



EPPING FOREST LOCAL COUNCILS' LIAISON COMMITTEE

NOTICE OF MEETING

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, **Date:** Tuesday, 29th March, 2016
High Street, Epping

Room: Council Chamber **Time:** 7.30 pm

Democratic Services Officer: A. Hendry, (Governance Directorate)
Tel: (01992) 564243 Email:
democratservices@eppingforestdcltd.gov.uk

Members:

District Council Representatives:

Councillors E Webster (Chairman), M Sartin, K Angold-Stephens, A Boyce and B Rolfe

Local Council Representatives:

Clerks and Chairmen/Members of Parish and Town Councils

County Council Representatives:

Members for the following divisions:

North Weald and Nazeing:	Councillor A Jackson
Loughton Central:	Councillor C Pond
Ongar and Rural:	Councillor M McEwen
Epping and Theydon Bois:	Councillor Mr J M Whitehouse
Buckhurst Hill and Loughton South:	Councillor V Metcalfe
Chigwell and Loughton Broadway:	Councillor J Knapman
Waltham Abbey:	Councillor Mrs R Gadsby

**PLEASE NOTE THE START DATE OF THE MEETING
COFFEE/TEA WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE FROM 7.00
P.M IN THE MEMBERS ROOM**

1. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

1. This meeting is to be webcast. Members are reminded of the need to activate their microphones before speaking.
2. The Chairman will read the following announcement:

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

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.

Please could I also remind members to put on their microphones before speaking."

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

3. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 14)

To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 November 2015 and any matters arising.

4. PUBLIC EVENTS - ROAD CLOSURES

(District Council) To receive a presentation outlining the approach to be taken to secure the necessary permissions to close roads traditionally associated with Remembrance Day (and other similar) parades, following the withdrawal of Essex Police support for such events in 2015.

5. ISSUES RAISED BY LOCAL COUNCILS

To discuss the following matters raised by the local councils:

(a) Town and Parish Charter Review

The review of the current charter between the District Council and the local town and parish councils is to be lead by the Essex Association of Local Councils (Epping Forest Branch).

In agreeing this way forward, the District Council has reserved the right to consider any recommendations arising from the review of the Charter that might necessitate the provision of additional resources. Any revisions to the Charter might therefore need to be considered by the Cabinet, once these have been developed and considered by the Liaison Committee.

6. EPPING FOREST DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN - PROGRESS (Pages 15 - 20)

(District Council) To receive a report setting out the current position with regard to progress on the development of the new Local Plan for the Epping Forest District.

7. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE FRAMEWORK FOR EPPING FOREST DISTRICT

Town and Parish Councils are asked to express an interest in participating in locally based forthcoming Green Infrastructure Framework for the district. The intention is that this work will be used to help inform policies in the emerging Local Plan as well as potentially being used to support neighbourhood planning initiatives. Chris Neilan will attend to present a short report for the Director of Governance.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

To note the future meeting dates of the Committee for the new municipal year:

04 July 2016;
07 November; and
06 March 2017.

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Agenda Item 3

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT LOCAL COUNCILS' LIAISON COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date:	Monday, 16 November 2015	Time:	7.30 - 10.00 pm
Place:	Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping		
Members Present:	Representing Epping Forest District Council:		
	Councillors E Webster (Chairman), S Jackman (Vice-Chairman), K Angold-Stephens, A Boyce and B Rolfe		
	Other Councillors:		
	Councillors R Bassett, G Chambers, P Keska, G Mohindra, S Neville, G Waller, S Watson, C Whitbread and J H Whitehouse		
	Representing Essex County Council:		
	County Councillors R Gadsby, J Knapman, M McEwen, V Metcalfe, C C Pond and J M Whitehouse		
	Representing Local Councils:		
	K O'Brien (Buckhurst Hill Parish Council), A Patel (Buckhurst Hill Parish Council), J Share-Bernia (Buckhurst Hill Parish Council), D Buckle (Epping Upland Parish Council), J Eldridge (Epping Upland Parish Council), V Evans (Epping Upland Parish Council), M Burgess (Lambourne Parish Council), A Raven (Lambourne Parish Council), C P Pond (Loughton Town Council), E Walsh (Loughton Town Council), T Graham (Matching Parish Council), R Morgan (Matching Parish Council), T Arnold (Nazeing Parish Council), C Evans (Nazeing Parish Council), S De Luca (North Weald Bassett Parish Council), A Tyler (North Weald Bassett Parish Council), N Wilkinson (Roydon Parish Council), R Northwood (Sheering Parish Council), J Farren (Stapleford Abbotts Parish Council), R Russell (Stapleford Abbotts Parish Council), H Kane (Waltham Abbey Town Council), K Richmond (Waltham Abbey Town Council) and S Bosworth (Willingale Parish Council)		
Apologies:	Epping Forest District Council:		
	Councillor M Sartin		
	Parish/Town Councils:		
	Epping Town Council		
Officers Present:	G Chipp (Chief Executive), A Hall (Director of Communities), S Tautz (Democratic Services Manager), T Carne (Public Relations and Marketing Officer), C Wiggins (Safer Communities Manager), V Loftis (Public Consultation & Engagement Officer) and G Woodhall (Webcasting Officer)		

