

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Asset Management and Economic Development Cabinet Committee **Date:** Thursday, 17 January 2019

Place: Council Chamber - Civic Offices **Time:** 7.00 - 8.10 pm

Members Present: Councillors A Grigg (Chairman), N Avey, H Kane, S Kane and G Mohindra

Other Councillors: Councillors C Whitbread, M Owen, C C Pond, S Heap and J M Whitehouse

Apologies:

Officers Present: D Macnab (Acting Chief Executive), J Nolan (Service Director (Commercial & Regulatory Services)), M Warr (Economic Development Officer), K Pabani (Chief Estates Officer), K Milligan (Senior Asset Manager), J Leither (Democratic Services Officer) and A Rose (Marketing & Digital Content Officer)

Also in attendance: P Wilks (Lichfields)

17. 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.

18. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Chairman asked the Cabinet Committee for nominations for a vice-chairman, Councillor G Mohindra nominated Councillor N Avey which was seconded by Councillor H Kane.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor N Avey be vice-chairman of the Asset Management and Economic Development Cabinet Committee for the duration of the municipal year.

19. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Cabinet Committee noted that there were no substitute members.

20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(a) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor G Mohindra declared an interest in agenda item 7, Economic Development Report by virtue of his role as Vice-Chairman of the Essex and Herts Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ). The Councillor had determined that his interest was non-pecuniary and would remain in the meeting for the consideration of the item.

(b) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor G Mohindra declared an interest in agenda item 8, Asset Management Development Projects – Progress Report, item 6, Hillhouse Development, by virtue of being an Essex County Council Cabinet Member. The Councillor had determined that his interest was non-pecuniary and would remain in the meeting for the consideration of the item.

(c) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor J M Whitehouse declared a personal interest in agenda item 9, St John's Road Update by virtue of being a member of Epping Town Council and living in St. John's Road. The Councillor had determined that his interest was non-pecuniary and would remain in the meeting for the consideration of the item.

(d) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor N Avey declared an interest in agenda item 9, St John's Road Update by virtue of being the Chairman of Epping Town Council. The Councillor had determined that his interest was non-pecuniary and would remain in the meeting for the consideration of the item.

21. MINUTES

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2018 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

22. THE BROADWAY DEBDEN, IMPACT STUDY - PRESENTATION BY LICHFIELDS

The Chairman introduced Mr Peter Wilks, Senior Director of Lichfields who gave a presentation of an impact study that they had produced regarding The Broadway, Debden.

P Wilks advised that Lichfields were commissioned to look into the impacts of the Epping Forest Shopping Park (EFSP) which was opened in December 2017, specifically looking back at how that application was determined in 2012. An impact assessment was prepared at that time which predicted the trade diversion and reduction in trade resulting from the shopping park. This had been established in the Council's own town centre study in May 2010 which had been based on:

- Visitor and household surveys;
- Land use survey; and
- Town centre health checks.

The historical evidence provided an opportunity to do a before and after comparison and we have looked at that data to see if there was any evidence of actual levels of impact on The Broadway.

Methodology

In terms of the methodology and looking at the trading performance of centres proved to be very difficult as there had been no national published data since 1971. Therefore, we could only go on what changes had happened with the land use within the centre and how the health check undertaken in October 2018 compared with the same exercise done in 2010. Therefore if the visitor and household surveys were re-run, this would enable us to estimate the turnover and trading performance of the town centre the same way it was estimated back in 2010.

Measure of vitality and viability

The Central Government Planning Guidance set out what the measures of vitality and viability were:

- Diversity of uses;
- % of vacant street level property;
- Commercial property rents/yields;
- Retailer representation;
- Pedestrian flows;
- Accessibility;
- Perception of safety / occurrence of crime; and
- State of town centre environmental quality.

Looking at The Broadway it was found to be a relatively small centre servicing local people. There were 55 purpose built Class A units which were easy to access and navigate around. The Javelin Group rank over 3,500 retail destinations in the UK including town centres, malls, retail parks and factory outlet centres. In the Epping Forest district The Broadway was ranked third and compared favourably with other smaller centres in the district.

