonisation Funding (SHDF)

I am pleased to report that EFDC has been awarded funding from BEIS for decarbonisation works on 130 properties which will benefit from reduced energy bills and improved thermal efficiencies. Funding from the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (formerly known as BEIS) will award a grant of up to £1,648,426.43. EFDC is liable to match fund this 100% bringing the total project value to circa £3.3m.

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 4 April 2023
Subject: Wellbeing & Community Partnerships Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Aniket Patel

Recommending:

That the report of the Wellbeing & Community Partnerships Portfolio Holder be noted.

Warm Places Initiative

The Warm Places initiative, lead by the Community & Wellbeing service area, saw 12 community spaces established across the district over the colder Autumn and Winter months. The Warm Places initiative provided a range of welcoming venues where residents could drop in, have a free hot drink, socialise and relax, whilst also being offered signposting to a variety of wider support services.

Each Warm Place was allocated £200 from the Epping Forest Public Health Community Fund as a small contribution towards costs. The Council, along with a plethora of voluntary groups, clubs and churches came together collaboratively in support of the initiative.

Two community-based lunches and a Safe & Well information day were also facilitated.

Such was the success of the scheme that, in many cases, plans are underway to continue these settings with the district's "Warm Places" being redesignated "Social Spaces" moving forwards. Whilst each venue will continue to have its own unique offer, these Social Spaces will continue to provide a warm welcome to local residents to encourage positive wellbeing and tackle loneliness and social isolation.

West Essex Adult Inclusion Buddy Up Project

The Adult Inclusion Buddy Up Project marked its one-year anniversary in March 2023. The Project, which supports neurodiverse adults into social activities through the support of volunteers or peer led groups, has successfully worked with 45 residents from across West Essex.

Some of the highlights of the Project over the past 12 months have included; supporting service users to volunteer with local businesses, developing a disability specific gym session with partners from Places Leisure and work towards organising a Reverse Jobs Fair specifically for neurodiverse residents.

Community Development in Waltham Abbey

The Thursday evening Youth Club on Ninefields estate in Waltham Abbey goes from strength to strength with a multitude of activities and opportunities for young participants to experience. Recently 16 young people took part in bespoke self-defence sessions. Funding of £1,319 was secured from Essex County Council for a

Food Education Project which commenced on 9 March. Partner agency, Youth Unity, has worked with the Team to enable delivery of 8 weeks of Boxing tuition during the same period.

Additionally, Youth Unity commenced outreach work on 17 March in an attempt to tackle anti-social behaviour on the estate through the provision of diversionary activities for young people. This is something new and exciting for those who may not normally attend a youth club setting. The project is run by specialist Youth Workers who engage with the young people and signposting them to services as appropriate. Two vehicles containing sports equipment and kit to enable podcasting and music workshops regularly attend as part of this project, which will run into the school summer holidays.

For Key Stage 2 children, Broadcast Junior, an interactive theatre production delivered by Arc Theatre was commissioned and successfully delivered in four Waltham Abbey Primary Schools the week commencing 6 March. The Healthy Relationships strand of the Safer Streets Project engaged Year 5 and 6 pupils, who learned about online safety, consent and the law. The roadshow was extremely well received in all the schools.

Stay Safe and Well This Spring

On Friday 24 March, the Community Development & Wellbeing Team delivered another successful Stay Well & Safe event, this time at The Limes Centre in Chigwell.

This informative event is aimed at engaging older people within the community and focusses on tools, strategies, and activities to stay safe and well. There were a variety of partner information stands, talks from blue light services, Crimestoppers, a local pharmacist and the Alzheimer's Society.

Health checks were offered by the Essex Wellbeing Service and a seated exercise session suitable for all abilities took place, along with a free lunch, information bag and an interactive performance about scamming from Arc Theatre Company.

Funding

The newly configured Community Development & Wellbeing Team seeks to support the community in applying for funding which, in turn, enables local groups to deliver programmes which support residents to lead healthy and active lives. The following has been awarded locally in the last two months:

£4500 High Sheriff funding to the Limes Farm Community Group for the Limes Farm Colts Football Project. This has supported transport to and from Power League 4G pitches, the purchase of equipment for goal posts, football boots and hall hire costs. Another diversionary activity covered by the funding included working with Essex Police around drug and knife awareness. St Johns Ambulance raised awareness of knife crime injuries, defibrillator, and CPR. Self-defence classes are planned for the future. Representatives from the Limes Farm Community Group and Council Team attended the High Sheriff Awards evening on Wednesday 8th March in recognition of this highly valued community work.

£3000 has been awarded by the CSP to Youth Unity to assist in extending the Limes Youth Club and associated outreach work for a further 3 months. Since the launch on 27 January, 24 young people are now regularly attending sessions each week.

The new Sheering Community Champion has secured £1,296 Locality Funding from ECC to extend the Warm Place / Community Coffee and Chatter sessions for 6 months up to October 2023. The initiative is run in the Village Hall where there is also a playgroup, and the funding will be used to pay for the hire of portaloos to keep the two activities separate and prevent any safeguarding issues.

The Nazeing Community Champion has secured £750 Locality Funding from ECC to pay for transport to an alternative venue for the local social group whilst the normal setting of Hyde Mead House is refurbished.

Epping Forest District Museum

The pop-up display on Homelessness is being well received by visitors to the Museum. The positive impact of the associated art workshops at Norway House have been recognised with resident families continuing to engage with activities.

Museum staff have been approached with a view to facilitating a display in 2024 relating to the anniversary of Winston Churchill becoming MP for Epping.

The Museum's Heritage Education Programme has had one of its most successful years to date with income exceeding in excess of £10,000 and over 8000 pupils reached up until February 2023.

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Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 4 April 2023
Subject: Customer Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Alan Lion

Recommending:

That the report of the Customer Portfolio Holder be noted.

Customer Service

Our aim this year is to continue to improve customer access to our services, increasing use of digital solutions, whilst retaining phone contact for less digitally enabled customers. Our proposed projects are outlined below, many of these are awaiting a corporate prioritisation exercise to confirm we will proceed with the projects.

Data Capture

March sees the launch of the data capture process which provides improved customer insight, namely call causation on why customers call us as well as visibility of back-office customer contact. Customers who need to speak to a Technical Officer will no longer be transferred to a voicemail if an Officer is not available, instead, the team will receive a 'contact request' to a generic email account. Corporately we have agreed to one working day response time for initial acknowledgement back to the customer. Managers will have access to a Power BI dashboard to view and extra customised reports. Senior leadership will receive key messages from the reports on a monthly basis.

Contact Centre

Members will be aware of the issues with the current Waste and Recycling contract and the number of missed collections experienced by residents in recent months. Customer Service are still receiving an increase in calls above the norm however volumes are slowly declining. From 1st Jan to 1st March 23 call volumes were 9.76% higher than the same period last year due to waste calls.

The number of calls resolved by the contact centre at '**first point resolution**' saw an average increase of 5.11% for same Jan-March period and a 5% increase in online customer transactions in comparison to last year. Full KPI information will be reported to Stronger Council.

Website Improvements

Our objective is to improve our online customer experience through simplified web content, better navigation, and search as well as a consistent look & feel to instil trust in our brand. Officers will be provided with a web content strategy as well as templates to assist with writing web content. Project awaiting corporate prioritisation.

Payment Solutions

Following the **closure of Debden cash office** on 29th November 2022 and the roll out of Allpay cards to Council Tax and Business Rate customers in November over £87,952.21 of income has been received using this new scheme. Monthly income from the Debden Cash Office accounted for between 0.2%-0.5% of total income, and with total income variance each month considerably more than this it's not possible to identify which channels customers have shifted to globally. However, examining average Council Tax income at Debden for the last year and comparing it to the income of the new Allpay service at this early stage around 65% of income has channel shifted to this service with usage of the Allpay cards increasing month on month.

As previously advised, we have now removed the payment kiosk from Waltham Abbey library. The intention is to remove the kiosks at the Civic offices by the end of March. As with Debden, cash paying council tax and business rates customers have been sent Allpay cards enabling them to make payments at over sixty Post Offices throughout the district.

We will be migrating to a **cloud-based solution for our payment's** solution provider Pay360 when the current contract expires at the end of March 23. This migration will reduce licensing, support and transaction costs as well as creating savings within ICT for hardware, software, licensing and disaster recovery. Go live date for migration will be August 23. Over a five-year period, revenue savings are estimated at £85,000.

Community Hub

Partner engagement continues to be on the increase with the highest volumes recorded for January 2023 – 284 visits. With our most popular services being EFDC benefits, DWP, EFDC Homelessness, Epping Foodbank and Barclays. In most recent months we have welcome three new partners: Essex Police (Community Engagement), Essex Family Support Services and Essex Wellbeing Services. The Hub continues to receive positive feedback from visitors regarding the face-to-face support and help on offer. The majority of The Hub users are from Epping, Loughton, Waltham Abbey & North Weald & Buckhurst Hill.

Members Digital

On our digital Members journey we will continue to support the transition to digital with the launch of the Members portal, providing access to all information in one place. The portal was launched to Members at one of our regular Members coffee mornings. Timescales for this project are awaiting the corporate prioritisation exercise after which further engagement sessions will be held.

Our members coffee mornings continue to be popular with regular Officers across service areas such as the People team, Planning and Parking attending. We have also had updates on Members Safety with the upcoming elections as well as an update from Qualis on their works. We would encourage Members to let us know of any particular subjects they would like to hear about at Members coffee mornings, please email Louis Walton on lwalton@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

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Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 4 April 2023
Subject: Contracts and Commissioning Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Nigel Avey

Recommending:

The report of the Contracts and Commissioning Portfolio Holder be noted.

Leisure Management:

Energy Saving Initiatives

Working in partnership with Places Leisure, the Council is lowering its carbon footprint in its leisure centres by introducing new energy saving initiatives which include:

- Installing pool covers at Waltham Abbey Leisure Centre and Ongar Leisure Centre
- LED conversions at Loughton Leisure Centre and Ongar Leisure Centre
- New Building Management System and variable speed drives at Loughton Leisure Centre

Leisure centres are one of the Council's major assets and one of the largest contributors of the Council's carbon footprint. Decarbonising leisure centres is an important step to achieving the Council's Climate Change Action Plan. These measures will reduce carbon emissions and operational costs, resulting in more sustainable facilities.

Sport England Funding

Epping Forest District Council has been awarded funding from Sport England for utilities consultancy support. This funding will be used for the Sports Consultancy to undertake an Energy Benchmarking Review in relation to the Design, Build, Operate and Maintain Contract with Places Leisure. The utilities consultancy support will help the assessment of the utilities position of our community leisure facilities across the Epping Forest district area and provide the Council with an evidence base for any financial adjustments that might be necessary under the terms of the Contract.

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Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 4 April 2023
Subject: Technical Services Portfolio Holder
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Ken Williamson

Recommending:

That the report of the Portfolio Holder be noted.

1. Regulatory & Technical Services:

Licensing

Coronation

Buckingham Palace has announced details on the ceremonial, celebratory and community events that will take place over the Coronation Weekend between Saturday 6th and Monday 8th May 2023. The celebrations will coincide with the additional bank holiday that has been announced for Monday 8th May 2023 to mark the coronation.

Following the success of Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee in 2022, the Council has put in place special relaxations to make it easier for our residents to come together and celebrate. Residents wishing to host an event may still need to apply for a temporary road closure however, for non-commercial events held on 6th or 7th May 2023, the Council has determined to waive the fees normally associated with such applications.

The application process is also simplified, the Team will consult with Essex Highways and partner agencies on the applicant's behalf. Emergency services will not be routinely consulted on applications however, it has been agreed that a spreadsheet of closures will be circulated prior to 6th May for info. The applicant remains responsible for notifying neighbours, businesses, Town and Parish Councils and anyone who will be affected by the road closure to make sure that they haven't got any objections.

For the platinum jubilee the Councils Licensing Team processed 47 applications and issued 45 road closure notices (some were withdrawn as no longer required). The team also worked with and provided guidance to many event organisers including schools, resident's associations, and Town/Parish Councils etc. where road closures were not required. The simplified process worked well, and we anticipate a higher number of applications for the Coronation. Similar to last year, we have produced guidance and are working with the Councils Communications team to update the website and inform residents accordingly.

The Councils approach follows Government guidance and is also consulting on whether to relax licensing hours for the sale of alcohol (on-sales only) and late-night refreshment on Friday 5th, Saturday 6th and Sunday 7th May 2023. If agreed this will extend the opening hours from 23.00 to 01.00 on these dates however the relaxation will not apply to off licences, supermarkets, or late-night takeaways.

The proposal is similar to the extension put in place for the Platinum Jubilee in 2022 and other occasions of national celebration. The consultation ended on 23rd January 2023 and the proposal is widely supported by the hospitality trade and likely to be approved.

Gambling Policy

The Councils Gambling Policy must be reviewed and republished every 3 years, it was last approved in 2020 and the review is now due.

The policy statement sets out the licensing authorities' general approach to regulation under the Act, guides administration of its functions and its expectations in relation to operators with premises in the locality. It will assist in ensuring that an appropriate balance is drawn between the interests of those wishing to provide and take part in legal gambling, and those who might be affected by such activities.

The current policy was approved by the Council in 2020 and only minor amendments have been made to reflect the latest guidance and to update the area profile in line with the Essex County Council Census 2021 and the Office for National Statistics data.

Due to the need for the review, timescales involved and Purdah, consultation began on 3rd February 2023 and ended on 10th March. The draft policy will be presented to Licensing Committee on 22nd March 2023 before going to Full Council on 4th April 2023 for final approval.

All Members, town and parish Councils have been consulted. Wider consultation includes betting premises, trade representatives/bodies, neighbouring councils, the Gambling Commission, Responsible Authorities, MPs, and residents etc. Once Full Council the Council have approved the policy a statement must be published announcing the date on which the policy shall come into effect.

Private Sector Housing

Empty Homes Week was 27th February to 2nd March this year. We arranged for some Social Media bursts on Facebook and Twitter to promote the service and incentives.

In February we issued over 400 letters to owners of Empty Homes across the district to try to engage with them to bring these back into use, we have financial incentives of up to £50,000 per property to assist with renovations.

Private Sector Grants

We met with our Essex DFG colleagues in February and have agreed to work with them on a project try to bring to task some Housing Associations for discriminatory practices which can give rise to health inequalities for their tenants.

Many Essex LA's are experiencing a range of circumstances where, for example, some HA's fail to financially contribute to large DFG projects that exceed the maximum DFG we can provide for their tenant. This results in cases being cancelled and adaptations not going ahead leaving disabled residents vulnerable. Some HA's simply refuse to allow certain works to be carried out in their properties and others insist on paying warranties themselves (e.g. for stairlifts) and then increasing the tenants rent when in fact, the DFG can include the cost of these warranties.

Environmental Enforcement

The team are performing well and enforcement for fly tipping and littering continues to increase, a full update to be provided with end of year figures in the next report.

Antisocial Behaviour Team

The team held a morning of action at Oakwood Hill, Loughton with internal and external partners and a Crimestoppers zone has been introduced on the Oakwood Hill estate. A community event has been held in Theydon Bois with crime prevention advice and materials given out to residents.

The team attended a Project Minerva (Violence against Women and Girls) workshop and three locations have been identified for the team to provide support and intervention.

EFDC Policing Team

Taskings – Ongoing & new

Epping Market – Monday patrols continued. The team have been deploying overt and covert tactics still. There was a recent report in one of the charity shops so the high visibility patrols will continue for the foreseeable future.

Limes Farm, the team supported the service of a closure order with the recovery of drugs and counterfeit cash that will be investigated further.

District-wide there has been a spike in burglary, several clusters have been identified and additional patrols will be conducted in those areas on key days/times.

CCTV

The team have been acknowledged for the added successful conviction and custodial sentencing of 2 suspects totalling 31years from a jewellery shop in Epping High Street, supplying good facial images of the suspects.

CCTV has supported several investigations recently including;

- Offensive graffiti identified in Epping High Street, suspects identified and reported to Police.
- Shooting incident North Weald Bassett Shopping Arcade.
- Public Order incident Shelly Close Ongar.
- Theft from shops, 3 separate incidents High Street Epping.
- Assisting HMRC Investigation High Road Loughton.
- Police suspect identification in Pyrles Lane Debden.
- Pedestrian and Motorcycle collision High Road Epping.
- Various Fly Tips in Springfields Waltham Abbey.

Grounds Maintenance

The transfer of Grounds Maintenance to Qualis Management is progressing well, meetings continue to be held with staff to ensure there is a full understanding of the transfer process.

There was an unexpected break from scheduled winter works to help clear the recent downfall of snow from pathways at various council offices and sheltered housing units. Equipped with bags of grit and shovels, the teams worked hard to ensure safe access was maintained for staff and residents.

Tree Team

The team are currently focusing on planting in the district, this includes the replacement street trees in the district. We are also exploring additional funding to replace and replant street trees in the district.

2. Planning Services

Building Control

Income and budgets

Income through fees and charges by the end of March (Month 11) was at approximately £462,000. Having fallen behind projections we now anticipate an end of year income circa £505,00 out of the budgeted £540,000. The cost of delivering the Building Control Service is currently forecast to come in below the budgeted forecast by approximately £10,000 at £732,000.

The team have been engaged with the ongoing build of the Cottis Lane multi-storey car park, early consultation on fire safety matters for the St Johns Road development and have just commenced on site for the Conder building development. Submissions have also been received for the housing at Roundhills Waltham Abbey and industrial units at Cartersfield Road Waltham Abbey. Securing these sites under the Council's Building Control team has been important to internalise costs, support the team and utilise local services.

Legislative Change

There remains concern in the Building Control sector that recruitment and retention will become more challenging as we approach mandatory licensing of inspectors by October 2024. Many experienced inspectors from across the country have indicated they intend to take retirement or move to warranty inspection work as an alternative to engaging in further structured training and examination. The private sector competition for equal roles can prove challenging for public sector employers to match. Two members of the team are currently engaged in structured training which has been funded by a central government grant. A third trainee post remains filled with the educational costs covered by the Council's apprenticeship levy funding. A project in the next service plan identifies a need to support all existing members of the team to achieve licensed status.