By Invitation: N Alston (Essex Police & Crime Commissioner), Chief Inspector D Morrissey (Essex Police), U Maccariello (Hastoe Housing Association)

7. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman reminded everyone present that the meeting would be broadcast live to the Internet and that Epping Forest District Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of meetings, including the Local Council's Liaison Committee.

8. PARIS TERRORIST ATTACKS

At the request of the Chairman, members, officers and invited guests stood in silence to honour the victims of the recent terrorist atrocities in Paris.

9. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That, subject to the following amendment to Minute 4 (Local Plan), the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 June 2015 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record:

'During a question and answer session, the Committee was informed that a new junction for the M11 was being considered as part of the Strategic Transport Assessment for the Harlow area'.

10. ESSEX POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

The Chairman welcomed the Police and Crime Commissioner for Essex, Nick Alston, to the meeting. Mr. Alston was supported by Chief Inspector Denise Morrissey of Essex Police, who had overall responsibility for the operational policing of the Epping Forest District.

The Committee was advised that the Police and Crime Commissioner had no agenda for presentation to the meeting and was willing to respond to questions or concerns on any local policing matters. Members and local councils had been invited to provide prior notification of any specific questions that they wished to raise with Mr. Alston and, in accordance with the usual practice of the District Council, notice of all such questions submitted had been provided to the Police and Crime Commissioner in advance of the meeting. Members of the Committee and representatives of local councils were also invited to raise specific questions with Mr. Alston and Chief Inspector Morrissey, concerning local policing arrangements across the Epping Forest District.

Halloween Disturbances – North Weald Bassett

Councillor S. Jackman of North Weald Bassett Parish Council sought assurances from the Police and Crime Commissioner in respect of public order disturbances that had occurred in North Weald on the evening of 31 October 2015. Mr. Alston advised the Committee that Halloween night was traditionally a very busy period for Essex Police, but that he was satisfied that the response of the force to the issues experienced in North Weald had been appropriate and that no calls to Essex Police had gone unanswered. Councillor Jackman reported that Chief Inspector Morrissey was to attend a meeting of the Parish Council in the near future to discuss the Police's local response to the public order disturbances in greater detail.

Remembrance Day Parades – Police Support

Councillor K. Angold-Stephens of Epping Forest District Council sought an indication from the Police and Crime Commissioner of the reasons why the withdrawal of Essex Police support from the recent Remembrance Day parades was apparently made at such short notice. Councillor Angold-Stephens reported that this approach had not allowed the Royal British Legion or local councils sufficient time to secure the necessary permissions to close roads traditionally associated with such parades.

Mr. Alston advised the Committee that of the approximately ninety parades held across Essex on Remembrance Day, only those scheduled for Epping and Loughton in the Epping Forest District (and Hadleigh elsewhere in the county) appeared to have encountered organisational difficulties with regard to road closures, although not all parades required such arrangements to be in place. Mr. Alston reported that the decision to withdraw police support from Remembrance Day parades had not been taken lightly, but was reflective of the financial situation currently faced by Essex Police. The Committee noted that the decision to withdraw support for parades had been taken by Essex Police in the Summer, but had only been communicated to the District Council in early September 2015, which had left the Council with insufficient time to complete statutory procedures for the temporary closure of the necessary roads.

Mr. Alston accepted that the timing of the confirmation of Essex Police to its future approach to the management of Remembrance Day parades had not been ideal, but that he would be facilitating meetings between relevant councils and the British Legion in the new year, to share learning and understanding of the powers available to the District Council to ensure the continued success of the parades going forward. The District Council confirmed that it had already undertaken to routinely waive all fees and charges associated with temporary road closures for Remembrance Day parades from 2016.

Police Stations – Closure

The Police and Crime Commissioner reported that it had been necessary for Essex Police to undertake a thorough review its property estate, to reflect the need for a more modern headquarters complex and the declining customer requirement for traditional 'front-counter' police stations, whilst also addressing service needs and the modernisation of arrangements for public contact with the Police. The Committee noted that the current property portfolio of Essex Police was generally in poor condition and required significant maintenance investment.

The Committee noted that the rationalisation of the Police's property estate meant that the existing police station in Epping was likely to close (although no decision to this effect had yet been taken) and that Loughton Police Station might therefore form the 'police base' for the Epping Forest District in future. Mr. Alston confirmed that any closure of current police station facilities in the District would not result in reduced levels of policing services to local residents. Councillor C. Whitbread, the Leader of the District Council, reported that officers were currently working with Essex Police to identify possible options for the co-location of police officers within the Civic Offices complex on a partnership basis, to address any closure of Epping Police Station. The Police and Crime Commissioner indicated that he wholeheartedly welcomed such partnership approaches with the District Council.