The number of units had reduced since 2010, this was due to the units in Torrington Drive being empty and derelict as Sainsbury's wanted to modernise and enlarge their store and utilise the units around the store to expand and become part of their car park. Therefore on balance the number of vacancies have predominantly stayed the same.

The representation in The Broadway in 2009 was largely the same as it was in 2018:

2018	2009
Martin's	Martin's
Sainsbury's	Sainsbury's
Boots	Boots
Iceland	Iceland
McColl's	McColl's
Superdrug	Superdrug
Barnardo's	Barnardo's
M&S Simply Food	Woolworths
Greggs	Clinton Cards
Factory Outlet	

The Broadway have the lowest rents in the district at £235 per sq.m with Loughton being the highest at £700 per sq.m.

Visitor Origin

The visitor and household survey that we undertook indicated the origin of the customers that visited the centre in 2009, 55% were local visitors with 45% coming from out of the area. The new survey data suggested that 85% were local visitors with 15% coming from out of the area. This also showed that the mode of travel used in 2009 more people were travelling to The Broadway by car, bus and the underground whilst in 2018 far more were walking to the centre which suggests the catchment area was more localised.

Visitor satisfaction / dissatisfaction

The survey asked visitors to rate how satisfied they were with the centre in 2009 and again in 2018 so the results could be compared. The results were mixed with some liking the centre and others not.

The range and quality of the shops and dining locations scored higher in 2018 whereas the level of pubs and bars the satisfaction rating had gone down in 2018 as the centre had lost the only pub that was in The Broadway. In terms of the environmental elements things had not changed significantly. There was still dissatisfaction in not being able to shelter from the weather. On balance visitors views remain mostly the same now as back in 2009.

Summary

The findings of the survey do not see any significant change in The Broadway since 2009 and therefore there was no clear evidence to suggest The Broadway has declined since 2009.

Questions

Councillor G Mohindra asked if the local businesses should have been approached and asked to disclose their turnover figures.

P Wilks stated that with health checks he had never seen anyone release sales or turnover data as this was commercially sensitive material.

Councillor G Mohindra asked how The Broadway compared to other centres.

P Wilks replied that The Broadway was a very small centre and you would have to compare it with other centres of the same size. In general terms it had a good mix of businesses with 10% of vacancies. The national average across all town centres for vacancies was 12% and in some centres it rose to 20% and above.

The Chairman asked if internet sales could have an impact on The Broadway as you have major stores like Marks and Spencer and Debenhams etc. who offer an internet ordering and delivery service and therefore the small town centres blame this for their loss of turnover.

P Wilks advised that internet sales had grown quite steadily over the last 20 years and looking at the most recent Experian data, taking off the internet sales still showed positive growth in in-store expenditure.

Councillor M Owen stated that the scene on the ground seemed very different to when he visited The Broadway as there were hardly any customers about. Whilst he appreciated the outcome of the report, on speaking with traders, they did not feel that trade was steady or on the up. Do you think the report could have missed anything.

P Wilks explained that the available data they had based the impact study on was from Experian where the demographics were taken into account. He also advised that he had visited The Broadway many times during 2010-2012 and had never thought or seen that it was a very busy centre.

Councillor C Pond highlighted that The Broadway was very popular some years ago because of the range of shops. it was known as a fairly major centre but had declined

over the years. As the landlords, the Council need to make it more attractive looking so that it would attract people from outside of the district.

P Wilks stated that the days of fashion shopping had gone and the centre was more of a convenience centre which provided the facilities that people wanted.

Councillor C Pond added as the Council were the landlords should they not be more selective to who the units were rented to and were there any practical ways the Council could filter the traders.

K Pabani advised that the Council had an Estate Management policy and that very few units came on the market at the same time. He added that the Council did usually get more than one interested party per unit and over the last 18 months the type of tenants that have been successful in acquiring a unit were primarily local people with either a franchise or a different type of retail use that was already trading in The Broadway. Therefore, the Council were very conscious of the type of tenant mix, the affordability and competition, in terms of the pressure it would put on other tenants.