Service Improvements

The team are currently working with ICT colleagues to trial suitable mobile working devices that will enable inspectors to access plans and specifications and to record their observations on site without the printed format. The team are also working with Planning colleagues on refinements to the Arcus Global cloud-based solution which underpins the potential for mobile working.

Development Management

Planning - Development Management

Planning Appeals

Members are reminded that Planning Appeal details are published in the weekly Bulletin, and links to the appeal documents are now provided to enable members to view a relevant appeal by clicking the link.

Development Management Service Guide

Members may be interested to read our Development Management Service Guide <https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/planning-and-building/development-management-service-charter/> that sets out our principles for service provision.

Increase of Pre-Application and discretionary fees

The discretionary fees for pre-application advice and other paid-for services will be increasing from 1 April 2023, and a notice has been published on the Council website to confirm the increase to prospective service users

<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/planning-and-building/apply-for-pre-application-advice/>

Government consultation on increasing planning fees and performance

Government is currently consulting on a proposal to increase planning application fees. The consultation will close on 25 April 2023, and details may be found here:

[Increasing planning fees and performance: technical consultation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/increasing-planning-fees-and-performance-technical-consultation)

The proposal is to increase fees for major applications by 35% and by 25% for other applications, and comments are also invited on the following:

- additional fees for bespoke or 'fast track' services
- annual inflation-related adjustment to planning fees
- ring-fencing additional fees income
- doubling fees for retrospective applications
- removing the 'free-go' for repeat applications
- introducing a prior approval fee for the permitted development right allowing the Crown to develop sites within the perimeter of a closed defence site
- building planning capacity and capability within local authorities, including challenges in recruitment and retention, and how these can be addressed
- reducing the Planning Guarantee from 26 weeks to 16 weeks for non-major applications
- improving the quality of the local authority planning service by monitoring more performance measures.

Successful prosecution: Tree and Landscaping

The Tree and Landscaping Team were successful in prosecuting the owner of a site in Chigwell, and the contractor that carried out the works, for the unauthorised felling of protected trees in October 2020 (a Robinia and Pine). After taking relevant matters into consideration, including the guilty pleas by the defendants, Chelmsford Magistrates Court on 22 February 2023 imposed the following:

- the owner: a fine of £448 on the owner with £917 costs awarded and a victim surcharge of £45
- the contractor: a fine of £66 with costs of £162 awarded and a victim surcharge of £34.

Notable Appeals

- 11 Crossfields, Loughton IG10 3PYL, written representations appeal decision issued on 27 February 2023. The appeal was allowed with conditions, and a full award of costs against the Council was also allowed on grounds of unreasonable behaviour resulting in unnecessary or wasted expense by the appellant. The application was before AREA PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE SOUTH on 3 November 2021 with an officer recommendation to grant planning permission. The application proposal was the same as a previous refusal, which was dismissed, on SAC grounds only, by a Planning Inspector and Members were so advised. Members still refused the application due to intensification of residential use, cramped nature of the development, and infilling an open aspect in the street scene and poor appearance that would be harmful to the character and appearance of the locality and impact on parking.
- <https://eppingforestdcpr.force.com/pr/s/planning-application/a0h8d000000NvIU/epf097519?tabset-dc51c=2>

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Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 4 April 2023
Subject: Internal Resources Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Sam Kane

Recommending:

That the report of the Internal Resources Portfolio Holder be noted.

People Team

Apprentice Strategy 23/24

- EFDC have now been running successful apprentice programmes for 10 years; In this time over 50 young local people have successfully achieved nationally recognised qualifications, and career success with the Council. In addition to this, apprentices have been employed in Planning, Housing, Legal, HR, Economic Development, Internal Comms, Learning and Development and Fleet - Mechanics.
- The apprenticeship levy has also been used to upskill current employees in Management ILM 5, (Institute of Leadership & Management), IRRV (Institute of Revenues Rating & Valuation) and soon a coaching programme plus a team leader apprenticeship will be offered. We have continually exceeded our public sector apprentice target every year and utilised our levy money, which would be lost if not invested in these qualifications.
- SLT have decided that remaining funding for 23/24 will be focused on recruiting 3-4 apprentices in our harder to recruit areas, thus further supporting our 'grow our own' culture. These roles will be advertised in the Spring.

Employee Digital Skills Development

- The People Team are running a series of Skill Pill hours during February/ March to enable employees to learn more about Microsoft Teams, and how to use Teams more efficiently and particularly how to collaborate more effectively; These sessions have also been opened up to councillors. Microsoft now offer these training sessions free (as part of EFDC's contract) and the sessions will continue with Excel and other relevant digital skills development. All sessions are recorded and hosted on our Litmos Learning Management System, for all employees to view at their leisure.
- ICT are exploring apprenticeship levy to pay for specialist, costly IT qualifications, therefore focusing on retaining talent and succession planning.

People Strategy 2023 – 2027

- The new people strategy for 2023-2027 is in final design stages. Engagement sessions with Executive, Senior and wider leadership teams have taken place. The feedback window closes on Friday 3rd March any final feedback will be reviewed and considered,

so far, the feedback is extremely positive. In addition to the new People Strategy, a project plan has been submitted to our PMO team. This will be reviewed in line with their priority process and feedback given; a final service plan will then be designed.

iTrent System

- **Version Upgrade:** Work has recently been carried out to upgrade iTrent to the latest version, enabling it ready for end of year routines with Payroll. Along with this was a new updated view and navigation for managers, some of the feedback received confirms that this is a significant improvement on the old view and navigation.
- **Onboarding:** This went live in December 2022, but we have not had many new starters over this period, so we are hoping to gain some feedback from new starters who have used onboarding in January / February 2023. This feedback will feed into any development / enhancement work that we intend to do with the portal in the future.
- **Multifactor Authentication (MFA):** This has been a requirement by the software provider, and they have given all customers until November 2023 to become compliant. As a partnership of Councils who utilise the same system, we are intending to implement a solution provided by Braintree District Council's ICT team. Currently work will likely start to get busier on this in April / May when we start to move all users over to this new form of authentication for logging in to the system, although there will be some pre work to understand exactly what this involves.
- **Reference points:** Over the past few months we have participated in being a supplier reference site, this has involved either a site visit or phone call and talking about how we utilise the system, normally with some form of demo or Q&A. The supplier has to date given us £1,000 in reference points, with another £1,000 expected in coming weeks, we will use to reinvest in further developments in the system (training / consultancy etc.)

Local Pay Award

- Officers are liaising with the Senior Leadership Team regarding the implementation of the local pay award in April 2023.

Internal Communications

Upgraded Employee Intranet

- Internal Communications have had agreement from ICT to begin unpublishing resources on our current intranet site and publishing links to the new site. This will be done over a two-week period to mitigate the risk of missing resources and prevent an influx of calls to the ICT Service Desk. Once satisfied that everything is working as it should, the new site will move from the test site address to the address the current one has after this two-week period. Meaning we should have our new intranet site in place by mid to late-March.

Business Support

Local Land Charges (LLC), HMLR Project

- The Head of Implementation for HMLR is attending the Civic Offices on 14th March 2023 for a 'Data Sign Off' meeting with Christine Ferrigi.
- The 'Serve Notice' meeting is scheduled virtually between the CEO of HMLR, Georgina Blakemore and Christine Ferrigi for 27th March 2023, for a go live date of 26th April 2023.

- Between now and those meetings the team have some additional data corrections to make, whilst also reducing the search turnaround times ready for go live.

Projects

Accommodation – Commercialisation of our bookable spaces

- The proposed start date for the contract between IWG, Regus Epping and EFDC is the 1st April 2023 and although the contract is not in place yet, we have had our first commercial booking via Regus Epping, which is for a group of 90 people in the Conference Suite.

Soft Facilities Management – Outsourcing our Concierge Service

- The service transfer date to the provider, PCS Group, is 3rd April 2023.
- PCS Group are currently in the TUPE process for one EFDC employee and recruiting to the vacant posts.

Contingency Planning

- Our current Corporate Business Continuity Plan is being reviewed and Service Plan template along with guidance will be produced following training sessions.

Insurance and Risk

- A Council wide Risk Management Framework, Policy & Strategy is being developed in conjunction with Chief Internal Auditor which will shortly going to Senior Officers and Members for consultation and ultimate approval by Cabinet. Expected achievement date to be by end of June 2023
- Risk Management training was rolled out in February 2023 to Senior Officers, provided by Zurich Risk Solutions. Member training will be rolled out in November 2023 in conjunction with the Chief Internal Auditor.
- The Insurance & Risk Specialist will deliver further training workshops throughout the year with individual service areas.
- The Insurance & Risk Specialist is continuing to work with the Fleet Management team, Health & Safety and HR on revising our Driving at Work policy, Drink & Drugs policy and producing a Drivers Handbook to ensure the Council is compliant with its obligations under the Health & Safety at Work Act and Road Traffic Acts amongst other obligations. The final documents will require approval by SLT and is expected to be finalised by Q1 of 2023/2024

Democratic and Election Services

- Preparations continue for the Local elections in May, and the Count this year will be held at the Waltham Abbey Marriot Delta Hotel. Members are requested to remind their family, friends and constituents of the requirement to show voter id at these elections when they attend their own polling station to vote.
- The financial pressures faced by the Council has necessitated a reduction in the resources available, and some changes are planned to the service provided by the Democratic Services section:
 - From the new municipal year, Members will notice a change to the format of committee minutes. They will become more concise and focused on the outcome of discussions rather than the discussion itself. The Democratic Services section

has been reviewing the style of minutes employed at a number of other Councils for the various different committees to ensure that the Council is complying with legislation and best practice. The new format will be trialled for next municipal year and reviewed.

- The number of paper copies of agenda provided by the Democratic Services section for committee meetings will also be decreased in a further effort to reduce costs. From the beginning of the new municipal year, a trial is being instigated to only provide the Chairman of committees with a paper copy of an agenda. If a member wishes to receive a paper copy of the agenda for a meeting, then they will need to contact the Democratic Services section at least one week before the meeting to request it. Only members (or substitutes) of that committee will be able to receive a paper copy of the agenda and papers for that meeting. 'Blanket' requests for a paper copy of an agenda for a particular committee for the whole of the municipal year will not be accepted. Members who have forgotten their device a spare will be made available at meetings rather than providing a paper copy of the agenda.

- The latest Members Coffee Morning was held on Wednesday 1 March 2023 and support was provided by Democratic Services Officers to Councillors who required assistance with accessing or using the Modern.Gov app. Members are also reminded to report any IT issues in respect of accessing Committee agenda on the Modern.Gov app or accessing their Epping Forest Email addresses to the Member Services Team and/or the ICT Helpdesk for logging and resolution.

Communications & PR

- To enhance the **audio quality in the Council Chamber** and taking account of budgetary constraints, Facilities, ICT, Planning and Corporate Communications have been working with the assistance of several councillors to develop affordable enhancements to the audio and visual quality.
- A new Wi-Fi-based hearing assistance system based on smartphone technology is due to replace the outdated and inadequate IR hearing system. A new Digital Signal Processor (DSP) has been installed to improve audio quality along with new speakers to enhance sound quality. Larger TV monitors are being installed to aid viewing of PowerPoint and planning presentations.

Webcasting Update

- Microsoft Teams will replace Zoom for hybrid webcast meetings later this year. Members will be able to join meetings via the Council's licensed MS Teams app. Free MS Teams app and browser options are also available to external attendees such as objectors, applicants and parish councils at planning meetings.
- The move to MS Teams is part of the Council's wider savings. Further cost reductions have been identified in the Council's webcasting contract. From July, webcasting costs will be reduced by approximately 50 percent to £10,000 per year. Main webcasting commitments will be retained including the live streaming of
 - Full Council
 - Cabinet
 - O&S
 - DDMC
 - Plans Sub Committees

ICT

Service Management, Security & Networks

ICT are making continuous improvements to provide an efficient experience for all their customers, by providing training and controlled ticket management with realistic SLA's.

Tickets are being managed at first- and second-line support, reaching out to third line with all the information to empower them to complete the request efficiently and within SLA. The average ticket age has reduced, and complex tickets are being resolved more quickly, due to the one team approach.

KPI's – SLA Metrics & Analysis for w/c 27 February 2023

Tickets Raised	Outstanding	On Hold	Resolved	Within SLA	% Within SLA	Outside SLA	% Outside SLA
124	26	2	90	120	96%	0	100%

Customer Feedback February 2023

Satisfaction Level	Ticket Handling	Customer service	Technical skill	Time taken
Very satisfied	93%	93%	86%	93%
Satisfied	0%	7.00%	14%	7%
Dissatisfied	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Very Dissatisfied	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
(blank) No response	7%	0.40%	0.81%	0.40%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Customer comments on service provided:

- Quickly, Thank you.
- Sorted in seconds - with quick response to the HOTH - very happy.
- Johnathan was brilliant, very thorough and explained the things he was doing. Thanks.
- Prompt and complete fix.
- Joe was really helpful and knowledgeable 5 Stars.
- Quick service to resolve issue.
- Excellent service from Joe, who resolved the problem and took the time to explain what to do if it happened again. Thank you. Fabulous service from the helpdesk as always!

Strategy

The ICT strategy is being updated in line with the need to find efficiency savings in the service and across the business to ensure that resources are focussed upon the areas of greatest impact.

Projects – Business Applications and Infrastructure

17 priorities for the ICT to deliver mostly by the end of March with some into April 2023.

- Data capture form
- Replace backup repository servers
- Biffa/Whitespace server upgrade
- Azure AD for Mod.Gov
- General enquires form
- Members Portal
- Grounds maintenance moving to Qualis
- Decommission Boxi 4.1 Bular servers
- DR cost saving
- Licence issues on servers
- Website accessibility changes
- MS 0365 MFA
- People Safe contract renewal
- iTrent MFA
- Encrypted mail to our mail server
- TSG SharePoint scoping in Housing only
- SurveyMonkey contract renewal

The following projects have been delivered by ICT:

1. Linking Granicus to Azure AD
2. Replaced all EFDC printers to supplier Rioch
3. Moved an on-premises application Proval in Housing to SaaS
4. ICT completed the sandbox DR Test
5. Data Capture Form mentioned above is now built and go live planned for 9 March.

Corporate Projects

The Project Management Office (PMO) provides governance and project management resources.

The 'project portfolio' currently consists of 28 projects, which are either in 'scoping and design' or 'in delivery'. Of these, 28 a number are categorised as priority projects, which are strategically aligned to EFDC's Corporate Objectives. Priority projects are also reported on a quarterly basis through Overview and Scrutiny.

The Priority Projects in progress include:

- Financial ICT Systems Replacement
- Housing & Asset Management System
- Epping Leisure Centre (Contract Agreement & Implementation)
- Waste Management Contract
- Transfer Services to Qualis
- North Weald Master Planning/Enterprise Zone
- Local Plan
- M3 PP Proposal
- People Programme
- Green Agenda Programme

The PMO has continued to work on reviewing and aligning projects to EFDC's Corporate objectives so that time, effort, and money can be directed and supported on the right projects. Steering Groups continue to develop and evolve to support the roles of the key stakeholders involved.

Service Planning for the 23/24 financial year is underway for all Service Areas. Draft Service Plans have been received back from all Service Areas that identify proposed projects for the 23/24 delivery year. The PMO are currently working through each of these to assess and scrutinise. The output of this activity will allow EFDC to have a prioritised forward plan for delivery and an understanding of the resource capacity available to deliver. Final versions of Service Plans will be completed once this task has finished and the forward delivery plan agreed.

The PMO is also currently mapping out a process and timeline to complete a full health check/deep dive on all Priority Projects to identify any gaps, re-align where appropriate and identify opportunities for support. This task aligns with the work that is underway on Service Planning.

The PMO is moving forward with a procurement for licenses for TeamHood which will give us a tool to allow us to start to use a Kan Ban Board System which in turn will support our appetite for a greater level of agile project delivery within the organisation. Sadly, we were unsuccessful with our joint bid with Haringey Council for funding to implement a system called Monday.com. This leaves us with a gap for a system to support project delivery. However, we are hopeful that TeamHood will fill some of this.

Parking

Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Station Installations

Four rapid Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points have been installed at the Council's Bansons Lane off-street public car park in Ongar. The chargers are expected to go live by the end of March 2023 and will be the first public fast-charging points for electric vehicles in Ongar.

EFDC first partnered with InstaVolt for EV charging points in its Oakwood Hill East car park last year. Following this success, the Bansons Lane car park in Ongar was identified as another site to expand the number of public chargers offered in the Epping Forest area.

Rapid EV charging points in Burton Road car park in Debden is also currently being explored. The installation of EV chargers in the district aims to not only encourage use of electric vehicles but also improve air quality and reduce the district's carbon footprint as well as helping the Council meet its commitment to become carbon neutral by 2030.

Park Mark Award

The Council has been awarded Park Mark awards for 2023 and achieved retention of its Park Mark status in its off-street public car parks. The Park Mark award is a national standard to ensure safer parking and is awarded to car parks that have achieved the requirements of a risk assessment conducted by the Police Crime Prevention Initiative.

The assessments include management and maintenance of the facility, ensuring that there are appropriate levels of surveillance, lighting, signage, and cleanliness. These criteria are known to reduce the opportunity for crime and create a safer environment for the motorist and their vehicle.

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Report to the Council

Subject: Calendar of Meetings 2023/24 and Scrutiny Committee Restructure

Date: 4 April 2023.