Gun Licences

Councillor R. Morgan of Matching Parish Council expressed concern with regard to current delays in the renewal of shotgun licences by Essex Police. The Police and Crime

Commissioner reported that this matter was currently an issue of concern across the county that he was already aware of. Mr. Alston indicated that it was essential that licences were only issued after the necessary checks on the suitability of applicants had been completed, but that the current delays were clearly unacceptable. The Police and Crime Commissioner also reported that the charges currently applied for shotgun licences did not cover the costs of the police in undertaking the licensing process and that he intended to review the existing charging regime as a matter of urgency.

Essex Police Precept

Councillor G. Chambers of Epping Forest District Council asked the Police and Crime Commissioner whether the Essex Police precept was likely to be increased above 1% for 2016/17. Mr. Alston reported that only one-third of the funding of the force was met from the precept and that residents of Essex currently paid less for police services than most other areas in the country. Whilst Mr. Alston felt that the precept should therefore ideally be increased by approximately 17.5% to address this deficit, the Commissioner reminded the Committee that precept increases above 2% would be required to be subject a local referendum that would be likely to cost in the region of £2m. Mr. Alston indicated that the experience of other police forces suggested that it would be an inappropriate use of resources to pursue such a referendum.

Police Community Support Officers

Councillor A. Patel of Buckhurst Hill Parish Council indicated that his council remained supportive of the local employment of Police Community Support Officers (PCSO) and wished to pursue this approach, notwithstanding an unsuccessful recruitment exercise earlier in the year that was considered to be due to the uncertainty of future funding for PCSO provision.

The Police and Crime Commissioner confirmed that Essex Police remained committed to the provision of PCSOs, even though their number was likely to reduce significantly in future. Mr. Alston welcomed the interest of local councils in supporting PCSO provision financially, although the Committee was disappointed to note that it was not possible for PCSOs to be appointed to specifically serve particular areas and that the allocation of PCSO responsibilities would remain with Essex Police and might need to be directed towards priorities in other geographic areas, when required by policing circumstances.

The Committee expressed reservations at the possible future reduction in the number of PCSOs in Essex and the likely consequent loss of information and intelligence at 'street-level'.

Savings and Efficiencies

Councillor S. Neville of Epping Forest District Council sought an indication of the likely level of savings to be generated by the rationalisation of Essex Police's property estate, the reduction in the current number of Police Community Support Officers and other ongoing efficiency measures.

Mr. Alston advised that savings and efficiencies were likely to be in the order of £11m and that a significant amount of the capital receipts that would accrue from the reduction in the number of Essex Police's operational properties would be used to fund the construction of a modern headquarters building for the force, at a site still to be identified. As a result, it was not possible to ringfence savings from specific areas, such as from the possible sale of the Epping Police Station site, for reinvestment in police services for particular areas. Mr. Alston confirmed however that operational running

cost savings arising from savings and efficiency measures would be reinvested in the provision of front-line police services for Essex.

Councillor J. Knapman of Chigwell Parish Council questioned why the savings and efficiencies proposals of the Police and Crime Commissioner had not been included within his initial manifesto and suggested that a more open-minded approach was needed to local policing arrangements. Mr. Alston indicated that Essex Police would continue to manage an operational base on the Limes Farm Estate at Chigwell where appropriate, notwithstanding that Chigwell Parish Council had engaged the services of a private security company to 'police' the estate.

In response to a question from Councillor S. Watson of Buckhurst Hill Parish Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner confirmed that his savings and efficiency proposals would have no negative effect on the safety and security of the Epping Forest District, particularly given its proximity to both London and Stansted Airport. Mr. Alston reported that, in the wake of the recent atrocities in Paris, the Prime Minister had announced additional funding for high-level counter-terrorism activity.

Special Constables

Councillor C. C. Pond of Essex County Council suggested that there was a need for increased police 'volunteering', through existing arrangements for the engagement of Special Constables. The Police and Crime Commissioner reported that there were currently 370 appointed Special Constables across Essex, including twelve rural area officers. Whilst Mr. Alston expressed his full support for the Special Constables and increased funding was available for their provision, he felt that it would be more desirable and effective to have greater flexibility over their deployment on general policing matters and allocation to specialist teams. The Committee was advised that over one-hundred volunteer Police Cadets had also been appointed throughout Essex.

