

## **EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**Committee:** Asset Management and Economic Development Cabinet Committee     **Date:** Thursday, 30 June 2016

**Place:** Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping     **Time:** 7.00 - 8.10 pm

**Members Present:** Councillors A Grigg (Chairman), W Breare-Hall (Vice-Chairman), H Kane, G Mohindra and A Lion

**Other Councillors:** T Boyce

**Apologies:** Councillor G Waller

**Officers Present:** M Warr (Economic Development Officer), J Leither (Democratic Services Officer) and G J Woodhall (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

**Also in attendance:** C Pasterfield (Consultant) and N Nilanweera (Harvey Spackfield)

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### **1. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION**

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

### **2. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

The Cabinet Committee noted that Councillor A Lion substituted for Councillor G Waller.

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

### **4. MINUTES**

#### **Resolved:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 April 2016 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### **5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TEAM PROGRESS REPORT**

The Economic Development Officer (EDO) presented a report to the Cabinet Committee and updated them on a number of projects and issues being explored by the Economic Development Team.

## **(1) Visitor Economy**

The Economic Development Team had been working with colleagues in Planning to commission a Visitor Accommodation Needs Assessment for the district. This work would look at all forms of visitor accommodation, including serviced (hotels, pub accommodation etc) and non-serviced accommodation (self-catering, camping, moorings etc). As reported previously, the main driver of this work is the preparation of the new Local Plan and the Study will form a key part of the evidence base helping to inform tourism policies in the Local Plan.

Beyond planning policy though, the Study potentially had the scope to inform broader interventions within the Council, for example, through the Economic and Tourism Development Teams and perhaps in the consideration of the future use of the Council's own assets etc. Presentations from two consultants had been presented to the Economic Development Team but no final decision on the appointment of either consultant had yet been reached.

A presentation had been received from a potential provider of a new tourism website under the Visit Epping Forest banner. Work would commence to realise the vision for a dynamic new website which was intended to promote and support the district's valuable visitor economy. The initial procurement and build of the website was being funded through monies awarded by the Town and Village Centres Opportunities Fund.

The Tourism and Visitor Board members suggested that a tourism conference towards the end of the year would be more useful than during English Tourism Week which was in March, a decision had therefore been made to host a second conference this year on 14th October and this would once again take place at the Waltham Abbey Marriott Hotel.

Addressing previously raised concerns around local public transport, the Tourism and Visitor Board discussed the idea of a tourism bus travelling between attractions. It was felt that this would be welcomed and especially effective when major events were being held. It was agreed that members would use the forthcoming tourism conference to see if dates for major events could be synchronised making the case for transport even more compelling. It was also agreed that opportunities to access funding for such a scheme should also be investigated.

The Visit Epping Forest leaflet had recently been updated and reprinted. As part of an awareness building campaign, leaflet holders have been purchased and the new leaflets have been placed in high-traffic visitor outlets across the district. The leaflets feature our major attractions plus information on destination towns and villages in the district and will direct traffic to the Visit Epping Forest website.

Members queried who would fund the Visit Essex Leaflet. The Economic Development Officer advised that he would speak to the relevant officer and publish a reply in the council bulletin.

## **(2) Town Centres**

A meeting of the Town Teams took place on 27 June, A presentation was given to the Town Teams with regard to the 2016/17 Town & Village Centres Opportunities Fund. A new policy document for the fund was presented, setting out the parameters within which a wider range of organisations could apply to the fund. This report would now be presented to Cabinet for review and subject to this being approved a wider

and more concerted launch and promotional campaign for the fund will then take place.

### **(3) Business Support**

#### **Pop Up Cafe**

The Economic Development Team are testing a new format business event in the district in July. The Pop Up Business Café will be held at the newly-refurbished Epping Forest District Museum in Waltham Abbey on Wednesday 13 July, 10am to 1pm. BEST Growth Hub (which provides business support across the Greater Essex area) will be helping to coordinate. They ran a similar event in Southend earlier this year which was very successful.