Councillor G Mohindra asked why the commercial rents in Loughton High Road were almost three times that amount of The Broadway.

P Wilks advised that Zone A commercial rents do vary from centre to centre and are largely based on the attractiveness of the centre.

D Macnab stated, without wanting to pre-empt or pre-judge the outcome of the Cabinet's Decision on the 7 February 2019, he highlighted a report regarding the Discretionary Business Rates. In the Government's Autumn Budget of 2018 it was announced that all eligible retailers with a rateable value below £51,000 are eligible to receive a one-third discount on their business rates bill. There are 34 Independent traders in The Broadway who would be eligible. The cost to the District Council was cost neutral as Central Government would be paying for this relief.

Councillor C Pond acknowledged that this was very good news for the traders of The Broadway.

23. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - PROGRESS REPORT

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

1. Digital Innovation Zone

The Economic Development team recently organised, on behalf of the Essex & Herts Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ), a highly successful Smart Places Seminar on the subject of future-proofing new garden communities. The event was held at Chesterford Research Park in December 2018 and sponsored by Uttlesford District Council. The event attracted around 70 delegates representing eight local authorities and a number of voluntary community groups, health and education organisations plus local businesses and national organisations.

Officers were planning the next smart places seminar which was planned for Friday 5 April 2019. The seminar would explore issues around digital inclusion and the potential impact of moving to new digital platforms for public service delivery.

Officers were currently working with colleagues at Essex County Council on a multi-million pound bid to the DCMS Local Full Fibre Network programme, to boost connectivity in areas across the DIZ from hubs based at GP surgeries. The Council have now been asked to bring forward a full proposal to the scheme by the beginning of February 2019 and work was ongoing to meet that date.

Resolved:

That the current progress and work programme of the Council's Economic Development Section were noted.

Reasons for Decision:

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

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

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

24. ASSET MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS - PROGRESS REPORT

The Acting Chief Executive (ACE) presented a report to the Cabinet Committee and updated Members on further developments to the report since the agenda had been published.

(1) Epping Forest Shopping Park

The Epping Forest Shopping Park was now fully let and trading well. Some issues had been identified with parking and were being looked at with a view to improving access to the car park. It had been recognised that some people who worked in the area were covering their number plates upon exiting the car park and others were exiting via the entrance. Parking enforcement officers were now patrolling the site and issuing Parking Charge Notices (PCNs) to anyone that was parked longer than 3 hours.

There were also concerns with the build up of traffic which, at times, was sitting across the junction from Oakwood Hill waiting to enter the Shopping Park. This had been reported to Essex Highways with a view to them looking at a scheme to improve the flow of traffic and stop the queuing across the junction.

Councillor CC Pond advised that the entrance and exit to the shopping park was causing the traffic to build up and at times block the A1168 and stated that this should now be a priority. He asked how effective had the issuing of PCNs been and had this freed up some space in the car park.

The Chief Estates Officer advised since the introduction of PCNs the car park had been freed up of parking spaces. On the first day of Parking Enforcement there had been 28 PCNs issued and it would appear most of these were commuters or people that worked in the area. It had been noted that a car company that traded in Langston Road was known to be using the charging bays to charge their electric cars so that they could be test driven by clients. The car company had been advised that the car charging points were for the sole use of the clients of the Shopping Park and they were not to be used. Local businesses had also been advised to inform their staff that they should not park in the Shopping Park and that PCNs were now being issued.

(2) Pyrles Lane Nursery

Following a successful marketing campaign the site was now under offer to Durkan Estates and solicitors have been appointed to progress the sale. Durkan Estates have carried out site investigations and we were waiting for the results. The access road, which is not part of the EFDC land, but has substantial existing rights was being assessed. The existing Nursery was due to relocate to the Town Mead Depot in Waltham Abbey in early 2019 following a successful planning application to refurbish premises on the site.

(3) St John's Road Redevelopment

There was a separate report on the agenda.