Casualty Reduction

The Police and Crime Commissioner confirmed that Essex Police also remained committed to the provision of casualty reduction measures across the county and, although the number of specialist officers that were part of the force's Road Traffic Unit had been maintained to date, these were likely to reduce in future. Mr. Alston confirmed that the operational base of the Road Traffic Unit at Chigwell was likely to be retained as part of the exercise being undertaken to rationalise Essex Police's property estate.

Essex Community Messaging

S. De Luca of North Weald Bassett Parish Council reported that the Essex Community Messaging service that provided for people to receive information, crime prevention advice and notifications from Essex Police and key partners such as Neighbourhood Watch, was not always up-to-date. The Police and Crime Commissioner undertook to raise specific matters concerning inaccurate information with the relevant officers of Essex Police.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chairman thanked Mr. Alston and Chief Inspector Morrissey of Essex Police for their attendance at the meeting.

11. RURAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING SCHEMES - PLANNING EXCEPTIONS POLICY

The District Council reported to the Committee on the opportunities available for the provision of affordable housing schemes comprising affordable rented, shared ownership and low-cost market housing, in rural areas of the Epping Forest District.

The Director of Communities advised that an opportunity for the provision of such housing schemes had arisen as a result of the 'planning exceptions policy' contained in the Council's current Local Plan, which recognised that a lack of affordable housing in rural village areas was likely to have a greater effect on individuals and communities than in urban areas, and that the opportunities for increasing the amount of affordable housing was less than in urban areas. Members noted that this was usually because less suitable development sites generally become available in rural areas and local inhabitants were more likely to have to move away from their local area than in larger, urban areas.

The Committee noted that, under the exceptions policy, planning permission could be granted on sites that only provided affordable housing (plus some market housing, if necessary in order to make the development viable) to meet a local housing need, for which planning applications for developments comprising predominantly market housing would be refused. Members were advised however, that certain conditions set out in the Local Plan must be met in relation to schemes, including that the development must be:

- in smaller settlements that have a recognisable community, distinct and separate from the metropolitan area;
- small scale;
- in response to a demonstrable local housing need (identified through a rural housing survey);
- supported by the local town or parish council;
- well-related to the existing settlement; and
- providing predominantly affordable housing in perpetuity.

It was reported that the Local Plan stated that settlements which could be suitable for schemes included Epping Green, Matching Tye, Matching Green, Moreton, Sheering, Fyfield, Willingale, Toot Hill and Stapleford Abbotts. Those areas that would specifically not be appropriate included Lower Nazeing, Theydon Bois, Chigwell Row, North Weald Bassett, Sewardstone and Chipping Ongar.

In order to ensure that rural affordable housing schemes only provided accommodation for local residents, applicants were required be:

- long-established local residents (i.e. those who have lived in the village concerned for at least five of the preceding ten years) requiring separate accommodation;
- immediate family dependents of long-established local residents;
- former long-established residents; or
- living elsewhere and could not otherwise take up, or continue to, work in the village.

The Committee was advised that four rural housing schemes had so far been provided in the District under the planning exceptions policy, which had provided a total of 26 affordable homes. Affordable Housing Grant was available from the Homes and Communities Agency to fund rural housing schemes in certain circumstances.

The District Council had previously selected Hastoe Housing Association as its partner for the delivery of rural housing schemes. Hastoe had a wealth of experience in working closely with town and parish councils to assess local housing need and provide rural housing schemes, including three of the four schemes already provided in the District in the past.

Ulrike Maccariello of Hastoe made a short presentation to the Committee, detailing how local housing needs are assessed through a bespoke rural housing survey, the process for the identification of suitable sites, the role of town and parish councils, the forms of

tenure provided for the accommodation, the development process and the safeguards implemented to ensure that only local residents are eligible for the housing schemes.

The District Council reported that the slides from Ms. Maccariello's presentation would be published on its website, alongside the minutes from the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

12. TOWN & COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 - SECTION 106 AGREEMENTS

The local councils sought clarification of the percentage of affordable housing generally required on new residential developments in the District, in view of a recent High Court judgement handed down to Reading Borough Council and West Berkshire District Council and the subsequent removal of the Government's Planning Practice Guidance on planning obligations relating to affordable housing as a result of the ruling.

The Director of Communities reported that in November 2014, the Government had changed the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), to require that any development comprising of ten dwellings or less with a gross internal floor area of less than 1,000 square metres, would no longer be required to provide any element of affordable housing. Along with all other local planning authorities, the District Council had implemented this change to its current development policy.