Portfolio Holder: Internal Resources

Recommending:

- 1. That the following proposed changes from the Constitution Working Group to the Council's Scrutiny Committee structure be recommended to the Council for approval:**
 - (a) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be retained on the Council's Committee list;**
 - (b) That the Stronger Council Select Committee be removed from the Council's committee list and its work programme be absorbed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;**
 - (c) That the Stronger Communities and Stronger Place Select Committees be retained on the Council's committee list and their work programmes continue to be aligned with the corresponding key themes within the Council's Corporate Plan;**
 - (d) That the two select committees be renamed as the Communities Scrutiny Committee and the Place Scrutiny Committee;**
 - (e) That nominations for all three Scrutiny committees be undertaken by the Appointments Panel and recommended to the Annual Council meeting for approval each year – therefore, the first meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in June would not be required;**
 - (f) That the position of Chairmen for all Overview and Scrutiny Committees should be filled by a member outside of the majority group but experienced in scrutiny matters;**
 - (g) That the position of Vice-Chairmen for all Overview and Scrutiny Committees need not all be filled outside of the majority group; and**
 - (h) That the Monitoring Officer be delegated authority to make the necessary revisions within the Constitution to implement the changes above;**
- 2. That only the Chairman of Committees receive paper copies of agenda for their meetings from 2023/24; and**
- 3. That, as attached at Appendix 1, the draft Calendar of Council Meetings for 2023/24 be recommended to the Council for adoption.**

1. Democratic Services submit a draft Calendar of Council meetings each year to the Council for approval. Significant changes are proposed due to current inconsistencies and overlap in responsibilities creating confusion in reporting lines. As the Council is also facing the biggest financial challenge in years the changes proposed will also assist in reducing the cost of supporting meetings.

2. This year, the focus has been to ensure that the correct report lines are created to allow the relevant committees to be informed, to scrutinise and to make valuable contributions to the decisions of the Council. Emphasis on the financial framework and the scrutiny of the Medium-Term Financial Plan which includes the Budget Strategy and Capital Programmes have been used to develop the cycle of meetings as well as Performance Indicators. Various officers and departments have been consulted to ensure that their requirements for reporting have been considered.

3. In line with the strategic direction of the Cabinet, senior officers prepared 2023/24 saving proposals which included strengthening and streamlining the Council Governance arrangements. This included bringing forward proposals for consolidating and removing some meetings. Whilst a reduction in the size of the Democratic Services Team was included within the approved budget, a decision on altering current scrutiny arrangements rests with the Council. A decision to adopt the recommendations of the Constitution Working Group, in addition to strengthening governance arrangements, would also assist in delivering the approved budget.

4. Furthermore, to assist with the saving proposals and in promoting the objectives of the Climate Change Action Plan, it is recommended that only the Chairman of the relevant Committees receive a paper copy of the agenda and all other members of the Committee access the documents electronically. The Mod.gov app and Members Portal provide access to the documents and officers from Democratic Services, Member Services and ICT will and have been assisting Members with their own and Council supplied devices.

The Executive

5. The Cabinet is scheduled to meet 7 times throughout 2023/24 and the Cabinet Sub-Committees have been consolidated into the Cabinet. The first meeting of Cabinet has been scheduled for late May to ensure that the Cabinet approves the reserves by the required deadline. This will also be an annual requirement going forward.

6. The Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee and Local Plan Cabinet Committee are to be decommissioned, and all business to be considered through Cabinet. It is worth noting that Local Plan Cabinet Committee last met on the 17 October 2019 and must refer all recommendations to Cabinet and the last two Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee have been cancelled. If required, the Cabinet Housebuilding Cabinet Committee could be retained, and could meet as and when required.

Overview & Scrutiny

7. At a special meeting held on 16 March 2023, the Constitution Working Group considered options for the restructure of the Council's Scrutiny Committees for the 2023/24 municipal year. The drivers for this were the observable overlap between the work programmes of the Stronger Council Select Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the reduced capacity of the Democratic Services Team in 2023/24. In discussions between Officers and the Portfolio Holder for Internal Resources, two options emerged:

(i) Retention of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, plus the Stronger Communities and Stronger Place Select Committees, with the Stronger Council Select Committee being abolished; or

(ii) Retention of the three Select Committees – Stronger Council, Stronger Communities and Stronger Place – and the abolition of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

8. After a full debate, the Constitution Working Group resolved to recommend option (i) above to the Council for approval. The Working Group also considered a number of other matters in connection with the Council's Scrutiny function and have made a number of further recommendations for the Council to consider and agree.

9. The Working Group felt that the two remaining committees should not retain the 'Select Committee' name as they worked very differently to the Select Committees in the Houses of Parliament. It was felt that they should be renamed the Communities Scrutiny Committee and the Place Scrutiny Committee respectively.

10. In addition, the Group favoured the proposal under option (ii) for all of the Scrutiny Committees to be appointed at the Annual Council meeting in May. This would enable the first Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting in early June to be removed from the calendar, as the main business of this meeting is to appoint members to the Scrutiny Committees.

11. The proposal for the Chairman of the three proposed Scrutiny Committees to be members of the non-majority political group was also agreed, but that the Chairman should be experienced in Scrutiny matters. In respect of the Vice-Chairman positions, the Group was more relaxed about whether they could be filled by a member of the majority political group.

12. The Constitution Working Group also noted that it was intended to hold quarterly meetings between the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Scrutiny Committees to manage the work programmes of all three committees. In addition, there will be regular joint meetings between the Executive and Scrutiny Chairmen to manage the business passing between the two functions of the Council.

13. At the request of a member in attendance, the Constitution Working Group agreed that the proposals should go before one of the current Scrutiny Committees for their views. The report and the recommendations of the Constitution Working Group were considered by the Stronger Communities Select Committee at its meeting on 21 March 2023.

14. The Select Committee felt that the quality of Scrutiny was more important than the number of Scrutiny Committees, and they supported the recommendations of the Constitution Working Group.

Planning

15. It is proposed that the District Development Management Committee and the planning sub-committee meetings will revert to meeting every six weeks as agreed with the Planning Development Team Manager. The week of the Annual Council meeting has again been kept free of Planning meetings.

Licensing

16. Following consultation with Licensing Officers, the two scheduled meetings per month will continue, as not all items fall in line with the scheduled meeting at the start of each month. Predominantly the additional meeting is cancelled but it is felt that for both members of the committee and officers this date is scheduled to assist with availability. The extra dates also assist with urgent business that occurs as well.

17. There have been no evening meetings for Licensing in 2022/23 and this will continue. Although a Premises Review could be held in the evening, if the Chairman of the Licensing Committee felt that it would be in the public interest to do so.

18. All members of the Licensing Committee continue to meet twice a year to consider policy and procedural matters.

Miscellaneous Committees

19. Both the Youth Council and the Local Highways Panel have not been included in this schedule as it is felt that they are meetings which sit outside the Council Calendar. The Youth Council have their own programme, and although the Local Highways Panel involves both the County and District Councillors, they are not organised by the District Council.

20. The Appointments Panel has been scheduled for 11 May and 18 May, on the Thursdays during the weeks before the Annual Council and following the Local Elections on 4 May 2023.

21. The Local Councils Liaison Committee will again meet twice during the year.

Conclusion

22. The Council is requested to consider the draft Calendar of Council meetings for 2023/24, as attached at Appendix 1, and advise whether any further changes are required. However, it should be noted that with the reduction in the Governance team, any additional meetings should be given very careful consideration.

23. We recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.

Resource Implications:

Any substantial increase in the number of Member meetings could not be supported by the new structure within Democratic Services.

Legal and Governance Implications:

None foreseen, as the proposed Calendar allows the Council to fulfil its obligations under the various Local Government Acts.

Safer, Greener and Cleaner Implications:

A reduction in the number of paper copies of agenda produced for each meeting will assist the Council in meeting its commitments under the Climate Change Action Plan.

Consultation Undertaken:

Officers, Senior Leadership Team, Senior members of Cabinet, the Constitution Working Group, Stronger Communities Select Committee and the Portfolio Holder for Internal Resources as part of the budget setting process.

Background Papers:

None.

Risk Management:

That sufficient meetings would be scheduled for a committee to complete its business for the year; however, if it became apparent that this was not the case then additional meetings could be arranged as necessary. Similarly, meetings can be cancelled if there is a lack of business.

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	May-23	Jun-23	Jul-23	Aug-23	Sep-23	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24
Council	25		25			3		19		20		9	21
A&G		29	27				30			16	28		
Cabinet	30		10	21		9	13	4	15	5	18		
O&S			18			24			23			23	
Communities		27			26				16		5		
Place			4		19				9	27			
Appointment Panel	11,18												
Constitution Working Group			13			19					14		
LCLC		15								1			
Licensing Committee				15							19		
Licensing Sub-Committee (Day Time)	16	6	11	1, 29	12,26	3,31	7,28	5,19	30	6,20	12	2,23	
DDMC		7	19	30		11	23		10	21		3	
Area Planning Sub-Committee South	17	28		9	20		1	13	24		6	17	29
Area Planning Sub-Committee East	10	21	2		13	25		6	17	28		10	22
Area Planning Sub-Committee West	31		12	23		4	15		3	14	27		15

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Report to the Council

Committee: Licensing

Date: 04 April 2023

Subject: Gambling Act 2005 - Statement of Licensing Principles

Chairman: Councillor R Morgan

Recommending:

That Full Council adopt the revised statement of licensing principles.

1. On 22 March 2023, the Licensing Committee considered a report on renewing the Council's Statement on the Gambling Act 2005 – statement of licensing principles.
2. The Gambling Act 2005 requires all licensing authorities to prepare and publish a statement of licensing principles that they propose to apply in exercising their functions under the Act, commonly known as a policy statement. The policy must be reviewed every 3 years and where reviewed and changes proposed, licensing authorities must consult on any revision. The statement must then be re-published.
3. The policy statement sets out the licensing authorities' general approach to regulation under the Act, guides administration of its functions and its expectations in relation to operators with premises in the locality. It will assist in ensuring that an appropriate balance is drawn between the interests of those wishing to provide and take part in legal gambling, and those who might be affected by such activities.
4. The current policy was approved by the Council in 2020 and only minor amendments have been made to reflect the latest guidance and to update the area profile in line with the Essex County Council Census 2021 and the Office for National Statistics data.
5. The proposed Statement of Licensing Principles is attached at Appendix 1 of this report.
6. We recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.

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Gambling Act 2005

Statement of Licensing Policy

DRAFT

This policy will be reviewed in TBC 2026

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All references to the Guidance ~~are refer~~ to the Gambling Commission's Guidance to Licensing Authorities, ~~5th Edition~~, published ~~September 2015 and updated September 2016~~ April 2021.

PART A THE LICENSING OBJECTIVES

Fundamental Principles

In exercising their functions under the Gambling Act 2005, Epping Forest District Council, as the Licensing Authority, must have regard to ~~will promote~~ the licensing objectives as set out in Section 1 of the Act.

The licensing objectives are:

- Preventing gambling from being a source of crime or disorder, being associated with crime or disorder or being used to support crime;
- Ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way;
- Protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

It should be noted that the Gambling Commission has stated: "The requirement in relation to children is explicitly to protect them from being harmed or exploited by gambling".

This Licensing Authority is aware that, as specified in Section 153, in making decisions about premises licences and temporary use notices, it should aim to permit the use of premises for gambling in so far as it thinks it is:

- in accordance with any relevant code of practice issued by the Gambling Commission;
- in accordance with any relevant guidance issued by the Gambling Commission;
- reasonably consistent with the licensing objectives;
- in accordance with this Statement of Policy.

For the purpose of this document, reference to "the Act" means the Gambling Act 2005.

1. Introduction

Epping Forest District Council (the Licensing Authority) is situated in the County of Essex, which contains twelve District or Borough Councils and two Unitary Authorities. The district has six main centres of population (Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell, Epping, Loughton, Chipping Ongar and Waltham Abbey) and numerous picturesque villages and hamlets, but no natural centre. The majority of the district lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt, designed to restrict the spread of London into the Home Counties.

The district has a population of approximately ~~*131,140~~ 135,000 people, making it the ~~sixth~~ eighth largest local authority area in Essex in terms of population size and equates to an estimated increase of ~~816-10,300~~ since the 2011 census (a rise of ~~0.638.3%~~). Approximately half of the population live in the southwest of the district (Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell and Loughton). The remainder live in a mixture of market towns, villages and rural hamlets. The demographic of Epping Forest is similar to the county average, for children and young people aged 0-15 ~~4~~ (17.4%), 16-64 years old (~~61.463%~~) and older people aged 65+ (~~19.6~~ 19.4%). It is predicted that over the next 15 years the age split of the population will change slightly with a small increase in the proportion of older people (20.76%) and a small decrease in the percentage of young people aged 0-17 (18.3%) and residents aged 18-64 (60.9%).

* ~~Data from Public Health Intelligence Research and Insight Essex County Council Sept 2019~~ Essex County Council Census 2021 – initial release and The Office for National Statistics

Unemployment in the district is generally low and many residents enjoy a high standard of living, with Epping Forest representing the third highest (of 12) average income for Essex Districts. However, there are also areas of significant ~~disadvantaged~~ disadvantage, and the district has four of the wards amongst the ten most deprived in Essex.

This Policy will be published every three years; but it will also be reviewed periodically as a result of legislative or policy change. Following consultation, it will be updated and re-published on the Council website.

The Gambling Act requires that licensing authorities consult with the following parties on the revision of their Licensing Policy:

- The Chief Officer of Police;
- One or more persons who appear to the authority to represent the interests of persons carrying on gambling businesses in the authority's area;
- One or more persons who appear to the authority to represent the interests of persons who are likely to be affected by the exercise of the authority's functions under the Gambling Act 2005.

The list of persons this authority consulted is attached as Appendix B. The full list of comments made in response to the consultation is available via the Council's website.

Copies were placed in the public libraries of the area as well as being available in the Civic Offices and on the website

Should you have any comments regarding this policy statement please send them via email or letter to the following contact:

Name: Licensing Manager
Address: Civic Offices, High Street, Epping, Essex CM16 4BZ
E-mail: licensing@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

It should be noted that this policy statement will not override the right of any person to make an application, make representations about an application, or apply for a review of a licence, as each will be considered on its own merits and according to the statutory requirements of the Gambling Act 2005.

2. Declaration

In producing this policy, the Licensing Authority declares that it has had regard to the licensing objectives of the Gambling Act 2005, the Guidance issued by the Gambling Commission, and any responses from those consulted on it.

3. Responsible Authorities

The licensing authority is required by regulations to state the principles it will apply in exercising its powers under Section 157(h) of the Act to designate, in writing, a body which is

competent to advise the authority about the protection of children from harm. The principles are:

- the need for the body to be responsible for an area covering the whole of the licensing authority's area; and
- the need for the body to be answerable to democratically elected persons, rather than any particular vested interest group.

This Licensing Authority designates the Essex County Council's Safeguarding Children Service as the competent authority, as required under Section 157(h) of the Gambling Act, to advise about the protection of children from harm. The principles are:

4. Interested Parties

Interested parties can make representations about licence applications or apply for a review of an existing licence. These parties are defined in the Gambling Act 2005 as follows:

"For the purposes of this Part, a person is an interested party in relation to an application for or in respect of a premises licence if, in the opinion of the Licensing Authority which issues the licence or to which the applications are made, the person -

- (a) lives sufficiently close to the premises to be likely to be affected by the authorised activities;
- (b) has business interests that might be affected by the authorised activities; or
- (c) represents persons who satisfy paragraph (a) or (b)."

The Licensing Authority is required by regulations to state the principles it will apply in exercising its powers under the Gambling Act 2005 to determine whether a person is an Interested Party. The following principles apply:

Each case will be decided upon its merits. This authority will not apply a rigid rule to its decision making. It will consider the examples of considerations provided in the Gambling Commission's Guidance ~~for to~~ Local Licensing Authorities. It will also consider the Gambling Commission's Guidance that "has business interests" should be given the widest possible interpretation and include partnerships, charities, faith groups and medical practices.

Persons who are democratically elected, such as Councillors and MPs, can be Interested Parties and are not required to evidence that they are acting on the direct request of constituents, provided they represent a ward likely to be affected. Likewise, where premises or activities relevant to this policy may affect a parish, that parish will be considered to be an Interested Party. In all other cases, this authority will generally require written evidence that a person/body (e.g. an advocate/relative) 'represents' someone who meets criteria (a) or (b) above. A letter from one of those persons, requesting the representation is sufficient.

If individuals wish to approach Councillors to ask them to represent their views, then care should be taken that the Councillors are not part of the Licensing Committee dealing with the licence application.

5. Exchange of Information

Licensing authorities are required to include in their statements, the principles they will apply in exercising the functions under sections 29 and 30 of the Act, with respect to the exchange of information between it and the Gambling Commission, and the functions under section 350 of the Act with respect to the exchange of information between it and the other persons listed in Schedule 6 to the Act.

The principles of this Licensing Authority are that it will be compliant with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), relating to the sharing of information; it will also have regard to any Guidance issued by the Gambling Commission on this matter, as well as any relevant regulations issued by the Secretary of State under the powers provided in the Gambling Act 2005. Any protocols that may be established regarding information exchange with other bodies, will be made available.

6. Public Register

The Licensing Authority is required to keep a public register and share information in it with the Gambling Commission and others (e.g. H.M. Revenue and Customs). A Public Register is available on the Licensing Authority's website that includes a list of all current licensed premises and permits under The Gambling Act 2005 within its District.

7. Enforcement

Licensing authorities are required by regulation under the Gambling Act 2005 to state the principles to be applied by the authority in exercising the functions under Part 15 of the Act, with respect to the inspection of premises; and the powers under section 346 of the Act to institute criminal proceedings in respect of the offences specified.

This Licensing Authority will be guided by the Gambling Commission's Guidance to Licensing Authorities and will endeavor to be:

- Proportionate: we will only intervene when necessary; remedies will be appropriate to the risk posed and costs identified;
- Accountable: we will be able to justify decisions, and be subject to public scrutiny;
- Consistent: rules and standards will be joined up and implemented fairly;
- Transparent: we will be open, and keep regulations simple and user friendly;
- Targeted: we will be focused on the problem, and minimise side effects.

In accordance with the Gambling Commission's Guidance for Local Authorities, the Licensing Authority will endeavor to avoid duplication with other regulatory regimes so far as possible.

This Licensing Authority has adopted and implemented a risk-based inspection programme, based on:

- The licensing objectives;
- Relevant codes of practice;
- Guidance issued by the Gambling Commission, in particular at Part 36;
- The principles set out in this Statement of Licensing Policy.

The main enforcement and compliance role for the Licensing Authority in terms of the Gambling Act 2005 is to ensure compliance with the Premises Licences and other permissions which it authorises. The Gambling Commission is the enforcement body for the Operating and Personal Licences. It is also worth noting that concerns about manufacture, supply or repair

of gaming machines are not dealt with by the Licensing Authority but should be notified to the Gambling Commission.