The basic concept was to draw together a small number of business support and local business professionals in an informal setting and to invite local businesses and those looking to start-up in business. The businesses would be able to speak with a business professional (say marketing, accounting, HR etc) for 10/15 minutes, networking. Whilst we are unable to pay the local business professionals for their time we would hope that they may see benefit in terms of getting promotion for themselves. Currently three local businesses have signed-up to provide advice and the Economic Development Team have approached several others.

#### **Database**

The Team's exercise to improve the information and contact information it holds for local businesses within the district has progressed well. The work would help in the delivery of a number of the Team's current projects regular email updates (on business events, funding, training opportunities, awards etc). Currently on the database there were 6,500 address and telephone business contacts and 600 email contacts. Recently 4,000 business were contacted asking for email address to add to the database. Out of these 4,000 we had 750 replies. There will be a further tele-research exercise in July, to collect further details.

### **(4) Broadband**

#### **Business Breakfast**

To further promote take-up by businesses of the ultrafast fibre broadband network being built within Epping Forest District by Gigaclear plc as part of the Superfast Essex Rural Challenge Project (RCP), the Economic Development team will be hosting a business breakfast aimed at the businesses within the RCP as well as businesses from outside the area whose services may be more effectively utilised with an ultrafast network.

It is planned that as well as a number of speakers presenting to the audience about the opportunities an ultrafast network makes possible, the event will also represent an excellent opportunity for local businesses to network with key Business to Business (B2B) providers, both local and national and make useful connections. The event will take place at Mulberry House, High Ongar on 13 September at 7.00am and promotion of the event will shortly begin. Liaison with local parish councils will also take place to ensure awareness of this event reaches as many businesses as possible in the RCP area.

#### **Ultrafast Network**

The physical build of the RCP network continues at pace and to date, over 84km of network has been built, installing connection points outside over 1100 premises in the district. Starting in Bobbingworth, the network has moved on through Moreton, Fyfield, Norton Heath, Abbess Roding and Toot Hill and will continue throughout the

remainder of the year to areas such as Willingale, The Lavers, Sheering, Ongar and North Weald. The project has experienced some delays but remains due to be completed in early 2017.

**(5) Partner Liaison**

Work was continuing with supporting and attending meetings with a number of Partner Organisations. The Economic Development Team had recently attended the Superfast Essex Super-Connected Business Conference at Chelmsford City Racecourse.

**Agreed:**

That a report would be published in the council bulletin regarding the funding of the Visit Essex leaflet.

**Resolved:**

To note the progress and work programme of the Council's Economic Development Section.

**Reasons for Decision:**

To appraise the Committee on progress made with regard to Economic Development issues.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

None, as this monitoring report is for information not action.

**6. ASSET MANAGEMENT CO-ORDINATION GROUP REPORT**

The Asset Management Consultant presented a report to the Cabinet Committee and updated them on further progress which had been achieved since the publication of the Agenda.

**(1) Epping Forest Shopping Park**

There was a separate detailed report on the progress of the development at Agenda Item 8.

**(2) Oakwood Hill Depot**

There had been a delay in relocating to the new depot at Oakwood Hill as the VOSA brake testing box had been positioned incorrectly. This had now been moved and the VOSA accreditation for the MOT Service was being carried out on the 16 July 2016. It was anticipated that all services would have fully moved to Oakwood Hill by the end of July 2016.

**(3) Pyrles Lane Nursery**

The District Development Management Committee have granted consent for the redevelopment of the Pyrles Lane Nursery site. A report would be presented to the Cabinet on the 21 July, seeking permission for the marketing strategy for the site.

**(4) St John's Road**

Negotiations on the purchase of the County Council's interest in the site had been concluded. The final terms were due to be agreed by Cabinet on the 21 July 2016. It was anticipated that, subject to sign off by the Secretary of State, exchange of contracts could be achieved over the summer holiday period.

**(5) North Weald Airfield**

Work was being undertaken on the development of the specification of works for an operational partner. This had been delayed due to changes in the European Procurement Rules which would prevent the procurement of a concessionary contract and would likely necessitate a full blown OJEU process.

**(6) Site of former Sir Winston Churchill Public House**

The development was proceeding at a pace and was now up to the fifth floor. Completion was still anticipated in July 2017. Agents have been appointed for the letting of the retail units on the ground floor with a number of quality prospective tenants expressing interest.