The Committee was advised that, in August 2015, Reading Borough Council and West Berkshire District Council had successfully challenged the change to the NPPF in the High Court. The Director of Communities reported that the two councils had claimed that the new policy would reduce the amount of affordable housing across the country by more than 20% and have a particular impact in their particular areas. Members noted that the Judge in the case had quashed the Government's revised policy and had ruled that the change was incompatible with the statutory planning framework. The Government was ordered to pay the councils' costs in bringing the challenge and, as a result of the judgement, the Government subsequently removed the new provisions from the NPPF. Following the judgement, the District Council had returned to its previous affordable housing policies set out in the Local Plan:

- in areas with a population of more than 3,000 people – a requirement for developers to provide 40% affordable housing on sites comprising 15 or more new dwellings, or with a site area 0.5ha or above; and
- in areas with a population of less than 3,000 people – a requirement for developers to provide 50% affordable housing for developments on greenfield sites providing two or more dwellings (or with a site area over 0.1ha) and for developments on brownfield sites providing three or more dwellings (or with a site area over 0.2ha).

The Committee was advised that the Government had recently been granted leave to appeal the decision of the High Court in the Court of Appeal.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report be noted; and
- (2) That a further report be made to a future meeting of the Committee on the outcome of any appeal by the Government against the recent High Court judgement.

13. GREATER ESSEX DEVOLUTION

The local councils requested that, following Essex County Council's commitment to progress its devolution agenda, the District Council share its own plans for taking over services from Essex County Council and/or devolving others to local councils.

The Leader of the District Council, Councillor C. Whitbread reported that the fifteen local councils of Greater Essex (Essex County Council, the district, borough and city councils and the Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock unitary authorities) had been working together to explore and develop devolution proposals which could see the transfer of powers and funding from central Government to a Greater Essex Authority. Whilst the proposals were not yet fully developed and any 'deal' would need to be considered by the Council before a final decision was reached, it was possible that devolution could bring benefits and greater local control over issues such as:

- the growth of the local economy in a sustainable way;
- the application of skills funding to ensure that training matched current and future business need;
- increased inward investment and job creation, and
- initiatives to tackle some of the transport and infrastructure challenges of the area.

The Committee was advised that, in order to agree to devolving power, the Government required the development of proposals that showed ambition in terms of outcomes, strong governance arrangements and a realistic prospect of delivery. Councillor Whitbread reported that, although a high-level submission had been made to the Government in September 2015 to confirm the Greater Essex Partnership's interest in a devolution arrangement, there was still not enough information available to make an informed decision about a final deal and that the case for devolution to a Greater Essex Authority was yet to be made.

The Committee was advised that it was anticipated that a more detailed submission would be made to the Government in December 2015, setting out the basis of a devolution deal and the approach to new governance arrangements, which would commence the detailed negotiation phase with the Government. Members noted that it was not likely that the detail of any final devolution deal, including any new governance model (such as a combined authority), would be available until March 2016 at the earliest. As a result, it was not currently possible to consider the substance of any services or functions that might subsequently be devolved to town and parish councils, although the Chief Executive of the District Council encouraged local councils to consider potential areas for devolution that they might wish to discuss with him or Councillor Whitbread at a later stage in the process. Members were advised however, that it might not be possible for the District Council to delegate responsibility for particular services, the provision of which might be of interest to local councils.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report be noted;
- (2) That a further report be made to a future meeting of the Committee once the detail of any devolution deal reached with the Government has been finalised; and
- (3) That pursuant to resolution (2) above, a special meeting of the Committee be convened if necessary, to further consider the devolution proposals of the Greater Essex Partnership.

14. PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT

The Committee considered a report and presentation of the District Council's Public Consultation and Engagement officer, Mrs. V. Loftis, setting out the ways in which local town and parish councils could support the District Council in undertaking consultation and engagement with local residents.

Members were advised that Epping Forest District Council carried out a significant amount of public consultation and engagement. The Council relied on the support of other organisations to assist its efforts in this regard, not only by providing responses in their own right but also by helping the authority to raise awareness of consultation through their own channels of communication. The Council had adopted a Public Consultation and Engagement Policy, which identified and registered all public consultation carried out by the authority during the year and all planned consultation for the following twelve months. Members noted that an annual report was made to the Governance Select Committee, which scrutinised the methods, costs and effectiveness of consultation. As the Council had to find cost effective ways in which to consult and engage with its stakeholders, the adoption of a common, co-ordinated approach to public engagement improved efficiency and helped to provide value for money.

The Committee noted that, when engaging with the public about a service, policy or any other issue, the focus of the District Council was on finding out the needs, concerns, priorities or satisfaction levels of current and potential service users. The Council was always keen to give people a voice in decisions that concerned them, as this was an effective way of helping them to become involved in improving their quality of life and the services provided by the Council. Members noted that effective public involvement could also help to improve local democracy through openness, transparency and accountability, whilst also enhancing community integration and cohesion.

The District Council reported that the slides from Mrs. Loftis' presentation would be published on its website, alongside the minutes from the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- (1) That the report be noted; and
- (2) That the valuable role that local councils can play in helping the District Council to publicise consultation exercises amongst local residents, businesses and other stakeholders through Parish-based newsletters, noticeboards, meetings, websites, social media and other local communication tools etc., be endorsed.