Bearing in mind the principle of transparency, this Licensing Authority's enforcement / compliance protocols / written agreements will be available upon request to the Licensing Section, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping Essex CM16 4BZ and email: licensing@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

8. Licensing Authority Functions

The Licensing Authority is required under the Gambling Act 2005 to:

- Be responsible for the licensing of premises where gambling activities are to take place by issuing Premises Licences;
- Issue Provisional Statements;
- Regulate members' clubs and miners' welfare institutes who wish to undertake certain gaming activities via issuing Club Gaming Permits and/or Club Machine Permits;
- Issue Club Machine Permits to Commercial Clubs;
- Grant permits for the use of certain lower stake gaming machines at unlicensed Family Entertainment Centres;
- Receive notifications from alcohol licensed premises (under the Licensing Act 2003) of the use of two or fewer gaming machines;
- Grant Licensed Premises Gaming Machine Permits for premises licensed to sell/supply alcohol for consumption on the licensed premises, under the Licensing Act 2003, where more than two machines are required;
- Register small society lotteries below prescribed thresholds;
- Issue Prize Gaming Permits;
- Receive and Endorse Temporary Use Notices;
- Receive Occasional Use Notices;
- Provide information to the Gambling Commission regarding details of licences issued;
- Maintain registers of the permits and licences that are issued under these functions.

The Licensing Authority is not involved in licensing remote gambling at all. This is regulated by the Gambling Commission via Operating Licences. [The Financial Services Authority regulates spread betting and the National Lottery Commission regulates the National Lottery.](#)

PART B PREMISES LICENCES

1. General Principles

Premises licences are subject to the requirements set out in the Gambling Act 2005 and regulations, as well as specific mandatory and default conditions, which are detailed in regulations issued by the Secretary of State. Licensing authorities are able to exclude default conditions and also attach others, where it is believed to be appropriate.

2. Decision Making

~~The Licensing Authority, in making decisions about premises licences, will follow the Fundamental principles outlines above, to permit the use of premises for gambling in so far as it thinks it is:~~ [This licensing authority is aware that in making decisions about premises licences](#)

it shall aim to permit the use of premises for gambling as set out in s.153 of the Act, in so far as it thinks it:

- in accordance with any relevant code of practice issued by the Gambling Commission;
- in accordance with any relevant guidance issued by the Gambling Commission;
- reasonably consistent with the licensing objectives; and
- in accordance with this licensing policy.

In accordance with the Gambling Commission's Guidance to Licensing Authorities "moral objections to gambling are not a valid reason to reject applications for premises licences" (except as regards any 'no casino resolution' - see section on Casinos), also that unmet demand is not a criterion for a licensing authority.

3. Definition of Premises

In the Act, "premises" is defined as including "any place." Section 152 therefore prevents more than one premises licence applying to any place. But a single building could be subject to more than one premises licence, provided they are for different parts of the building and the different parts of the building can be reasonably regarded as being different premises. This approach has been taken to allow large multiple unit premises, such as a pleasure park, pier, track or shopping mall to obtain discrete premises licences, where appropriate safeguards are in place. However, licensing authorities should pay particular attention if there are issues about sub-divisions of a single building or plot and should ensure that mandatory conditions relating to access between premises are observed.

The Gambling Commission states that: "In most cases the expectation is that a single building/plot will be the subject of an application for a licence, for example, 32 High Street. That does not mean 32 High Street cannot be the subject of separate premises licences for the basement and ground floor, if they are configured acceptably. Whether different parts of a building can properly be regarded as being separate premises will depend on the circumstances. The location of the premises will clearly be an important consideration and the suitability of the division is likely to be a matter for discussion between the operator and the Licensing Authority. However, the Commission does not consider that areas of a building that are artificially or temporarily separated, for example by ropes or moveable partitions, can properly be regarded as different premises."

In accordance with the Gambling Commission's Guidance, this Licensing Authority will take particular care in considering applications for multiple licences for a building and those relating to a discrete part of a building used for other (non-gambling) purposes. This will include, in particular:

- The licensing objective that seeks to protect children from being harmed by gambling. In practice that means not only preventing them from taking part in gambling, but also preventing them from being in close proximity to gambling. Therefore, premises should be configured so that children are not invited to participate in, have accidental access to, or closely observe gambling, where they are prohibited from participating;
- Entrances to and exits from parts of a building covered by one or more premises licences should be separate and identifiable, so that the separation of different premises are not compromised, and people do not "drift" into a gambling area. In this

context, it should normally be possible to access the premises without going through another licensed premises or premises with a permit;

- Customers should be able to participate in the activity named on the premises licence.

The Licensing Authority will also take account of other relevant factors, which may include:

- Do the premises have a separate registration for business rates?
- Is the premises' neighbouring premises owned by the same person or someone else?
- Can each of the premises be accessed from the street or a public passageway?
- Can the premises only be accessed from any other gambling premises?

This authority will consider these and other relevant factors in making its decision, depending on all the circumstances of the case.

The Gambling Commission's relevant access provisions for each premises type are reproduced below:

Casinos

- The principal access entrance to the premises must be from a street (as defined at 7.23 of the Guidance);
- No entrance to a casino must be from premises that are used wholly or mainly by children and/or young persons;
- No customer must be able to enter a casino directly from any other premises which holds a gambling premises licence.

Adult Gaming Centre

- No customer must be able to access the premises directly from any other licensed gambling premises

Betting Shops

- Access must be from a street (as per paragraph 7.23 of the Gambling Commission's Guidance to Licensing Authorities) or from premises with a betting premises licence;
- There must be no direct access from a betting shop to a premises used for the retail sale of merchandise or services. In effect there cannot be an entrance to a betting shop from a shop of any kind and if there was to be a betting shop at the back of a café, the whole area would have to be licensed.

Tracks

No customer should be able to access the premises directly from a casino or an adult gaming centre.

Bingo Premises

No customer must be able to access the premises directly from a casino, an adult gaming centre or a betting premises, other than a track.

Family Entertainment Centre

No customer must be able to access the premises directly from a casino, an adult gaming centre or a betting premises, other than a track.

Part 7 of the Gambling Commission's Guidance to Licensing Authorities contains further guidance on this issue, which this Licensing Authority will also take into account in its decision making.

4. Premises "ready for gambling"

The Guidance states that a licence to use premises for gambling should only be issued in relation to premises that the Licensing Authority can be satisfied are going to be ready to be used for gambling in the reasonably near future, consistent with the scale of building or alterations required before the premises are brought into use.

If the construction of a premises is not yet complete, or if they need alteration, or if the applicant does not yet have a right to occupy them, then an application for a provisional statement should be made instead.

In deciding whether a premises licence can be granted where there are outstanding construction or alterations, this authority will determine applications on their merits, applying a two-stage consideration process:

- Firstly, whether the premises ought to be permitted to be used for gambling;
- Secondly, whether appropriate conditions can be put in place to cater for the situation that the premises are not yet in the state in which they ought to be before gambling takes place.

Applicants should note that this authority is entitled to decide that it is appropriate to grant a licence subject to conditions, but it is not obliged to grant such a licence.

More detailed examples of the circumstances in which such a licence may be granted can be found in the Guidance.

5. Location

This Licensing Authority is aware that demand issues cannot be considered with regard to the location of premises, but that considerations in terms of the licensing objectives are relevant to its decision making. As required by the Gambling Commission's Guidance to Licensing Authorities, this authority will pay particular attention to the protection of children and vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling, as well as issues of crime and disorder. The applicant must show that they have taken into account such issues as the proximity of schools, centres for vulnerable adults or residential areas with a high concentration of families with children. Should any other specific policy be decided upon as regards areas where gambling premises should not be located, this policy will be updated. It should be noted that this policy does not preclude any application being made and each application will be decided on its merits, with the onus upon the applicant showing how potential concerns can be overcome.

Applicants will be expected to provide with their applications:

- Details of how the premises will operate to restrict access from children and vulnerable people;
- Whether a proof of age scheme is being used;
- If an appropriate number of security staff are employed at appropriate times;
- What the opening times are in order that they do not coincide with schools start and finish times.

6. Planning

This Licensing Authority, in determining applications, will take into consideration, all relevant matters and will not take into consideration any irrelevant matters, i.e. those not related to gambling and the licensing objectives. One example of an irrelevant matter would be the likelihood of the applicant obtaining planning permission or building regulations approval for their proposal; those matters should be dealt with under relevant planning control and building regulation powers, and not form part of the consideration for the premises licence. Equally, fire or health and safety risks will not be taken into account, as these matters are dealt with under other relevant legislation and must not form part of the consideration for the premises licence.

Section 210 of the 2005 Act prevents licensing authorities taking into account the likelihood of the proposal by the applicant obtaining planning or building consent when considering a premises licence application. Equally the grant of a gambling premises licence does not prejudice or prevent any action that may be appropriate under the law relating to planning or building.

7. Duplication with other Regulatory Regimes

Although the Licensing Authority seeks to avoid any duplication with other statutory/regulatory systems where possible, it will listen to, and consider carefully, any concerns about conditions which are not able to be met by licensees due to planning or other restrictions, should such a situation arise.

8. Licensing Objectives

Premises licences granted must be reasonably consistent with the licensing objectives. With regard to these objectives, this licensing authority has considered the Gambling Commission's Guidance to Licensing Authorities and some comments are made below.

Preventing gambling from being a source of crime or disorder, being associated with crime or disorder or being used to support crime. This Licensing Authority notes that the Gambling Commission will be taking a leading role in preventing gambling from being a source of crime and that it has intended disorder to mean activity that is more serious and disruptive than mere nuisance.— The Gambling Commission's Guidance does, however, envisage that licensing authorities should pay attention to the proposed location of gambling premises in terms of this licensing objective. Thus, where an area has known high levels of organised crime, this authority will consider carefully whether gambling premises are suitable to be located there and whether conditions may be suitable, such as the provision of door supervisors. This Licensing Authority is aware of the distinction between disorder and nuisance and will consider various factors in order to make that distinction, (for example whether police assistance was required and how threatening the behaviour was to those who could see it).

Ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way. This Licensing Authority notes that the Gambling Commission states that it generally does not expect licensing authorities to be concerned with ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way, as this will be addressed via operating and personal licences.

Protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling. This Licensing Authority notes the Gambling Commission's Guidance, that this objective means preventing children from taking part in gambling (as well as restriction of advertising so that gambling products are not aimed at or are particularly attractive to children). The Licensing Authority will therefore consider, as suggested in the Gambling Commission's Guidance, whether specific measures are required at particular premises, with regard to this licensing objective. Appropriate measures may include supervision of entrances / machines, segregation of areas etc.

The Licensing Authority acknowledges that Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) does not just apply to children on licensed premises, particularly as children are not permitted access to most gambling premises, however applicants should be equally aware of children in the proximity of the premises that may be waiting for or seeking older persons. There should be:

- regular staff training and awareness raising programmes;
- regular patrols of the premises including adjoining or outside areas to identify children outside a licensed premises or meeting adults leaving a licensed premises;
- raised awareness of children looking uncomfortable in the company of, or leaving a premises with, older people.

The Licensing Authority does not wish to create an impression that all contact between adults and children is inappropriate, however, operators must be made aware of the risks of CSE and should proactively minimise the risk.

This Licensing Authority is also aware of the Gambling Commission Codes of Practice as regards this licensing objective, in relation to specific premises.

Codes of practice are either:

- social responsibility code provisions - which must be adhered to by all licence holders;
- ordinary code provisions - these do not have the status of licence conditions but failure to take account of them can be used as evidence in criminal or civil proceedings.

Operators must comply with the code provisions covering risk assessments and local authority area profiles.

Assessing local risk

Licensees must assess the local risks to the licensing objectives posed by the provision of gambling facilities at each of their premises, and have policies, procedures and control measures to mitigate those risks. In making risk assessments, licensees must take into account relevant matters identified in the licensing authority's statement of licensing policy.

Licensees must review (and update as necessary) their local risk assessments:

- to take account of significant changes in local circumstances, including those identified in a licensing authority's statement of licensing policy;
- when there are significant changes at a licensee's premises that may affect their mitigation of local risks;
- when applying for a variation of a premises licence; and
- when applying for a new premises licence.

This Licensing Authority will expect the local risk assessment to consider as a minimum:

- the location of services for children such as schools, playgrounds, leisure/community centres and other areas where children will gather;
- the demographics of the area in relation to vulnerable groups;
- whether the premises is in an area subject to high levels of crime and/or disorder;
- local risk assessments should show how vulnerable people, including people with gambling dependencies, are protected.

The Risk Assessment should be kept on the individual premises and made available for inspection by the Licensing Authority on request.

Sharing local risk assessments

Licensees should share their risk assessment with licensing authorities when applying for a premises licence or applying for a variation to existing licensed premises, or otherwise, on request.

9. Local Area Profiles

Risk assessments can make reference to the Local Authority's Area Profile which may include reported gambling-related problems in an area. At the time of preparing this edition of the Statement of Licensing Policy, there has been no evidence presented to Epping Forest District Council to support the assertion that any part had or is experiencing problems from gambling activities. This position will be kept under review and, in the event that it changes, further research will be carried out to discover the extent of the problems and to prepare an Area Profile accordingly.

As regards the term "vulnerable persons", it is noted that the Gambling Commission does not seek to offer a definition but states that "it will for regulatory purposes assume that this group includes people who gamble more than they want to; people who gamble beyond their means; and people who may not be able to make informed or balanced decisions about gambling due to a mental impairment, alcohol or drugs." This Licensing Authority will consider this licensing objective on a case by case basis.

10. Conditions

Any conditions attached to licences will be proportionate and will be:

- relevant to the need to make the proposed building suitable as a gambling facility;
- directly related to the premises and the type of licence applied for;
- fairly and reasonably related to the scale and type of premises; and
- reasonable in all other respects.

Decisions upon individual conditions will be made on a case by case basis, and there will be a number of measures this Licensing Authority will consider utilising should there be a perceived need, such as the use of supervisors, appropriate signage for adult only areas etc. There are specific comments made in this regard under some of the licence types below. This

Licensing Authority will also expect the licence applicant to offer their own suggestions as to ways in which the licensing objectives can be met effectively.

This Licensing Authority will also consider specific measures which may be required for buildings which are subject to multiple premises licences. Such measures may include the supervision of entrances; segregation of gambling from non-gambling areas frequented by children; and the supervision of gaming machines in non-adult gambling specific premises, in order to pursue the licensing objectives. These matters are in accordance with the Gambling Commission's Guidance.

It is noted that there are conditions which the Licensing Authority cannot attach to premises licences, which are:

- any condition on the premises licence which makes it impossible to comply with an operating licence condition;
- conditions relating to gaming machine categories, numbers, or method of operation;
- conditions which provide that membership of a club or body be required (the Gambling Act 2005 specifically removes the membership requirement for casino and bingo clubs and this provision prevents it being reinstated);
- conditions in relation to stakes, fees, winning or prizes.

Category C machines or above

This authority will also ensure that where category C or above machines are on offer in premises to which children are admitted:

- all such machines are located in an area of the premises which is separated from the remainder of the premises by a physical barrier which is effective to prevent access other than through a designated entrance;
- only adults are admitted to the area where these machines are located;
- access to the area where the machines are located is supervised;
- the area where these machines are located is arranged so that it can be observed by the staff or the licence holder; and
- at the entrance to and inside any such areas there are prominently displayed notices indicating that access to the area is prohibited to persons under 18.

These considerations will apply to premises including buildings where multiple premises licences are applicable.

Door Supervisors

The Gambling Commission advises in its Guidance to Licensing Authorities that if a Licensing Authority is concerned that a premises may attract disorder or be subject to attempts at unauthorised access (for example by children and young persons), then it may require that the entrances to the premises are controlled by a door supervisor, and is entitled to impose a premises licence condition to this effect.

Where it is decided that supervision of entrances/machines is appropriate for particular cases, a consideration of whether these need to be SIA licensed or not will be necessary. It will not be automatically assumed that they need to be licensed, as the statutory requirements for different types of premises vary (as per the Guidance, Part 33).

Credit

Credit facilities are prohibited from being provided in casinos and bingo licensed premises. Cash machines (ATMs) may be installed in such premises. All premises licences include a mandatory condition which requires that any ATM made available for use on the premises, must be located in a place that requires any customer who uses the ATM to cease gambling in order to do so.

Adult Gaming Centres and Licensed Family Entertainment Centres

This Licensing Authority will specifically have regard to the need to protect children and vulnerable persons from harm or being exploited by gambling and will expect the applicant to satisfy the authority that there will be sufficient measures to, for example, ensure that persons under 18 years do not have access to the premises.

This Licensing Authority may consider measures to meet the licensing objectives such as:

- Proof of age schemes;
- CCTV;
- Supervision of entrances / machine areas;
- Physical separation of areas;
- Location of entry;
- Notices / signage;
- Specific opening hours;
- Self-exclusion schemes;
- Provision of information leaflets / helpline numbers for organisations such as GamCare.

This list is not mandatory, nor exhaustive, and is merely indicative of example measures.

Casinos

The Licensing Authority has not passed a 'no casino' resolution under Section 166 of the Gambling Act 2005 but is aware that it has the power to do so. Should this Licensing Authority decide in the future to pass such a resolution, it will update this policy statement with details of that resolution. Any such resolution will be made by Full Council.

Bingo Premises

The Gambling Commission's Guidance states:

"Licensing authorities will need to satisfy themselves that bingo can be played in any bingo premises for which they issue a premises licence". This will be a relevant consideration where the operator of an existing bingo premises applies to vary their licence to exclude an area of the existing premises from its ambit and then applies for a new premises licence, or multiple licences, for that or those excluded areas.

Gaming machines must remain within the licensed area covered by the premises licence. In unusual circumstances that an existing bingo premises covered by one premises licence applies to vary the licence and acquire additional bingo premises (so that the area that was the subject of a single licence would become divided between a number of separate licensed premises) it is not permissible for all gaming machines to be grouped together with one of the licensed premises

Children and young people are allowed to enter bingo premises; however, they are not permitted to participate in bingo and if category B or C machines are available for use, these must be separated from areas where children and young people are allowed.”