**(7) Ongar Academy**

The sale of the land to the Secretary of State for Education was now complete and construction of the new school had commenced.

**(8) Hillhouse Leisure / Community Hub**

After the successful community engagement events to assist in Masterplanning the site, an outline application was due to be submitted jointly by the partners in August 2016, with the intention that it was considered by District Development Management Committee at their meeting in November 2016. Proposals from the tenderers for the new Leisure Management Contract have been received for the construction of the new Swimming Pool on the site. The GP Practice will now not temporarily relocate.

**(9) Former Golden Lion Public House**

A revised offer had been received for a lease extension for the site from the developer. A planning application is anticipated to be submitted in August 2016.

**(10) Town Mead Depot**

No suitable alternative use had yet been identified for this site.

**Resolved:**

To note progress on the Council's Asset Management and Development Projects.

**Reasons for Decision:**

To comply with the Cabinet Committee's previous request to monitor the development of the Council's property assets on a regular basis.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

None, as this was a monitoring report which was for information not action.

## **7. EPPING FOREST SHOPPING PARK - PROGRESS REPORT**

The Asset Management Consultant presented a report to the Cabinet Committee and updated them on further progress which had been achieved since the publication of the Agenda.

He advised that tenders had been received for the main construction contract from three suitably qualified companies. The contractors were invited to a clarification interview and their bids have been formally evaluated by the Project Team. Standstill letters have been sent to all tenderers and on the assumption that no challenges have been received by the 20 June, a report will be considered by the Cabinet on the 21 July to make the final award. The length of the construction period is estimated at around 40 weeks with a start on site in August 2016.

Members will recall that the Section 278 Highways Contract was awarded to Walkers Construction earlier in the year. The start of the work had been delayed by several months due to difficulties in reaching agreement with Essex County Council Highways on methods of working and their requirements for re-surfacing in adjacent areas. Although a solution has been agreed, this was likely to increase costs. This issue will also be addressed as part of the Cabinet Report in July.

Members were concerned about the impact the shopping park would have on local businesses and asked if any research had been implemented. The Asset Management Consultant advised that he would speak to the Chief Estates Officer concerned and ask that he attend the next meeting of the Asset Management and Economic Development Cabinet Committee to give a report.

### **Agreed:**

That the Chief Estates Officer be invited to the next meeting of the Asset Management and Economic Development Cabinet Committee to report on the impact of the shopping park on local businesses.

### **Resolved:**

To note progress on the Epping Forest Shopping Park.

### **Reasons for Decision:**

In order that the Cabinet Committee can monitor progress on this major capital project for the Council.

### **Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

To report direct to Cabinet.

## **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Cabinet Committee noted that there was no other urgent business for consideration.

## 9. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

### Resolved:

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the items of business set out below on the grounds that they would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972:

<u>Agenda Item No.</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Exempt Information Paragraph Number</u>
8	Epping Forest Shopping Park Progress Report	3

## 10. EPPING FOREST SHOPPING PARK - PROGRESS REPORT

The Asset Management Development Consultant presented a report to the Cabinet Committee the progress of the Epping Forest Shopping Park. He advised that the project was progressing well with all the final details now coming together.

Consultants from Harvey Spack Field, the agents who were marketing the Shopping Park attended the meeting and advised that 70% of the retail park lettings were now in the hands of Solicitors and by the time the building works start they estimated that 84% of the units would be pre-let. He also advised that the Shopping Park was in a strong position.

### Resolved:

To note the marketing report from Colliers International and Harvey Spack Field regarding progressing on the leasing of units in the Epping Forest Shopping Park.

### Recommended:

To note the report on procurement of the main build contract for the Shopping Park by DAC Beachcroft and recommend a contract be entered into with the winning tenderers, McLoughlin & Harvey, with a bid of £10,218,000.

### Reasons for Decision:

To comply with the Cabinet Committee's previous request to monitor the development of the Council's property assets periodically and in particular report in detail on progress relating to the development of the Epping Forest Shopping Park.

### Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To report direct to Cabinet.

**CHAIRMAN**