15. EPPING FOREST DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN - PROGRESS

The Committee received a comprehensive report setting out the current position with regard to progress on the development of the new Local Plan for the Epping Forest District.

The District Council reported that it had not been possible to meet the previous timetable for the development of the new Local Plan and that the timings for each of the key stages had slipped by about a year, although a revised programme leading to adoption of the Local Plan in September 2018 was now considered to represent a realistic and achievable timetable. The Committee noted that, as a result of the revised Local Development Scheme that had been agreed by the District Council's Cabinet on 11 June 2015, the next Local Plan consultation stage on the draft plan preferred approach would be undertaken during summer 2016.

Members were reminded that a series of member (including Town and Parish Councils) briefing and workshop sessions had been arranged in relation to the development of the new Local Plan, to inform members of emerging key issues that the draft Local Plan would need to cover and to ensure that Member views and concerns might be taken account of in the drafting of Local Plan policies.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

16. COMMUNITY WEDDING VENUES

The Committee was advised that Essex County Council was seeking to identify a suitable local venue to take over the provision of a Community Wedding Venue, which was presently provided at through the Registration Office in Epping. A consultation exercise was currently being undertaken that could result in the closure of the facilities at Epping Registration Office and the County Council were therefore looking to arrange a suitable replacement venue as soon as possible.

Members noted that the concept of a Community Wedding Venue was to provide a discounted wedding venue that allowed couples to undertake a formal wedding ceremony without a need to arrange a reception etc. The discounted rate for the service was shared between Essex County Council and the venue on a roughly equal basis. The type of venue that Essex County Council was seeking to identify would be able to accommodate up to 60 people, would be fully accessible to the public and did not offer other wedding ceremonies in the same room (other rooms in the venue could be used for more expensive ceremonies) and was ideally available from Monday to Saturday.

The District Council reported that Essex County Council were happy to discuss its requirements in more detail with individual local councils.

17. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2016/17

The District Council reported that it was currently developing its calendar of meetings for the next municipal year, which would be approved by the Council at its meeting on 15 December 2015.

Members were advised that the calendar had developed over time to meet the needs of the authority and that, where possible, meetings of particular committees were standardised on a particular night of the week. The Committee was therefore asked to indicate is preferred evening for meetings to be held during 2016/17.

RESOLVED:

That, wherever possible, meetings of the Liaison Committee be held on a Monday evening during 2016/17.

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held at 7.30pm on 29 March 2016.

CHAIRMAN

Epping Forest District Council Local Plan Progress Report Local Councils' Liaison Committee – 29 March 2016

1) Local Plan timetable

The Local Development Scheme agreed by Cabinet on 11 June 2015 has the timetable for consultation on the draft plan scheduled for July 2016 to September 2016. This timescale is challenging.

The Government has made clear their expectation that all local planning authorities should have a post 2012 National Planning Policy Framework local plan in place. This includes intervening where no local plan has been produced by early 2017 to arrange for the plan to be written, in consultation with local people. The Government are currently consulting until 15 April 2016 on the criteria to inform their decision on whether to intervene to deliver this commitment. This is included within the technical consultation on implementation of planning changes arising from measures outlined in the Housing and Planning Bill that is currently being debated in Parliament. (Section 5 of this report refers). One of the penalties proposed for not having produced a plan, (it is not clear yet how this will be interpreted), is the loss of New Homes Bonus. It is clear that the Council needs to make good progress this year and to have consulted on our Draft Plan Preferred Approach as soon as possible. For this reason the focus of the Planning Policy Team is on the outstanding work needed to go out to consultation on the Draft Plan as soon as possible and so for the moment we will not be able to give as much resource to Neighbourhood Planning. The team will of course continue to provide advice and assistance by signposting to relevant material and grants available and will give regular updates to Local Plans Liaison Committee.

Duty to Cooperate

Officers and Members continue to meet regularly with appropriate authorities, principally through the Cooperation for Sustainable Development Officer group and Member Board, to consider a wide range of cross boundary issues. In addition to the post SHMA work referred to below, the Board has considered other strategic issues including employment, Green Belt Review work. The Lea Valley Food Taskforce continues to develop a programme for the future of the glasshouse industry - one of the District's historic and still important sectors.

Officers have also been involved in transport work being undertaken by the London Borough of Enfield, opposing reference to construction of a new access road in the North East Enfield Area Action Plan and are keeping a watching brief on wider transport work being undertaken as part of Enfield's Northern Gateway Access Package (NGAP).

2) Member Workshops

The purpose of the member workshops, that includes Town and Parish Council representation, is to inform Members of emerging key issues that the draft Local Plan will cover and to ensure that Members views and concerns are aired in order that they might be taken account of in the policy drafting.

Three workshops held in November 2015 considered potential policy approaches to:

- i) the Historic Environment, the Natural Environment and Green Networks,
- ii) Economic and Employment; and

iii) Affordable, older persons', accessible and custom build housing.