Betting Premises

Betting machines - This Licensing Authority will, in accordance with the Gambling Commission's Guidance, take into account the size of the premises, the number of counter positions available for person-to-person transactions, and the ability of staff to monitor the use of the machines by children and young persons (it is an offence for those under 18 to bet) or by vulnerable people, when considering the number/nature/circumstances of betting machines an operator wants to offer.

Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (FOBT's)

In respect to nationally expressed concerns that exist in relation to the potentially adverse impact FOBT's may have on vulnerable groups of adults, the Licensing Authority will apply conditions to betting shop premises licences including, but not limited to, setting out minimum staffing levels to ensure sufficient staff are on the premises to comprehensively promote responsible gambling, adequately protect players, particularly in relation to those who are deemed to be vulnerable and to prevent persons under 18 years accessing gambling facilities.

In particular, applicants will be expected to show how they will prevent access to under 18's.

Tracks

Tracks may be subject to one, or more than one, premises licence, provided each licence relates to a specified area of the track. In accordance with the Gambling Commission's Guidance, this Licensing Authority will especially consider the impact upon the third licensing objective (i.e. the protection of children and vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling) and the need to ensure that entrances to each type of premises are distinct and that children are excluded from gambling areas where they are not permitted to enter.

This authority will therefore expect the premises licence applicant to demonstrate suitable measures to ensure that children do not have access to adult only gaming facilities. It is noted that children and young persons will be permitted to enter track areas where facilities for betting are provided on days when dog-racing and/or horse racing takes place, but that they are still prevented from entering areas where gaming machines (other than category D machines) are provided.

This Licensing Authority may consider measures to meet the licensing objectives such as those outlined above.

Gaming machines - Where the applicant holds a pool betting operating licence and is going to use the entitlement to four gaming machines, machines (other than category D machines) should be located in areas from which children are excluded.

Betting machines - This Licensing Authority will take into account the size of the premises and the ability of staff to monitor the use of the machines by children and young persons (it is an offence for those under 18 to bet) or by vulnerable people, when considering the number/nature/circumstances of betting machines an operator proposes to offer.

The Local Authority considers a gaming machine is 'available for use' if a player can take steps to play it without the assistance of the operator. Where more than the permitted number

of machines are physically located on a premises, licensees will need to demonstrate that no more than the permitted number are 'available for use' at any one time

11. Applications and Plans

The Gambling Act (s51) requires applicants to submit plans of the premises with their application, in order to ensure that the Licensing Authority has the necessary information to make an informed judgement about whether the premises are fit for gambling. The plan will also be used for the Licensing Authority to plan future premises inspection activity.

Plans for tracks do not need to be in a particular scale but should be drawn to scale and should be sufficiently detailed to include the information required by regulations.

Some tracks may be situated on agricultural land where the perimeter is not defined by virtue of an outer wall or fence, such as point-to-point racetracks. In such instances, where an entry fee is levied, track premises licence holders may erect temporary structures to restrict access to premises.

In the rare cases where the outer perimeter cannot be defined, it is likely that the track in question will not be specifically designed for the frequent holding of sporting events or races. In such cases, betting facilities may be better provided through occasional use notices where the boundary premises do not need to be defined.

This authority appreciates that it is sometimes difficult to define the precise location of betting areas on tracks. The precise location of where betting facilities are provided is not required to be shown on track plans, both by virtue of the fact that betting is permitted anywhere on the premises and because of the difficulties associated with pinpointing exact locations for some types of track. Applicants should provide sufficient information that this authority can satisfy itself that the plan indicates the main areas where betting might take place. For racecourses, in particular, any betting areas subject to the "five times rule" (commonly known as betting rings) must be indicated on the plan.

Travelling Fairs

Where category D machines and/or 'equal chance prize gaming without a permit' is provided at Travelling Fairs, the Licensing Authority will require that the facilities for gambling amount to no more than an ancillary amusement at the fair.

The Licensing Authority will also consider whether the applicant falls within the statutory definition of a travelling fair.

It is noted that the ~~27-day~~ 27-day statutory maximum for the land being used as a fair, is per calendar year, and that it applies to the piece of land on which the fairs are held, regardless of whether it is the same or different travelling fairs occupying the land. The Licensing Authority will work with its neighbouring authorities to ensure that land which crosses our boundaries is monitored, so that the statutory limits are not exceeded.

Provisional Statements

Developers may wish to apply to this authority for provisional statements before entering into a contract to buy or lease property or land, to judge whether a development is worth taking forward in light of the need to obtain a premises licence. There is no need for the applicant to hold an operating licence in order to apply for a provisional statement.

S204 of the Gambling Act provides for a person to make an application to the Licensing Authority for a provisional statement in respect of premises that he or she:

- expects to be constructed;
- expects to be altered; or
- expects to acquire a right to occupy.

The process for considering an application for a provisional statement is the same as that for a premises licence application. The applicant is obliged to give notice of the application in the same way as applying for a premises licence. Responsible Authorities and Interested Parties may make representations and there are rights of appeal.

In contrast to the premises licence application, the applicant does not have to hold or have applied for an operating licence from the Gambling Commission (except in the case of a track) and they do not have to have a right to occupy the premises in respect of which their provisional application is made.

The holder of a provisional statement may then apply for a premises licence once the premises are constructed, altered or acquired. The Licensing Authority will be constrained in the matters it can consider when determining the premises licence application, and in terms of representations about premises licence applications that follow the grant of a provisional statement, no further representations from relevant authorities or interested parties can be taken into account unless:

- they concern matters which could not have been addressed at the provisional statement stage; or
- they reflect a change in the applicant's circumstances.

In addition, the authority may refuse the premises licence (or grant it on terms different to those attached to the provisional statement) only by reference to matters:

- which could not have been raised by objectors at the provisional licence stage; or
- which, in the authority's opinion, reflect a change in the operator's circumstances.

Where the premises has not been constructed in accordance with the plan and information submitted with the provisional statement application. This must be a substantial change from the plan and licensing authorities should discuss any concerns they have with the applicant before making a decision.

12. Reviews

Requests for a review of a premises licence can be made by Interested Parties or Responsible Authorities. It is for the Licensing Authority, however, to decide whether the review is to be carried out. This will be on the basis of whether the request for the review is relevant to the matters listed below, as well as consideration as to whether the request is frivolous, vexatious, repetitious, or will certainly not cause this authority to wish to alter, revoke or suspend the licence.

Reviews will be carried out:

- in accordance with any relevant code of practice issued by the Gambling Commission;

- in accordance with any relevant guidance issued by the Gambling Commission;
- if the request is reasonably consistent with the licensing objectives; and
- in accordance with this statement of licensing principles.

The Licensing Authority can also initiate a review of a licence for any reason which it thinks is appropriate.

Once a valid application for a review has been received by the Licensing Authority, representations can be made by Responsible Authorities and Interested Parties during a 28 day period. This period begins 7 days after the application was received by the Licensing Authority, who will publish notice of the application within 7 days of receipt.

The Licensing Authority must carry out the review as soon as possible after the 28 day period for making representations has passed.

The purpose of the review will be to determine whether the Licensing Authority should take any action in relation to the licence. If action is justified, the options open to the Licensing Authority are:

- add, remove or amend a licence condition imposed by the Licensing Authority;
- exclude a default condition imposed by the Secretary of State (e.g. opening hours) or remove or amend such an exclusion;
- suspend the premises licence for a period not exceeding three months;
- revoke the premises licence.

In determining what action, if any, should be taken following a review, the Licensing Authority must have regard to the principles set out in section 153 of the Act, as well as any relevant representations.

In particular, the Licensing Authority may also initiate a review of a premises licence on the grounds that a premises licence holder has not provided facilities for gambling at the premises. This is to prevent people from applying for licences in a speculative manner without intending to use them.

Once the review has been completed, the Licensing Authority must, as soon as possible, notify its decision to:

- the licence holder;
- the applicant for review (if any);
- the Commission;
- any person who made representations;
- the Chief Officer of Police or Chief Constable; and
- ~~Her~~His Majesty's Commissioners for Revenue and Customs.

PART C - PERMITS/TEMPORARY & OCCASIONAL USE NOTICE

1. Unlicensed Family Entertainment Centre Gaming Machine Permits

Where a premises does not hold a Premises Licence but wishes to provide gaming machines, it must apply to the Licensing Authority for a permit. The applicant must show that the premises will be wholly or mainly used for making gaming machines available for use.

The Gambling Act 2005 states that a Licensing Authority may prepare a statement of principles that they propose to consider in determining the suitability of an applicant for a permit and in preparing this statement, and/or considering applications, it need not (but may) have regard to the licensing objectives and shall have regard to any relevant guidance issued by the Commission under section 25. The Gambling Commission's Guidance to Licensing Authorities also states: "In their three year licensing policy statement, licensing authorities may include a statement of principles that they propose to apply when exercising their functions in considering applications for permits...., licensing authorities will want to give weight to child protection issues."

Guidance also states: "...An application for a permit may be granted only if the Licensing Authority is satisfied that the premises will be used as an unlicensed FEC (Family Entertainment Centre), and if the Chief Officer of Police has been consulted on the application. Licensing authorities might wish to consider asking applicants to demonstrate:

- a full understanding of the maximum stakes and prizes of the gambling that is permissible in unlicensed FECs;
- that the applicant has no relevant convictions (those that are set out in Schedule 7 of the Act); and
- that staff are trained to have a full understanding of the maximum stakes and prizes.

It should be noted that a Licensing Authority cannot attach conditions to this type of permit.

This Licensing Authority will expect the applicant to show that there are policies and procedures in place to protect children from harm. Harm in this context is not limited to harm from gambling but includes wider child protection considerations. The efficiency of such policies and procedures will each be considered on their merits, however, they may include appropriate measures / training for staff as regards suspected truant school children on the premises, measures / training covering how staff would deal with unsupervised very young children being on the premises, or children causing perceived problems on / around the premises, DBS checks for staff.

This Licensing Authority will also expect, as per Gambling Commission Guidance, that applicants demonstrate a full understanding of the maximum stakes and prizes of the gambling that is permissible in unlicensed FECs, that the applicant has no relevant convictions (those that are set out in Schedule 7 of the Act) and that staff are trained to have a full understanding of the maximum stakes and prizes.

2. Alcohol Licensed Premises Gaming Machine Permits

Automatic Entitlement: 2 machines

Premises licensed to sell alcohol for consumption on the premises may automatically have two gaming machines, of categories C and/or D. The premises must notify the Licensing Authority of their intention to exercise this right, but they may remove this automatic authorisation in respect of any particular premises if:

- provision of the machines is not reasonably consistent with the pursuit of the licensing objectives;

- gaming has taken place on the premises that breaches a condition of section 282 of the Gambling Act (i.e. that written notice has been provided to the Licensing Authority, that a fee has been provided and that any relevant code of practice issued by the Gambling Commission about the location and operation of the machine has been complied with);
- the premises are mainly used for gaming; or
- an offence under the Gambling Act has been committed on the premises.

Permit for three or more machines

If a premises wishes to have more than two machines, then it must apply for a permit. The Licensing Authority will consider the application based upon the licensing objectives, any guidance issued by the Gambling Commission issued under Section 25 of the Gambling Act 2005, and such matters as it thinks relevant.

Each case will be considered on its merits, but, generally, it will consider the need to protect children and vulnerable persons from harm or being exploited by gambling and will expect the applicant to satisfy them that there will be sufficient measures to ensure that persons under 18 years do not have access to “adult only” gaming machines. Measures which will satisfy the authority that there will be no access may include:

- Supervision of machine areas;
- Physical separation of areas;
- Notices / signage;
- The location of gaming machines

This list is not exhaustive.

As regards the protection of vulnerable persons, the Licensing Authority will consider measures such as the use of self-barring schemes, provision of information leaflets/helpline numbers for organisations such as GamCare. It should be noted that the Licensing Authority can decide to grant the application with a smaller number of machines and/or a different category of machines than that applied for. Conditions (other than these) cannot be attached. The holder of a permit must comply with any Code of Practice issued by the Gambling Commission about the location and operation of the machine. Where an alcohol licensed premises applies for a premises licence for their non-alcohol licensed areas, any such application would need to be applied for as an Adult Entertainment Centre premises licence.

3. Prize Gaming Permits

The Gambling Act 2005 states that a Licensing Authority may “prepare a statement of principles that they propose to apply in exercising their functions under this Schedule” which “may, in particular, specify matters that the Licensing Authority proposes to consider in determining the suitability of the applicant for a permit”.

This Licensing Authority’s Statement of Principles requires that the applicant should set out the types of gaming that he or she is intending to offer and that the applicant should be able to demonstrate:

- that they understand the limits to stakes and prizes that are set out in Regulations;
- that the gaming offered is within the law;
- clear policies that outline the steps to be taken to protect children from harm;
- training to cover how staff would deal with unsupervised and/or very young children on/around the premises and suspected truants.

In making its decision on an application for this permit the Licensing Authority does not need to (but may) have regard to the licensing objectives but must have regard to any Gambling Commission guidance.

Applicants for a permit must comply with the conditions laid down by the Gambling Act 2005.

The conditions in the Act are:

- the limits on participation fees, as set out in regulations, must be complied with;
- all chances to participate in the gaming must be allocated on the premises on which the gaming is taking place and on one day; the game must be played and completed on the day the chances are allocated; and the result of the game must be made public in the premises on the day that it is played;
- the prize for which the game is played must not exceed the amount set out in regulations (if a money prize), or the prescribed value (if non-monetary prize); and
- participation in the gaming must not entitle the player to take part in any other gambling.

The Licensing Authority may not impose any further conditions.

4. Club Gaming and Club Machines Permits

Qualifying members clubs and Miners' welfare institutes (but not commercial clubs) may apply for a Club Gaming Permit. The Club Gaming Permit will enable the premises to provide gaming machines (3 machines of categories B, C or D). NB Commercial Clubs may not site category B3A gaming machines offering lottery games in their club.

Gambling Commission Guidance states: "Members' clubs must have at least 25 members and be established and conducted "wholly or mainly" for purposes other than gaming, unless the gaming is permitted by separate regulations." It is anticipated that this will cover bridge and whist clubs. A members' club must be permanent in nature, not established to make commercial profit, and controlled by its members equally. Examples include working men's clubs, branches of Royal British Legion and clubs with political affiliations.

The Licensing Authority may only refuse an application on the grounds that:

- the applicant does not fulfil the requirements for a members' or commercial club or miners' welfare institute and therefore is not entitled to receive the type of permit for which it has applied;
- the applicant's premises are used wholly or mainly by children and/or young persons;
- an offence under the Act or a breach of a permit has been committed by the applicant while providing gaming facilities;
- a permit held by the applicant has been cancelled in the previous ten years; or
- an objection has been lodged by the Commission or the police.

Where a premises holds a Club Premises Certificate under the Licensing Act 2003, they may apply using the fast-track procedure. As the Gambling Commission's Guidance to Licensing Authorities states: "Under the fast-track procedure there is no opportunity for objections to be made by the Commission or the police, and the grounds on which an application under the process may be refused are:

- that the club is established primarily for gaming, other than gaming prescribed under schedule 12;
- that in addition to the prescribed gaming, the applicant provides facilities for other gaming; or
- that a club gaming permit or club machine permit issued to the applicant in the last ten years has been cancelled.

Objections will not be lodged by the Commission or the police, as these will have been dealt with under the Licensing Act application procedure.

There are statutory conditions on club gaming permits that no child uses a category B or C machine on the premises and that the holder complies with any relevant provision of a code of practice about the location and operation of gaming machines.

5. Temporary Use Notices

Temporary Use Notices allow the use of premises for gambling where there is no premises licence but where a gambling operator wishes to use the premises temporarily for providing facilities for gambling. Premises that might be suitable for Temporary Use Notices, according to the Gambling Commission, would include hotels, conference centres and sporting venues.

The Licensing Authority can only grant a Temporary Use Notice to a person or company holding a relevant operating licence, i.e. a non-remote casino operating licence.

The Secretary of State has the power to determine what form of gambling can be authorised by Temporary Use Notices. The Gambling Act 2005 (Temporary Use Notices) Regulations 2007 state that Temporary Use Notices can only be used to permit the provision of facilities or equal chance gaming, where the gaming is intended to produce a single winner, which in practice means poker tournaments.

This Licensing Authority expects to object to notices where it appears that their effect would be to permit regular gambling in a place that could be described as one set of premises, as recommended in the Gambling Commission's Guidance to Local Authorities.

6. Occasional Use Notices

The Licensing Authority has little discretion as regards these Notices, aside from ensuring that the statutory eight days in a calendar year is not exceeded and will grant such notices where statutory requirements are met.

7. Small Society Lotteries

Lottery licences will be issued in accordance with the Gambling Commission's Guidance to Local Authorities.