More recent workshops considered design matters on 28 January 2016 and input to stage 2 of the Green Belt study on 25 February 2016. All workshops have been well attended and Members have provided valuable information and opinions on the matters presented.

In respect of the Green Belt workshop, Members were afforded a short period (until 10 March), to send further comments on the parcel boundaries and to feed in local knowledge and views about the areas now being looked at in more detail. Officers have passed on all comments received to the consultants who are undertaking this piece of work.

Further workshops will be held covering additional matters including climate change, energy and flood risk and development management policies. A programme is being worked up for these sessions and once finalised Members will be advised of dates and arrangements accordingly.

3) Update on key evidence work

Work continues on finalising the evidence base reports which will be used to inform the policies included in the Draft Plan (Preferred Approach) that the Council consults on later this year.

Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Economic and Employment evidence

Work was completed in 2015 on these key pieces of technical evidence relating to housing and jobs numbers.

An updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) has been produced in conjunction with the other authorities within our Housing Market Area: East Herts, Harlow and Uttlesford and was reported to Cabinet in October 2015. What the SHMA provides us with is figures for Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAHN) for Epping Forest District and the other three Districts named above. The OAHN figure in Epping Forest District is 11,300 dwellings up to 2033 but it is important to understand that this is not the housing target for the District. Work is underway with the other SHMA authorities to consider the options for the most appropriate spatial distribution of growth across the area.

An Economic Evidence report for West Essex and East Herts commissioned jointly by EFDC and East Herts, Harlow and Uttlesford Councils was also reported to the October 2015 Cabinet meeting. Local Plan Inspectors pay particular attention to the need for jobs and housing requirements to be aligned. Therefore, this study was commissioned on the same basis as the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, to cover the four authorities and to inform all four Local Plans across the 'Functional Economic Market Area'. A second more detailed report covering 'Economic and Employment Evidence to Support the Local Plan and Economic Development Strategy' has also been completed for EFDC alone.

These housing and economic evidence reports can be viewed via the Local Plan pages of the Council's website.

Green Belt Review

Government guidance and emerging Inspectors' reports make clear the need to undertake a comprehensive Green Belt Review of the entire District before the release of any Green Belt land is considered. It is important to remember that the outcome of the Green Belt Review is only one, albeit an extremely important, piece of the evidence base that will inform the Council's future plan-making

decisions.

Following completion of the Stage 1 work reported to Cabinet in September 2015, work on the Green Belt Review Stage 2 is being undertaken for the Council by external consultants LUC. The consultants' fieldwork and analysis has now largely been completed giving a finer grain assessment of the broad locations identified in the Stage 1 work. In particular, this will provide detailed evidence and information concerning the contribution different parcels of land make to the Green Belt purposes identified in the NPPF. This in turn will assist the Council in deciding:

- The areas where the Green Belt policy designation should remain;
- Any historic anomalies in the existing boundaries or locations where development has taken place, which may therefore suggest minor amendments to the Green Belt boundaries are required;
- Areas that may be least harmful in Green Belt terms if released from the Green Belt.

It therefore follows that, simply because a parcel, or part of the parcel, is being appraised as part of the more detailed work, this does not necessarily mean that it should / will be allocated for development in the emerging Local Plan, or that the Council would look favourably on a planning application.

As noted above, the consultants recently ran a workshop to ensure that Member views are appropriately taken account of in this work. Once the Stage 2 study has been completed, (now likely to be around mid-April), together with the other evidence the findings will be used to inform the Draft Plan (Preferred Approach).

Settlement Capacity Work

Fregonese Associates have made good progress on the settlement capacity study of the District's 10 largest settlements - namely Epping, Theydon Bois, Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell, Loughton/Debden, Waltham Abbey, North Weald Bassett, Chipping Ongar, Lower Nazeing and Roydon. This will provide the District with the information to determine the potential for additional capacity within existing settlements over and above that originally identified in the SLAA, and so minimise the potential need to utilise Green Belt land for any future growth. Like Stage 2 of the Green Belt Review, the results of this work will be used to inform, and be published alongside, the consultation Draft Plan Preferred Approach.

Transport

To help inform the best way to meet the objectively assessed housing need for the Strategic Housing Market Area identified in the work reported to Cabinet in October 2015, further transport modelling work is being undertaken by Essex County Council. This will look at the implications for the transport network of growth and how it can be distributed across the Housing Market Area. The outputs will then be considered by the districts and jointly by the four SHMA authorities at the Cooperation for Sustainable Development Board. This work is being progressed using support from ATLAS and facilitated by AECOM to undertake a sustainability appraisal on the impact of strategic growth options in the four authorities to meet the overall housing and employment figures for the SHMA area. Officers have met Natural England and the Conservators of Epping Forest to consider the impact on air quality in particular for Epping Forest itself.

Delays have been encountered in the strategic transport assessment using the VISUM model which has still not been signed off by Highways England. This is of concern because it could lead to a delay in completing the work to test the strategic options for growth in the SHMA area. A joint letter from the leaders of the four authorities to local MPs and relevant ministers was sent on 22 February 2016 seeking a

dedicated resource at senior level within Highways England to assist with the work so that Local Plans are not further delayed.

Other evidence base studies

Essex County Council is undertaking a Historic Environment Characterisation study of the District with a final report due this Spring. Town and parish councils are also to be asked for expressions of interest in participating in work leading to the establishment of a Green Infrastructure Framework for the District. The intention is that this work will produce a Corporate District-wide strategy and can be used to help inform policies in the emerging Local Plan as well as potentially support neighbourhood planning initiatives. A short report and presentation explaining more about this work is covered by a separate agenda item for this meeting.

4) Neighbourhood Plans

Moreton, Bobbingworth and the Lavers have finalised their draft Plan and submitted it to the Council. The plan has now been published and is currently being examined.

Eight other Parish and Town Councils have applied to designate neighbourhood planning areas for their areas (Chigwell, Epping, Buckhurst Hill, Theydon Bois, Loughton, North Weald Bassett, Epping Upland and Waltham Abbey). Many of these are now at early stages in scoping out and drafting their plans.

As noted below in section 5 there are proposals in the Housing and Planning Bill to streamline and simplify neighbourhood planning so that there would be automatic designation of whole parishes, statutory time limits on local planning authority decisions and powers for the Secretary of State to intervene to send a plan to referendum if there are delays or disagreements.

5) Housing & Planning Bill

The Housing & Planning Bill containing more than 140 clauses was published on the 13 October 2015 and on its passage through Parliament is currently being scrutinised at committee stage in the House of Lords. It is anticipated that the Bill will receive Royal Assent and be enacted by the autumn; this is likely then to be quickly followed by secondary legislation to bring its provisions into force. Measures have been included to streamline the planning process; to facilitate starter homes, self builds and building on brownfield land. It is proposed that more powers are given to the Secretary of State to take over plan making, decision taking and effectively impose financial penalties on local authorities with high-value vacant buildings.

In addition to the proposals for neighbourhood planning and local plan making referred to earlier in this report other main changes included in part 6 of the Bill are:

- Neighbourhood planning - concerned that the neighbourhood planning process is too slow, Government has introduced changes which it hopes will combat this delay.
- Local planning - changes to local planning are included to give the Secretary of State more power to intervene if local plans are not delivered effectively.
- Local registers of brownfield land and permission in principle – a key element of the Bill is the creation of a new "permission in principle" provision which provides that planning permission in

principle may be granted for development of land in England.

- Planning permission - changes under this heading relate to the grant of planning permission by permitted development rights and by the Secretary of State when a local planning authority is deemed to be underperforming.
- Nationally significant infrastructure projects - as another means of boosting housing supply, the Bill provides the Secretary of State with a new power to grant development consent for housing which is linked to an application for a nationally significant infrastructure project.

Changes to the compulsory purchase regime are also included in the Bill and are aimed at making compulsory purchase "clearer, fairer and faster".

Technical consultation on implementation of planning changes

The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) is seeking views on the proposed approach to implementation of measures in the Housing and Planning Bill, and some other planning measures. Responses to the public consultation will inform the detail of the secondary legislation which will be prepared once the Bill gains Royal Assent.

The consultation period started on 18 February and runs until Friday 15 April 2016. The consultation document <http://tinyurl.com/z3a719h> sets out proposals that cover a wide range of development management and planning policy matters. Within EFDC Development Management and Planning Policy officers are currently considering the matters raised and questions posed in the document with a view to preparing a response to be sent by the Council.

Structured in chapters the following areas are covered in the document:

Chapter 1: Changes to planning application fees.

Chapter 2: Enabling planning bodies to grant permission in principle for housing development on sites allocated in plans or identified on brownfield registers and allowing small builders to apply directly for permission in principle for minor development.

Chapter 3: Introduction of a statutory register of brownfield land suitable for housing development.

Chapter 4: Creating a small sites register to support custom build homes.

Chapter 5: Speeding up and simplifying neighbourhood planning.

Chapter 6: Introducing criteria to inform decisions on intervention to deliver the Government's commitment to get local plans in place.

Chapter 7: Extending the existing designation approach to include applications for non-major development.

Chapter 8: testing competition in the processing of planning applications.

Chapter 9: information about financial benefits.

Chapter 10: Introducing a Section 106 dispute resolution service.

Chapter 11: Facilitating delivery of new state-funded school places, including free schools, through expanded permitted development rights; and

Chapter 12: Improving the performance of all statutory consultees.