APPENDIX A

TABLE OF DELEGATIONS OF LICENSING FUNCTIONS

MATTER TO BE DEALT WITH	FULL COUNCIL	SUB-COMMITTEE	OFFICERS
Three year licensing policy	X		
Policy not to permit casinos	X		
Fee Setting - when appropriate			(to be approved by Executive)
Application for premises licences		Where representations have been received and not withdrawn	Where no representations received/ representations have been withdrawn
Application for a variation to a licence		Where representations have been received and not withdrawn	Where no representations received/ representations have been withdrawn
Application for a transfer of a licence		Where representations have been received from the Commission	Where no representations received from the Commission
Application for a provisional statement		Where representations have been received and not withdrawn	Where no representations received/ representations have been withdrawn
Review of a premises licence		X	
Application for club gaming /club machine permits		Where representations have been received and not withdrawn	Where no representations received/ representations have been withdrawn
Cancellation of club gaming/ club machine permits		X	
Applications for other permits			X
Cancellation of licensed premises gaming machine permits			X
Consideration of temporary use notice			X
Decision to give a counter notice to a temporary use notice		X	

APPENDIX B

LIST OF CONSULTEES

<p>Alex Burghart MP Association of Multiple Licensed Retailers Attwater Jameson Hill Solicitors Bay Restaurant Group Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner Solicitors Betting Offices British Transport Police Campaign to Protect Rural England Chigwell and Hainault Synagogue Child Protection Essex County Council Church of England Citizens Advice Bureau Consumers Association Council for Voluntary Services Community Safety Partnership Curwens Solicitors EFDC Councillors EFDC Senior Officers Eleanor Laing MP Environment agency Epping Forest Conservators East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust Essex Coalition for Disabled Group Essex County Council Essex Fire & Rescue Essex Police Service Essex Probation Service Essex Tourist Bodies Federation of Licensed Victuallers Association Federation of Synagogues Fosket Marr Gadsby & Head GamCare Gamblers Anonymous UK</p>	<p>Gambling Commission Greene King Health and Safety Executive Essex HM Customs and Excise HM Revenue & Customs Jarmans Solicitors Lea Valley Regional Park Authority Local Chambers of Commerce Local Council Liaison Committee Local Round Tables McMullens Brewery Methodist Church Mitchells & Butlers Brewery Neighbouring Local Authorities Other Faith Groups Parish and Town Councils Princess Alexandra NHS Trust Punch Taverns Robert Halfon MP Roman Catholic Church Rural Community Council of Essex Spirit Group Retail Ltd Town Centre Partnerships Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers Unison Unite West Essex CCG Whiskers & Co Solicitors All current gambling premises within the district</p>
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APPENDIX C RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES FOR GAMBLING ACT 2005 APPLICATIONS

<p>Epping Forest District Council Civic Offices High Street Epping Essex CM16 4BZ Attn; Licensing Unit Tel: 01992 564034 licensing@eppingforestdc.gov.uk</p>	<p>Head of Child Protection (Licensing Applications) Quality Assurance & Safeguarding Service Family Operations Essex County Council 70 Duke Street Chelmsford Essex CM1 1YS licensingapplications@essexcc.gov.uk</p>
<p>The Licensing Department (alcohol) Essex Police Braintree Essex CM7 3DJ Tel : 01245 452035 licensing.applications@essex.police.uk</p>	<p>Gambling Commission Victoria House Victoria Square Birmingham B2 4BP info@gamblingcommision.gov.uk</p>
<p>Essex Fire & Rescue Service South West Group Service Delivery Point Fire Station Broadmayne Basildon Essex SS14 1EH Tel : 01376 576700 Email: southwestgroupSDP@essex-fire-gov.uk</p>	<p>HM Revenue & Customs Excise Processing team Gambling Duties BX9 1GL Email: Nrubetting&gaming@hmrc.gsi.gov.uk Tel. 0300 200 3700</p>
<p>Director of Planning Civic Offices High Street Epping Essex CM16 4BZ Tel: 01992 564514 Email: Contactplanning@eppingforestdc.gov.uk</p>	<p>Public Health Unit Civic Offices High Street Epping Essex CM16 4BZ Brian Stalabrass – Business and Corporate Team Manager, Commercial and Regulatory Service Directorate Tel:01992 564058 Email: bstalabrass@eppingforestdc.gov.uk</p>

Report to the Council

Committee: **Audit & Governance**

Date: **4 April 2023**

Subject: **Audit & Governance Committee Annual Report 2021/22**

Chairman: **Councillor P Bolton**

Recommending:

That the Audit & Governance Committee Annual Report for 2021/22 be noted.

1. The Annual Report of the Audit and Governance Committee outlines the Committee's work and achievements over the year ending 31 March 2022. The Annual Report helps to demonstrate to residents and the Council's other stakeholders the vital role that is carried out by the Audit and Governance Committee and the contribution that it makes to the Council's overall governance arrangements.
2. The Annual Report is attached as an Appendix to this report, and we recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.

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EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

2021/22

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Audit Committee is to:

- provide independent assurance to the Council in respect of the effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements, risk management framework and the associated control environment; and
- independent scrutiny of the Council's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the Council's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment.

Whilst there is no statutory obligation for a local authority to establish an audit committee, they are widely recognised internationally across the public and private sectors as a key component of effective governance. Similarly, it is considered good practice for the Committee to report annually to the Council on its work.

The key benefits of an effective audit committee are:

- increasing awareness regarding the effectiveness and continued development of the Council's governance arrangements;
- providing additional assurance on the robustness of the Council's governance arrangements through a process of independent and objective review;
- reducing the risks of illegal or improper acts;
- increasing public confidence in the objectivity and fairness of financial and other reporting;
- contributing to performance improvements in assurance levels and awareness of the need for strong internal control including the implementation of audit recommendations; and
- reinforcing the importance and independence of internal and external audit and similar review processes.

1. ASSURANCE ACTIVITY 2021/22

To help the Committee draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the Council's internal control framework, governance and risk management it gained assurances from the following sources:

Internal Audit

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 require the Council to maintain an adequate and effective internal audit which is discharged by the Section 151 Officer. Internal Audit is a key source of assurance for both Members and management on the effectiveness of the control framework. The Committee has a responsibility for ensuring that Internal Audit is effective in the provision of this assurance and has worked with the Chief Internal Auditor to ensure the agreed Audit Plan for 2021/22 was delivered.

The Committee considered and agreed reports regarding the Internal Audit Strategy, Internal Audit Charter and Annual Plan 2021/22, and progress by management in implementing audit recommendations. It also received regular progress reports on the work and performance of Internal Audit. These reports have helped in ensuring that reported weaknesses have either been addressed or the identified risks

adequately mitigated by management and that there is an effective system of governance and internal control in place.

Assurance Framework / Annual Governance Statement

The Committee's terms of reference include advising on the effectiveness of the Council's assurance framework including the production of the Annual Governance Statement.

During the year, the Committee has received reports on the control framework and how the annual review and assurance process is undertaken. The Assurance Framework is compiled from various sources of assurance, for instance Directors and other key officers.

The Chief Internal Auditor provides an annual report and opinion regarding the Council's control framework. This opinion is considered by the Committee alongside other sources of assurance.

The Committee reviewed the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for 2020/21 which identified governance issues requiring further ongoing improvement or oversight relating to:

- Ensuring the health and safety of staff, partners and the public in the way it delivers its services especially with regards to Covid-19
- Financial Management Code review
- Statement of Accounts
- Disaster recovery
- Risk management and service/business planning
- Financial regulations – training and awareness

The assurance framework remained unchanged during 2021/22. The Council's Code of Corporate Governance was reviewed by the committee in January 2022 to ensure it remains compliant with the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework - Delivering Good Governance in Local Government. The review confirmed the Code is still up to date and fit for purpose and no changes were required.

The Committee was able to satisfy themselves that there is a robust assurance framework in place to safeguard the Council's resources through reliance on the annual review of the Council's system of internal control and the Chief Internal Auditor's annual opinion.

Anti-Fraud and Corruption

Countering fraud and corruption is the responsibility of every Member and officer of the Council. The Committee's role in this area has been to monitor and support the actions taken by officers to counter fraud, particularly as the Council has its own in-house Corporate Fraud Team, who work in tandem with Internal Audit.

The Committee receives reports and presentations on such work undertaken in the Council and proactive fraud work, for example participation in the National Fraud Initiative (NFI).

The Council continues to send out a strong message that fraud will not be tolerated and that where fraud is proven the strongest possible actions of redress will be taken.

Based on the work to date, coupled with no major incidences of internal fraud and corruption being highlighted by management, the Corporate Fraud Team or Internal Audit, the Committee concludes that there is a sound anti-fraud and corruption framework in place. The Council's anti-fraud and corruption strategy was approved

by Council, following approval by the Audit and Governance Committee in November 2021.

Risk Management

The Committee receives and discusses reports relating to risk management. Work continues to enhance monitoring and reporting mechanisms to ensure there is adequate scrutiny and challenge of risk across the Council and aligning this with the service planning process. Committee members are routinely presented with the corporate strategic risk register.

Treasury Management

In accordance with its Terms of Reference, the Committee reviewed the Council's Treasury Management Strategy and considered the risks associated with the Council's treasury activity and how these are managed. The Committee also considered progress reports on the treasury management function and performance against prudential indicators.

Statement of Accounts and External Auditors

At its July 2021 meeting the Committee reviewed and approved the 2020/21 Annual Governance Statement and the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts.

The Committee has been kept abreast during the year on issues regarding the 2020/21 Accounts, seeking explanations for the delay from both the External Auditors (Deloitte) and the Council's Section 151 Officer. The External Auditors will be on site at the end of July 2022 for the 2020/21 accounts directly followed by the 2021/22 accounts, and the Committee will be updated at the September 2022 meeting.

2. COMMITTEE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

The Committee has a rolling and flexible programme of work for its main areas of activity which is proactively reviewed and amended throughout the year to reflect changes in policies, priorities and risks. The Committee met four times in 2021/22. The Committee considered items which are presented annually, such as audit results, the statement of accounts, the annual governance statement, and audit plans; as well as a number of other items including treasury management as this falls under the committee's remit.

The Committee's work plan is supplemented with periodic bespoke training which is open to all councillors. Training topics included anti-fraud and corruption, risk management and the role of the Audit Committee.

Members of the Committee have a wide range of both experience and professional knowledge which, coupled with it having two co-opted persons, has continued to help demonstrate its independence. One co-opted post has been vacant throughout the year with plans to have a recruitment campaign in 2022.23.

In November 2021 the Committee undertook its own effectiveness review and reviewed its Terms of Reference, the results of which concluded its Terms of Reference did not need updating and the Council was able to demonstrate compliance with recommended best practice for an effective Audit Committee.

The Committee has the benefit of being well supported by Council officers. This includes the Section 151 Officer, the Monitoring Officer, and the Chief Internal Auditor as well as the Council's external auditors.

There have been no reported major breakdowns in internal control, governance and risk management that have led to a significant loss in one form or another, nor any major weakness in the governance systems that has exposed, or continues to expose, the Council to an unacceptable level of risk.

The purpose, strategy and work programme of the Committee mitigates against any major failure by the Council to obtain independent assurance in relation to the governance processes underpinning:

- An effective risk management framework and internal control environment including audit;
- The effectiveness of financial and non-financial performance (to the extent that it affects exposure to risk and poor internal control); and
- The compilation and consideration of the Annual Governance Statement.

Outcomes / Achievements

Through its work, the Committee's main outcome is in the additional assurance provided of the robustness of the Council's arrangements regarding corporate governance, risk management and internal controls.

The Committee has added value through its activity and in particular:

- it has continued with the importance placed upon governance issues, particularly risk management, anti-fraud and the assurances sought that key risks are being mitigated; and
- it has continued to raise the profile of internal control issues across the Council and to seek to ensure that audit recommendations are implemented.

Conclusions

The Committee's remit is achieved firstly through it being appropriately constituted, and secondly by the Committee being effective in ensuring internal accountability and the delivery of audit and a robust assurance framework. The Committee has received and challenged reports including those from internal and external audit.

The agreed work programme enables the Committee to provide independent assurance to the Council as to the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment.

The Committee has continued to have a real and positive contribution to the governance arrangements of the Council. The Committee's key achievement is in the additional assurance provided of the robustness of the Council's arrangements regarding corporate governance, risk management and the control environment.

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Report to the Council

Committee: **Audit & Governance**
Date: **4 April 2023**
Subject: **Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy**
Chairman: **Councillor P Bolton**

Recommending:

That the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy be approved.

The Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy has been revised and is attached as an Appendix. The strategy remains largely the same as last year with minor changes around types of fraud to include "new responsibilities" such as grant payments.

The Audit and Governance Committee reviewed and referred the revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy to the Council for approval at its meeting on 28 November 2022.

We recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.

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Epping Forest District Council

Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy

(Including Anti-Money Laundering Policy)

Version		Status	Draft
Implementation Date	October 2022	Next Review Date	October 2023
Revised by	Martin Crowe (Corporate Fraud Team Manager)	Policy Lead Officer	Sarah Marsh (Chief Internal Auditor)

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Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy

Section 1 – Purpose of the Strategy

Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) is committed to high legal, ethical and moral standards, and the proper accountability of public funds.

The Council will not tolerate fraud and corruption in the administration of its responsibilities, whether from inside or outside the Council.

The Council's expectation of propriety and accountability is that Members and staff at all levels will lead by example in ensuring adherence to legal requirements, rules, procedures and practices.

The Council also expects that individuals and organisations with which it comes into contact will act towards the Council with integrity.

The purpose of this Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy is to support the Council's 2018 -23 Corporate Plan by protecting the public purse as every pound lost through fraud cannot be spent on Council services. In particular, this strategy:

- Sets out the aims and long-term vision of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption framework
- Outlines the Council's approach to Anti-Fraud and Corruption
- Outlines the expected outcomes along with how the Council intends to achieve and monitor these

Section 2 – Key Objectives

The key objectives of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption framework are to:

- protect the Council's resources and assets, ensuring they are used as intended.
- maintain a culture where fraud or corruption is not tolerated; and
- ensure staff and Members demonstrate the highest standards of honesty and integrity at all times.

This Strategy also supports the national Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally Strategy 2020 which advocates turning strategy into action by councils considering their counter fraud response and performance against each of the six 'C' themes:

- **Culture** – creating a culture where countering fraud and abuse is an accepted part of the Authority's normal business model and where fraud and corruption are unacceptable in line with the Council's Values & Behaviours
- **Capability** - Assessing the full range of fraud risks and ensuring that the range of anti-fraud measures deployed is appropriate and proportionate to those risks.
- **Capacity** – deploying the correct level of resources to deal with the level of fraud risk including the maintaining of a Corporate Fraud Investigation Team staffed by fully accredited

investigators and ensuring that these resources are monitored by those charged with the Council's governance.

- **Competence** – having the right skills and standards throughout the Council's services which are commensurate with the full range of counter fraud and corruption activity
- **Communications** – raising awareness internally and externally, deterring fraudsters, sharing information and celebrating successes
- **Collaboration** – working together across internal and external boundaries, with colleagues, with other local authorities, and with other agencies; sharing resources, skills and learning, good practice, innovation and information.

Section 3 – Definitions

In law, fraud is deliberate deception to secure unfair or unlawful gain, or to deprive a victim of a legal right. The purpose of fraud may be monetary gain or other benefits, such as obtaining a home or a job with the Council by way of false statement

Corruption is a form of dishonest or unethical conduct by a person entrusted with a position of authority, often to acquire personal benefit. Corruption may include many activities including bribery which can be defined as the offering, giving, soliciting or acceptance of an inducement or reward which may influence the action of any person”.

Both can be encompassed by the term “economic crime”, which refers to a broad category of activity involving money, finance or assets, the purpose of which is to unlawfully obtain a profit or advantage for the perpetrator or cause loss to others.

Section 4 – Strategic Response

The principles of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy are focussed on the following four pillars of activity (as taken from the aforementioned 2020 Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally Strategy). These are:

- Govern
- Acknowledge
- Prevent
- Pursue
- These principles are supported by one overarching pillar which is Protect.

Govern	Acknowledge	Prevent	Pursue
Having a holistic approach to tackling fraud is part of good governance	Acknowledge and understanding fraud and corruption risks	Preventing and detecting more fraud and corruption	Being stronger in punishing fraud and corruption/recovering losses
Having robust arrangements and executive support to ensure anti-fraud,	Assessing and understanding fraud and corruption risks	Making better use of information and technology	Prioritising fraud recovery and the use of civil sanctions

<p>bribery and corruption measures are embedded throughout the organisation.</p>	<p>Committing the right support and resources to tackling fraud and corruption</p> <p>Maintaining and demonstrating a robust anti-fraud and corruption response</p> <p>Communicating the risks to those charged with governance</p>	<p>Enhancing fraud and corruption controls and processes</p> <p>Developing a more effective anti-fraud and corruption culture</p> <p>Communicating its activities and processes</p>	<p>Developing capability and capacity to punish corruption and fraudsters</p> <p>Collaborating with fellow practitioners across geographical and sectoral boundaries</p> <p>Learning lessons and closing the gaps</p>
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Govern	Acknowledge	Prevent	Pursue
Some specific examples for Epping Forest District Council			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Fraud Team that reports into the Corporate Governance Group and the Audit and Governance Committee Counter Fraud activities and monitoring included in the Audit Committee's Terms of Reference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk management process Fraud /corruption proofing policy and processes Fraud and corruption awareness and training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistleblowing policy Strong internal control culture Staff and supplier vetting Participation in the National Fraud Initiative and the Pan-Essex Council tax matching campaign Staff and Member Code of Conduct and Declarations of Interest Information security and IT policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fraud response plan Appropriate levels of powers, application of sanctions and prosecutions Collaboration and where practicable, joint investigations / prosecutions with other Authority fraud teams

Protect
<p>Recognising the harm that fraud and corruption can cause both in the Authority and the community. Protecting itself and its' residents from fraud.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protecting against serious and organised crime, protecting individuals from becoming victims of crime and protecting against the harm that fraud can do to the community. For Epping Forest District Council, this will also cover protecting public funds, protecting the Council from fraud and cybercrime and also protecting itself from future frauds.



Section 5 – Key Fraud and Corruption Risks

It is important that the Council recognises and manages the risks relating to fraud and corruption in order to prevent them from occurring. Furthermore, it is imperative that these risks are routinely considered as part of the Council's overall approach to risk management. In order to understand the nature of these risks, the following have been identified as key issues that are relevant to EFDC:

- Social Housing Tenancy Fraud – this includes risks such as fraudulent housing applications, mutual exchanges, illegal subletting etc.
- The Right to Buy scheme – fraudulent applications and suspected money laundering
- Money Laundering – Exposure to suspect transactions
- Council Tax – fraudulently claimed discounts (including Local Council Tax Support), refund scams
- Non-Domestic Rates – fraudulent applications for exemptions, unlisted properties
- Grants (including Disabled Facilities Grants) – false eligibility and applications, diverted funds, works not carried out.
- Insurance Fraud – suspected false claims particularly those relating to personal injury
- Planning Fraud – risk of manipulation, collusion, potential conflicts of interest, bribery etc.
- No recourse to public funds – fraudulent eligibility for Council services such as Social Housing
- Payroll Fraud – false and “ghost” employees, overtime and mileage claims, expenses.
- Internal Frauds – such as fund diversion, accepting bribes, stealing monies and / or Council property, social housing misallocations for personal gain, working elsewhere whilst off sick, abuse of position such as misuse of assets / resources.
- HR related fraud – such as false information on job applications, bogus qualifications / references, failing to declare previous convictions etc.
- New Responsibilities – Areas of work that have transferred to local authority responsibility such as business grants etc.
- Procurement Fraud – tendering issues, split contracts, double invoicing
- Cyber Crime / Fraud – frauds such as false applications for services, fund diversion.
- Commission of Services: including joint commissioning, joint ventures, commercial services, third sector partnerships – conflicts of interest, collusion etc.

It is important to note that the above represents the key fraud risk areas and examples of each. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list.

As with the culture, the concept of fraud prevention applies to the organisation from top to bottom.

The United Kingdom Anti-Corruption Strategy 2017-22 sets out a long-term framework for tackling corruption. For local government, including Epping Forest District Council, this sets out the following goals which have been considered as part of this strategy:

- Greater procurement transparency, enabling better identification and mitigation of corruption risks.
- Strengthened awareness and capability within contracting authorities leading to a stronger awareness of corruption risks and more capability to detect and deter illegality.

Section 6 – The Council’s Approach to combatting Fraud & Corruption.

The prevention and detection of fraud and corruption and the protection of the public purse is everyone’s responsibility and this should permeate throughout the authority at every level. The key components in achieving this are:

Being Proactive

- Actively strengthening the anti-fraud culture to increase resilience to fraud
- Preventing fraud through the implementation of appropriate and robust internal controls including robust procurement and cyber security measures
- Increasing fraud and corruption awareness of Council officers, Members, Contractors and residents
- Deterring fraud attempts by publicising the actions the Council takes against corruption and fraudsters

Reactive Responses

- Detecting fraud and corruption through data and intelligence analysis
- Implementing effective whistleblowing arrangements
- Robustly investigating fraud and corruption referrals
- Applying sanctions, both civil and criminal
- Seeking redress, including the recovery of assets and money utilising all methods available.

The Role of the Corporate Fraud Team

The Corporate Fraud Team role is in both the prevention and investigation of instances of suspected fraud against the Council. Fraud awareness training is given to officers within the Council to assist in ensuring that any cases referred to the team contain good quality information to assist with the investigation. All investigations are carried out in accordance with the respective legislation.

In cases where the offence is deliberate and serious enough to warrant prosecution, consideration will be given to the Council’s own policies as well as The Code for Crown Prosecutors. If deemed appropriate legal proceedings will be undertaken in conjunction with Legal Services and / or other bodies such as the Police. Utilising the provisions of Section 222 of The Local Government Act 1972, the Corporate Fraud Team in conjunction with Legal Services are appropriately authorised to undertake criminal prosecutions.

The table below lists the suggested approach and expected outcomes against each of the four pillars of the Council’s Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy, which will be supported by a rolling action plan and annual Corporate Fraud Team Strategy:

Principle	Approach	Expected Outcome
Govern by having a	Oversight and performance	Delivery of the Council’s

Principle	Approach	Expected Outcome
holistic approach to tackling fraud	monitored through the regular Corporate Fraud Team updates, Corporate Governance Group and the Audit and Governance Committee meetings	Anti-Fraud and Corruption Plan that tackles both internal and external fraud
Acknowledging and understanding fraud and corruption risks	<p>Using the risk management process to assess current and future fraud and corruption risks</p> <p>Continued cultural change and increase in fraud and corruption awareness both internally and outside of the Council</p> <p>Annual fraud report through central collection of fraud data</p> <p>Improved sharing of fraud and corruption threats, information and intelligence both internally and externally</p>	<p>Increased reporting of cases</p> <p>Increased awareness of anti-fraud and corruption process and procedures throughout the Council</p> <p>Making service areas become more responsible for their own fraud risks</p>
Preventing and detecting more fraud and corruption	<p>Fraud and corruption proofing of policy and processes</p> <p>Better use of data and technology to prevent and detect fraud and corruption</p> <p>Assessment of the Council's internal controls framework to ensure it remains robust</p> <p>Supporting anti-fraud and corruption policies and procedures including whistleblowing and money laundering</p>	<p>Increased levels of anti-fraud and corruption awareness</p> <p>When fraud or corruption has occurred because of a breakdown in the Council's systems or procedures, the Section 151 Officer will ensure that the appropriate improvements in the control systems are implemented to prevent a recurrence.</p> <p>Any significant control issues are reported in the Annual Governance Statement along with actions taken to address the issue.</p>
Be stronger in punishing fraud and corruption and recovering losses	<p>Maintain and further develop capacity and capability to investigate and prosecute fraud and corruption</p> <p>Consistent and effective response for dealing with fraud and corruption cases</p>	<p>Successful use of sanctions and/or prosecution</p> <p>Reduce the losses as a result of fraud or corruption and to commit to the consideration of all available methods of loss recovery.</p>

Section 7 – Responsibility for implementing this strategy

Responsibility	Role
Chief Executive	Ultimately responsible for preventing and detecting theft, fraud and corruption and promoting an anti-fraud and corruption culture.
Members	As elected representatives, all Members of the Council have a duty to the public to maintain the highest standards of conduct and ethics, and to ensure the Council is open and transparent in all the decisions it makes. Members are required to adhere to the Council's constitution, which incorporates a Member Code of Conduct.
Standards Committee	Monitoring the operation of the Code of Conduct and to take remedial action when required.
Audit and Governance Committee	To satisfy itself there are adequate arrangements in place to manage risk (including that relating to fraud and corruption) effectively. To monitor Council policies on Anti-Fraud and Corruption and to receive periodic reports on fraud and corruption.
Corporate Governance Group	Develop, review and maintain the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Framework.
Senior Management Team	Ensuring all Staff follow this Strategy and any related policies and procedures, supported by the Council's Internal Audit, Corporate Fraud and Human Resources functions.
Section 151 Officer	Has a statutory responsibility under the Local Government Act 1972 for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs. Where irregularities, fraud or corruption are suspected the S151 Officer should be informed. On being informed of an alleged irregularity, fraud or corruption the S151 Officer will determine the arrangements for investigating the matter in line with the Council's Fraud Response Plan.
Monitoring Officer	Statutory responsibility to ensure that the council operates within the law. Overall responsibility for the Members Code of Conduct and the maintenance and operation of the Confidential Reporting Procedure for Employees (Whistleblowing Under the Local Government Act 1972 has the specific duty to ensure that the Council, its Officers, and its Elected Councillors, maintain the highest standards of conduct in all they do.
Managers (all levels)	Responsible for preventing and detecting fraud and corruption and ensuring they operate effective mechanisms in their area of control to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent theft, fraud and corruption thereby safeguarding the Council's assets and interests • Promote employee awareness and take ownership of

Responsibility	Role
	<p>the fraud risks specific to their area(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the risk of fraud and corruption and take appropriate action Take prompt action in line with the Fraud Response Plan where they suspect or are alerted to possible theft, fraud or corruption
All staff	All staff have a responsibility to prevent, detect and report on fraud and corruption or suspected cases.
Partners and Contractors	Required to comply with the Council's policies and procedures when undertaking work for and jointly with the Council
External Audit	Under the International Standard on Auditing 240, when conducting an audit External Audit are responsible for obtaining reasonable assurance that the financial statements taken as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error.
Internal Audit	<p>Providing assurance on the effectiveness of systems and procedures to prevent and detect fraud and corruption (by undertaking audits).</p> <p>Supporting managers in minimising fraud and corruption related risk and are alert in all their work to risks and exposures that could allow fraud and corruption to take place.</p>

Section 8 - Supporting Policies, Procedures and Processes

In addition to this document, the Council has a range of policies, procedures and processes in place to formalise arrangements for the prevention, detection and investigation of fraud and corruption. These include:

- Fraud Response Plan (Appendix 1 of this document)
- Anti-Bribery Policy (Appendix 2 of this document)
- Anti-Money Laundering Policy (Appendix 3 of this document)
- Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure (located on the Council's Intranet)
- Employee and Member Codes of Conduct (located on the Council's Intranet, Public facing website and published as part of the Constitution)
- Financial Regulations (located on the Council's Intranet and published as part of the Constitution)
- Procurement Rules located on the Council's Intranet and published as part of the Constitution)
- CIPFA Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally Strategy 2020:
<https://www.cifas.org.uk/insight/public-affairs-policy/fighting-fraud-corruption-local-authorities/FFCL-Strategy-2020>
- United Kingdom Anti-Corruption Strategy 2017 – 2022:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/667221/6_3323_Anti-Corruption_Strategy_WEB.pdf

Section 9 - Policy Reporting, Review and Monitoring Performance

This Strategy can only be varied with the collective agreement of the Chief Executive, the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer.

It will be the responsibility of the Senior Management Team, via the Corporate Governance Group, to ensure there are adequate resources to support the action plan.

The Audit and Governance Committee will receive regular fraud updates to assist in their oversight of the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and arrangements.

Appendix 1

Epping Forest District Council Fraud Response Plan

Introduction

The Fraud Response Plan defines the way in which the Council applies its various policies and procedures to suspected instances of theft, fraud corruption and bribery. It fits in with and is designed to be read in conjunction with the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy, Anti-Bribery Policy, Anti Money Laundering Policy and the Whistleblowing / Confidential Reporting Policy. The aim of this plan is to provide clear guidance for dealing with these issues, access to rapid relevant advice and a guide for managers on how to react and deal with suspicions of fraud, theft, corruption and bribery.

Additionally, it seeks to give a brief outline on how investigations will be progressed (although no detail will be given regarding investigation techniques etc.).

The Fraud Response Plan is designed to ensure timely and effective action in the event of suspected fraud by:

- Seeking to minimise the extent of the fraud by taking prompt action
- Preventing further losses where fraud had occurred.
- Maximising the recovery (or the chances of recovering) any financial losses
- Ensuring the accuracy and integrity of evidence for successful criminal prosecution and / or disciplinary action
- The early identification of any system weaknesses and the lessons to be learnt for preventing them in the future
- Maximising positive publicity where frauds are discovered and dealt with.
- Deterring others from any illegal / inappropriate conduct they may be committing or contemplating.

The Manager's Role in dealing with suspected fraud

First Response

Where managers suspect a fraud or involvement in a fraud is taking place, the first course of action must be to contact the Section 151 Officer, Chief Internal Auditor or the Corporate Fraud Manager who will ensure that the Section 151 Officer and the Chief Executive are informed.

Although, the Council no longer investigates Housing Benefit fraud, where a suspicion occurs of a staff member's involvement in a Housing Benefit (including Local Council Tax Support) fraud, the above steps should still be followed.

All other suspicions of benefit fraud (including Local Council Tax Support) must be reported to the Compliance Manager within the Revenue and Benefits Division. Suspicions can also be reported directly to The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) via their website (www.gov.uk/report-

[benefit-fraud](#)) or by calling the National Benefit Fraud Hotline on 0800 854440 or by textphone on 0800 328 0512. It may be prudent to seek the advice of either The Corporate Fraud Manager or The Compliance Manager before contacting the DWP as Local Council Tax Support cannot be investigated by the DWP.

In usual circumstances, the suspicion will be passed to the Corporate Fraud Team to assess and undertake an investigation if appropriate. The Corporate Fraud Manager / Chief Internal Auditor will retain overall responsibility for the conduct of the investigation; however, it is probable that the matter will be allocated to a member of the Corporate Fraud Team to undertake any investigation. As part of the Internal Audit service, the Corporate Fraud Team will be independent of any service area under investigation and all of the officers comprising the Corporate Fraud Team are fully trained and accredited investigators each holding the qualification of Accredited Counter Fraud Officer / Specialist whilst the Corporate Fraud Manager also holds the qualification of Accredited Counter Fraud Manager.

There may be circumstances where it is appropriate for managers to undertake some preliminary enquiries to ascertain the validity of an allegation or irregularity (for example, to establish whether on the face of it, there is a case to be investigated), however, before embarking on such action, advice should always be sought from a member of the Corporate Fraud Team as such action may alert the fraudster and could result in the concealing or destroying of vital evidence or compromise the investigation and the collection of further evidence.

The investigating officer will liaise and work with The People Team at the earliest available opportunity on disciplinary matters such as suspending the staff member to enable further investigation and protect vital evidence.

Initial Enquiries

As stated above, the manager may make discreet initial enquiries in order to:

- Determine any facts that gave rise to the suspicion
- Examine any factors to determine whether there has been a genuine mistake made or whether an irregularity has occurred

Any actions and findings should be clearly recorded and documented ensuring that access is restricted (for example, not held on an “open” area of the computer network or in the case of paper notes, making sure they are securely locked away).

It is important that the suspected perpetrator is not interviewed at this stage, nor any allegations / suspicions put to them. If in doubt at any point, the manager must seek the guidance of the Corporate Fraud Team or the Chief Internal Auditor.

Formal Investigation

If a formal investigation is required, it will be conducted by a qualified Corporate Fraud Investigator unless determined otherwise by the Section 151 Officer or Chief Executive. The nature of the investigation, lines of enquiry followed, and evidence obtained will vary depending on the irregularity being investigated and will, for the most part be fluid and reactive. Generally, however, the investigating officer will be seeking to gather evidence by way of interviews, the taking of written witness statements and the obtaining of evidence be it physical, documentary etc.

The investigating officer will consult and take advice from The People Team particularly on matters regarding employment law, policies and procedural matters. It is imperative however, that a clear distinction must be made in these circumstances between those advising the investigating officer and those advising the staff member.

Legal Services will be consulted as appropriate to advise or seek external advice in order to support any investigation.

Any investigation will be conducted with full compliance with The Criminal Procedures and Investigations Act 1996 which governs the conduct of a criminal investigation (such as obtaining and recording evidence etc.) as well as any other legislation that may apply such as The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE), The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA), The Human Rights Act 1998, The General Data Protection Regulation / Data Protection Act 2018 etc. (this list is meant as an example and is not exhaustive).

In general terms however, the following principles will apply to the investigation:

- Any investigation will be conducted promptly (subject to evidence gathering activities) with periodic updates given as appropriate to the Chief Internal Auditor / the relevant Service Director or the Section 151 Officer
- All actions and evidence will be recorded either by written or electronic means and stored securely with access given purely on a “need to know” basis.
- Enquiries and evidence gathering activities will be undertaken as discreetly as possible with sensitivities observed where appropriate.
- Confidentiality will be maintained throughout with information only shared where circumstances and the law allows.

Where it is considered appropriate, the investigation may involve the input of other agencies such as local authorities as well as other law enforcement agencies such as the Police and HM Revenue & Customs. Liaison and / or joint working will be conducted in accordance with established guidelines and protocols.

The investigating officer must not and will not accept any offer of repayment of monies or resignation at any stage during the investigation, however, any such offers will be noted and recorded on the investigation file and reported to the Chief Internal Auditor and responsible Service Director.

The Council has a right to suspend any employee involved pending the outcome of an investigation. Any such suspension, is, in the opinion of the Council, a neutral act and does not imply any guilt on behalf of the suspended employee. The suspension of an employee can, in some circumstances aid the speed in which an investigation can be conducted and serve to preserve vital evidence.

When suspects are not suspended, supervision of the employee will usually need to be increased and any manager should seek the advice of The People Team and ICT on how this can best be accomplished.

Actions following the completion of an investigation

Upon the completion of an investigation, the investigating officer will report their findings in the first instance to the Corporate Fraud Manager, Chief Internal Auditor and S151 Officer, who will in turn make the findings known to The People Team, relevant Service Director or the Chief Executive as appropriate.

In the case of any monetary losses, a report will be given to the Council's Insurance Officer.

Should any control weaknesses be identified, the Service Director and relevant manager will be informed, and remedies be actioned immediately. The Chief Internal Auditor / Internal Audit Service will be able to provide advice and support regarding effective control mechanisms.

Should there be disciplinary issues identified as part of the investigation, a full report will be made to The People Team who will work with the relevant Service Director and manager to decide what happens next. Should any course of action result in a disciplinary hearing, the investigating officer will (if required) make themselves available to give evidence at the hearing.

Although some organisations delay the bringing of any disciplinary action pending the outcome of any criminal prosecution, the Council will seek to deal with any disciplinary matters using the appropriate processes.

Should it be the case that criminal action presents itself as an option, this decision will be fully explored and subject to the Council's Fraud Prosecution Policy.

Should fraud be proven, the Council will make every effort to recover any monetary losses. The method of doing so may vary depending on the type of loss and relevant legislation, however all options will be explored including civil court proceedings and in the case of criminal prosecution, proceedings brought under The Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

Anti-Bribery Policy

Objective of this policy

This policy provides a coherent and consistent framework to enable Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) Members and employees to understand and implement arrangements enabling compliance. In conjunction with related policies and key documents it will also enable Members and employees to identify and effectively report a potential breach.

We require that Members and all staff, including those permanently employed, temporary agency staff and contractors:

- act honestly and with integrity at all times and safeguard the organisation's resources for which they are responsible
- comply with the spirit, as well as the letter, of the laws and regulations of all jurisdictions in which the Council operates, in respect of the lawful and responsible conduct of activities.

Scope of this policy

This policy applies to all of the Council's activities. For partners, joint ventures, agents and suppliers, we will seek to promote the adoption of policies consistent with the principles set out in this policy.

Within the Council, the responsibility to control the risk of bribery occurring resides at all levels of the Council. It does not rest solely within assurance functions, but in all business units and corporate functions.

This policy covers all staff, including all levels and grades, those permanently employed, temporary agency staff, contractors, agents, elected Members, co-opted members of the public, volunteers and consultants.

The Council's commitment to action

The Council commits to:

- Setting out a clear anti-bribery policy and keeping it up to date
- Making all Members and employees aware of their responsibilities to adhere strictly to this policy at all times
- Raising awareness and where appropriate offer training so Members and employees can recognise and avoid the use of bribery by themselves and others
- Encouraging its Members and employees to be vigilant and to report any suspicions of bribery, providing them with suitable channels of communication and ensuring sensitive information is treated appropriately
- Rigorously investigating instances of alleged bribery and assisting police and other appropriate authorities in any resultant prosecution
- Taking firm and vigorous action against any individual(s) involved in bribery
- Provide information to Members and employees to report breaches and suspected breaches of this policy
- Include appropriate clauses in contracts to prevent bribery.

Facilitation payments

Facilitation payments are not tolerated and are illegal. Facilitation payments are unofficial payments made to public officials in order to secure or expedite actions.

Gifts and hospitality

This policy does not change the requirements of our gifts and hospitality policy. This makes it clear that:

Sample tokens of modest value (for example, pens, diaries or calendars) whether given personally, or received in the post, may be retained unless they could be regarded as an inducement or reward.

You should refuse the offer or invitation (or return the gift) unless your Service Director has advised you that it may be accepted or retained. This agreement needs to be documented.

Public contracts and failure to prevent bribery

One of the main changes introduced by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 is that a company will no longer face permanent debarment (referred to as an 'exclusion' in the 2015 Regulations) from bidding for public contracts following a corporate conviction for certain economic crimes. Instead, a company will face a period of debarment and will be able to recover eligibility to bid for public contracts if it has undergone a 'self-cleaning' process.

Member and Staff responsibilities

All Members and staff are required to avoid activity that breaches this policy. The prevention, detection and reporting of bribery and other forms of corruption are the responsibility of all those working for the Council or under its control.

Members and staff must:

- ensure that they read, understand and comply with this policy
- raise concerns as soon as possible if they believe or suspect that a conflict with this policy has occurred or may occur in the future.

Staff

As well as the possibility of civil action and criminal prosecution, staff who breach this policy may face disciplinary action, which could result in summary dismissal for gross misconduct. Dismissal can still be an outcome with or without civil action or criminal prosecution.

Members

The Member Code of Conduct requires that where a Member acts as a representative of the Council he or she must not use or attempt to use their position as a Member improperly to confer on or secure for them self or any other person, an advantage or disadvantage.

Allegations against a Member for breach will be routed through the Standards complaints process administered by the Monitoring Officer.

Raising a concern

This Council is committed to ensuring that all of us have a safe, reliable, and confidential way of reporting any suspicious activity. We want Members and each and every member of staff to know how they can raise concerns.

We all have a responsibility to help detect, prevent and report instances of bribery. If you have a concern regarding a suspected instance of bribery or corruption, please speak up – your information and assistance will help. The sooner you act, the sooner it can be resolved.

Preferably the disclosure will be made and resolved internally (e.g., to a Service Manager/Service Director or the Chief Internal Auditor). Secondly, where internal disclosure proves inappropriate, concerns can be raised with the External Auditor or relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations.

Concerns can be reported anonymously. In the event that an incident of bribery is reported, we will act as soon as possible to evaluate the situation. We have a clearly defined Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy which sets out procedures for investigating fraud, misconduct and non-compliance issues and these will be followed in any investigation of this kind.

Members and staff who refuse to accept a bribe, or those who raise concerns can understandably be worried about the repercussions. The Council aims to encourage openness and will support anyone who raises a genuine concern in good faith under this policy, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

The Council is committed to ensuring nobody suffers detrimental treatment through refusing to take part in bribery, or because of reporting a concern in good faith.

Appendix 3

Anti-Money Laundering Policy

Introduction

The Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Transfer of Funds (Information on the Payer) Regulations 2017 (MLR 2017) came into force on 26 June 2017. They implement the EU's 4th Directive on Money Laundering. In doing so, they replace the Money Laundering Regulations 2007 (MLR 2007) and the Transfer of Funds (Information on the Payer) Regulations 2007 which were previously in force.

A key difference is that relevant persons are obliged to adopt a more risk-based approach towards anti-money laundering, in particular in how they conduct due diligence. Determining the appropriate level of due diligence requires analysis of risk factors based on the EU Directive and which are set out in MLR 2017.

Whilst Local Authorities are not directly covered by the requirements of the Money Laundering Regulations 2017, guidance from finance and legal professions, including the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA), indicates that public service organisations should comply with the underlying spirit of the legislation and regulations and put in place appropriate and proportionate anti-money laundering safeguards and reporting arrangements. Epping Forest District Council is committed to the highest possible standards of conduct and has, therefore, put in place appropriate and proportionate anti-money laundering safeguards and reporting arrangements.

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all employees and contractors, whether permanent or temporary, and Members of the Council.

Its aim is to enable employees and Members to respond to a concern they have in the course of their dealings for the Council. Individuals who have a concern relating to a matter outside work should contact the Police.

Definition of Money Laundering

The most common motive for crime is financial gain or to obtain valuable property. Whenever criminals do anything with that financial gain or criminal property, they 'launder' it. Money laundering offences are serious; they carry sentences of up to 14 years imprisonment, but criminals and their associates still commit them every day.

Money laundering is the process by which criminals try to hide the origin of the proceeds of their crimes, making it look as if those proceeds were acquired legitimately. In doing so, criminal property obtained unlawfully is turned into property or money that can be accessed via legitimate methods without arousing suspicion. In other words, 'laundering' is the process of turning 'dirty' money into 'clean' money.

Money laundering has three distinct phases. They are:

- Placement: the movement of criminally obtained money into the wider economy.
- Layering: undertaking transactions (perhaps bogus) to conceal the origin of the money; and
- Integration: making it look as if money has come from a legitimate source.

Two distinct offences affect employees, contractors and Members of the Council

- Failure to disclose one of the offences listed above, where there are reasonable grounds for knowledge or suspicion.
- Tipping off a person(s) who is or is suspected of being involved in money laundering in such a way as to reduce the likelihood of or prejudice an investigation.

Although the term 'money laundering' is generally used to describe the activities of organised crime, for most people it will involve a suspicion that someone they know, or know of, is benefiting financially from dishonest activities.

Successful money laundering means criminals can enjoy the fruits of their criminality and fund further criminal activity. Stopping money laundering disrupts organised crime by removing the lifeblood of the 'business' and prevents low level criminals from moving up into major level crime.

Requirements of the Money Laundering Legislation

The main requirements of the legislation are:

- To appoint a money laundering reporting officer.
- Maintain client identification procedures known as know your customer (KYC) and know your business (KYB).
- Implement a procedure to enable the reporting of suspicions of money laundering.
- Maintain record keeping procedures.

The Money Laundering Reporting Officer (MLRO)

The Council must appoint an MLRO to act as the focal point within the organisation for money laundering matters. The MLRO is responsible for:

- receiving disclosures from other staff; and
- deciding whether disclosures should be passed on to National Crime Agency (NCA).

The MLRO must keep copies of all disclosures received by them, notes of action taken and copies of all correspondence with NCA and other agencies.

Identifying and disclosing suspicious transactions

Whilst the risk to the Council of contravening the legislation is low, it is extremely important that all are familiar with their legal responsibilities; serious criminal sanctions may be imposed for breaches of the legislation.

A key requirement is for every-one to promptly report any suspected money laundering activity to the Money Laundering Reporting officer (MLRO)
Possible Signs of Money Laundering

It is not possible to give a definitive list of ways in which to spot money laundering but facts which tend to suggest that something "odd" is happening may be sufficient for a reasonable suspicion of money laundering to arise. The following are the types of risk factors which may, either alone or cumulatively with other factors suggest the possibility of money laundering activity:

- A new customer with no previous history with the Council;
- A secretive customer: for example, one who refuses to provide requested information without a reasonable explanation.
- Concerns about the honesty, integrity or identity of a customer.
- Illogical third-party transactions: for example, unnecessary routing or receipt of funds from third parties or through third party accounts;
- Involvement of an unconnected third party without logical reason or explanation.
- Payment of a substantial sum in cash;
- Overpayments by a customer
- Absence of an obvious legitimate source of the funds
- ; • Movement of funds to and from overseas.
 - Where, without reasonable explanation, the size, nature and frequency of transactions or instructions is out of line with normal expectations.
 - Cancellation or reversal of an earlier transaction.
- Cash transactions made that are significantly outside of normal expectations.

Epping Forest District Council will consider the threats to Council being used by money launderers and put systems in place to guard against them. Policies and procedures should be laid out clearly so that all relevant staff understand and have access to them.

The officer nominated to receive disclosures about money laundering activity within the Council is the Section 151 Officer Andrew Small. He can be contacted as follows:

Andrew Small - Section 151 Officer / Strategic Director
 Civic Offices
 Epping
 Essex
 CM16 4BZ

Email: asmall@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

In the absence of the MLRO, Christopher Hartgrove the deputy MLRO (also the deputy Section 151 Officer) should be contacted in their absence on Extension 2532 or by email at: chartgrove@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

All suspicions should be reported directly to the MLRO or his deputy using the relevant documentation, which can be found at Appendix Four of this document.

Client Identification Procedures

The Council has developed formal client identification procedures which must be followed when Council land or property is being sold. These procedures require individuals and if appropriate, companies to provide proof of identity and current address (KYC).

All verification documents are capable of being forged and can be bought over the internet. For this reason, industry guidance usually recommends face-to-face meetings with new clients. Excuses for non-attendance and excuses for missing documents should be explored and treated with some scepticism.

The Council must identify its customers and verify that identity on the basis of documents, data or information obtained from a reliable source. Where there is a beneficial owner who is not the customer then the Council must identify that person and verify the identity and where the beneficial owner is a trust or similar then the Council must understand the nature of the control structure of that trust. Finally, the Council must obtain information on the purpose and intended nature of the business relationship. The MLR 2017 introduces the need for the Council to consider both customer and geographical risk factors in deciding what due diligence is required.

If satisfactory evidence is not obtained at the outset of a matter, then the transaction must not be

progressed, and a disclosure report must be submitted to the Money Laundering Reporting Officer.

The Council is also obliged to maintain ongoing monitoring of its business relationships which means it must scrutinise transactions throughout the course of the relationship to ensure that the transactions are consistent with the Council's knowledge of the customer and keep the information about the customer up to date.

Enhanced Customer Due Diligence and Ongoing Monitoring

In certain circumstances, it will be necessary to undertake what is known in the Regulations as Enhanced Customer Due Diligence. In summary, this will be necessary where:

- The customer has not been physically present for identification purposes; or
- In any other situation which by its nature can present a higher risk of money laundering or terrorist financing.

Where this applies, the Council will need to take adequate measures to compensate for the higher risk. For example, this will mean ensuring that the customer's identity is established by additional documents, data or information.

Similarly, where the Council is in an ongoing business relationship with a customer, the Regulations impose a special obligation to carry out ongoing monitoring. This means that the Council must:

- scrutinise transactions undertaken throughout the course of the relationship to make sure that these transactions are consistent with the Council's knowledge of the customer and their business and risk profile
- keep documents, data or information obtained for the purpose of applying Customer Due Diligence measures up to date.

All personal data must be collected, kept or destroyed in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation and The Data Protection Act 2018.

In order for the Council to be as effective at combatting this type of crime as possible, the following measures should be implemented wherever possible:

- No payment to the Council should automatically be accepted in cash (including notes, coins or travellers' cheques in any currency) if it exceeds £10,000. This can be a single transaction, or a group of related transactions. However, it is important to be vigilant when receiving any cash payment over £1,000. This does not, however, mean that cash transactions below this value will be valid and legal and should not arise any suspicion. Professional scepticism should remain at all times.
- Staff who collect cash payments are asked to provide the details of any cash transaction over £10,000 to the MLRO so that precautionary checks can be performed. It is best practice to insist on payment by cheque or electronically from a UK clearing bank.
- The Council, in the normal operation of its services, accept payments from individuals and organisations. If an employee has no reason to suspect or know that money laundering activity is taking/has taken place and if the money offered is less than £10,000 in cash as payment or part payment for goods/services offered by the Authority, then there is no need to seek guidance from the MLRO. If a member of staff has reasonable grounds to suspect money laundering activities or proceeds of crime, or is simply suspicious, the matter should

still be reported to the MLRO. If the money offered is £10,000 or more in cash, then payment must not be accepted until guidance has been received from the MLRO even if this means the person has to be asked to wait.

- Any officer involved in a transaction of this kind should ensure that the person provides satisfactory evidence of their identity personally, through passport/photo driving licence plus one other document providing evidence of current address in the form of a bank statement, credit card statement, mortgage or insurance details or a utility bill covering the previous 3-month period. Where the other party is a company, this can be done through company formation documents or business rate bill.

Reporting Procedure for Suspicions of Money Laundering

Where you know or suspect that money laundering activity is taking/has taken place or become concerned that your involvement in a matter may amount to a prohibited act under the Act, you must disclose this as soon as practicable to the MLRO. The disclosure should be within “hours” of the information coming to your attention, not weeks or months later.

Your disclosure should be made to the MLRO using the disclosure report; the report must include as much detail as possible including

- Full details of the people involved
- Full details of the nature of their/your involvement.
- The types of money laundering activity involved
- The dates of such activities
- Whether the transactions have happened, are ongoing or are imminent.
- Where they took place.
- How they were undertaken.
- The (likely) amount of money/assets involved.
- Why, exactly, you are suspicious.

Along with any other available information to enable the MLRO to make a sound judgment as to whether there are reasonable grounds for knowledge or suspicion of money laundering and to enable him to prepare his report to the National Crime Agency (NCA), where appropriate. You should also enclose copies of any relevant supporting documentation.

Once you have reported the matter to the MLRO you must follow any directions he may give you. You must NOT make any further enquiries into the matter yourself: any necessary investigation will be undertaken by the NCA. Simply report your suspicions to the MLRO who will refer the matter on to the NCA if appropriate. All members of staff will be required to co-operate with the MLRO and the authorities during any subsequent money laundering investigation.

Similarly, at no time and under no circumstances should you voice any suspicions to the person(s) whom you suspect of money laundering, even if the NCA has given consent to a particular transaction proceeding, without the specific consent of the MLRO; otherwise, you may commit a criminal offence of “tipping off”.

Do not, therefore, make any reference on a client file to a report having been made to the MLRO –

should the client exercise their right to see the file, then such a note will obviously tip them off to the report having been made and may render you liable to prosecution. The MLRO will keep the appropriate records in a confidential manner.

Consideration of the disclosure by the Money Laundering Reporting Officer

Upon receipt of a disclosure report, the MLRO must note the date of receipt on his section of the report and acknowledge receipt of it. They should also advise you of the timescale within which he expects to respond to you.

The MLRO will consider the report and any other available internal information they think relevant e.g.:

- reviewing other transaction patterns and volumes.
- the length of any business relationship involved.
- the number of any one-off transactions and linked one-off transactions.
- any identification evidence held.

And undertake such other reasonable inquiries they think appropriate in order to ensure that all available information is taken into account in deciding whether a report to the NCA is required (such enquiries being made in such a way as to avoid any appearance of tipping off those involved). The MLRO may also need to discuss the report with you.

Once the MLRO has evaluated the disclosure report and any other relevant information, he must make a timely determination as to whether:

- there is actual or suspected money laundering taking place; or
- there are reasonable grounds to know or suspect that is the case; and
- whether he needs to seek consent from the NCA for a particular transaction to proceed.

Where the MLRO does so conclude, then they must disclose the matter as soon as practicable to the NCA on their standard report form and in the prescribed manner, unless they have a reasonable excuse for non-disclosure to the NCA (for example, if you are a lawyer and you wish to claim legal professional privilege for not disclosing the information).

Where the MLRO suspects money laundering but has a reasonable excuse for non-disclosure, then they must note the report accordingly; they can then immediately give their consent for any ongoing or imminent transactions to proceed.

In cases where legal professional privilege may apply, the MLRO must seek independent legal advice or consult with an Accredited Financial Investigator to decide whether there is a reasonable excuse for not reporting the matter to the NCA.

All disclosure reports referred to the MLRO and reports made by him to the NCA must be retained by the MLRO in a confidential file kept for that purpose, for a minimum of five years.

The MLRO commits a criminal offence if they know or suspect, or has reasonable grounds to do so, through a disclosure being made to them, that another person is engaged in money laundering and they do not disclose this as soon as practicable to the NCA.

Training

Officers considered likely to be exposed to suspicious situations, will be made aware of these by their senior officer and provided with appropriate training.

Additionally, all employees and Members will be familiarised with the legal and regulatory requirements relating to money laundering and how they affect both the Council and themselves.

Notwithstanding the paragraphs above, it is the duty of officers and Members to report all suspicious transactions whether they have received their training or not.

Additional Information can be obtained from:

- <https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/what-we-do/crime-threats/money-laundering-and-illicit-finance>

Appendix 4

Money Laundering Reporting Form

CONFIDENTIAL
Report to the Money Laundering Reporting Officer (MLRO)
Report of Suspected Money Laundering Activity

To: Money Laundering Reporting Officer (Epping Forest District Council)

From:

Name of Staff Member Reporting Suspicion	
Job Title	
Service Area	
Telephone Number (inc. any extension)	
Email address	

Details of Suspected Activity

Name and address of ALL persons involved If a company / public body, please include details of the nature of their business	
Nature, value, timing of activity involved Please include full details (what, when, where and how)	Continue on a separate sheet if necessary)
Please explain the nature of your suspicions regarding such activity in as much detail as possible.	Continue on a separate sheet if necessary
Has any form of investigation been undertaken? If, Yes, please explain what.	Continue on a separate sheet if necessary
Have you discussed your suspicions with any other person? If so, whom?	
Have you consulted any Regulatory / Supervisory Body (e.g., The Law Society)	

Please do not discuss the content of this report with anyone you believe to be involved in the suspected money laundering activity described above. To do so, may constitute the offence of “tipping off” which can carry, upon conviction a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment.

Signed..... Date.....

For Completion by MLRO (EFDC)

Date SAR Received	
Date SAR acknowledged	
Unique Case Reference Number	
Are there reasonable grounds to suspect money laundering activity?	
If Yes, confirm date of report made to NCA	
Is consent required from the NCA to any ongoing or imminent transactions which would otherwise be a prohibited act? If yes, please give full details.	
Date consent received from the NCA	
Date consent given to employee for the transaction to proceed.	

If there are reasonable grounds to suspect money laundering but you have not or do not intend to report the matter to the NCA, please set out the reasons for non-disclosure	
Date consent given by you to the employee for the transaction to proceed	

Signed..... Date.....

THIS REPORT TO BE RETAINED FOR A MINIMUM OF FIVE YEARS

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