(4) North Weald Airfield

An internal Officer project team had been set up to provide strategic direction in line with the requirements of the submission version of the Local Plan. A Planning Brief had been requested as the first stage in the process of engaging a third party consultant to assist EFDC Officers in the preparation and submission of a Masterplan for the land identified as site NWB.E4 in the Submission Version of the Local Plan dated December 2017, along with the aviation land to the western side of the runway and associated new access point.

Interim terms have been agreed with Saunders Markets for them to remain in occupation throughout 2019, while a tender process was being undertaken to assess market demand and to secure the best operator from January 2020.

Terms have been agreed and solicitors instructed for a new 25 year lease to the Essex & Herts Air Ambulance. The lease to the National Police Air Service had been completed and funding approved from the Home Office. Construction for the new base had commenced.

(5) Landmark Building

Following the withdrawal of interest from the Co-Op and Costa Coffee new marketing agents had been appointed. Both units were now under offer with the bulk of the former under offer to a local publican. The lease to the Mediterranean restaurant had now completed and the tenant was fitting out. The prospective tenants were submitting the necessary planning and building regulation applications. Two other units (one newly created via proposed sub-division) were available for letting and the agents were reporting interest.

Councillor C C Pond stated that the mix of premises in the Broadway were becoming competitive with the new Mediterranean restaurant and the one opposite on the corner of the Broadway both being Turkish.

The Chief Estates Officer replied that terms had already been agreed with the Mediterranean restaurant and at that time the premises opposite was a Café. In November 2018 the Café was sub-leased and EFDC had no control over the premises becoming another Turkish restaurant.

(6) Hill HouseLeisure Centre

The new Leisure Centre at Hillhouse opened on 17 November 2018 and was achieving membership take-up well beyond forecasts. The centre was now in its contractual six-month bedding in period.

The Roundhills Swimming Pool site had been physically secured pending demolition and redevelopment. Essex Housing were the management agents and demolition should take place early in 2019.

Independent Living Scheme

The Council were in receipt of a planning application from Essex Preferred Independent Living provider there has been some public consultation undertaken in the locality however we have been pressing the provider to enter into a PPA which would involve the scheme going in front of our Quality Review Panel who look at schemes of this nature.

Councillor S Kane asked how long would the demolition take place of the old leisure centre on Roundhills and what was the expected mix and affordability of the housing going on the site.

The ACE advised that the demolition of the site would expect to take 6-8 weeks and the site would consist of a minimum of 11 units of which the Council's Policy required that 40% would be affordable properties.

Resolved:

That the current progress on the Council's Asset Management and Development projects were noted.

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 monitoring report was for information only not action.

25. ST JOHN'S ROAD UPDATE

The Acting Chief Executive (ACE) presented a report to the Cabinet Committee and updated Members on further developments to the report since the agenda had been published. He advised that following the failure to conclude the tri-partite agreement between the District and Town Council and their development partner, the Cabinet had agreed that the Council should proceed with an alternative scheme in accordance with the previously adopted Development and Design Brief and that EFDC should seek to enter into a partnership with Epping Town Council as part of any new scheme. Furthermore that in the event of a partnering arrangement not being possible with Epping Town Council, the District Council should proceed with the St John's Road Redevelopment project, on land within its ownership.

In addition, it was agreed that the site should become the preferred site for the re-provision of Epping Sports Centre and that it should be delivered by the existing

contractual arrangements with the Council's Leisure Management Partner, Places for People.

Following the decisions made by Cabinet in December 2018 a meeting was convened between officers of the council and representatives of Places Leisure (including Pozzoni Architecture and the Sports Consultancy).

As a result of this meeting and recognising that Pozzoni Architecture were developing the brief for the Leisure Centre (the anchor building on the site) officers made the decision to appoint Pozzoni Architecture as consultants to produce a master plan for the whole site, which incorporated the elements of the previous brief agreed by Full Council and the Submission Version of the Local Plan. The cost of this would be in the region of £10,000 which given that they were already undertaking work on the site was heavily discounted.

There had also been contact with two cinema operators who had both expressed an interest in the development and a future meeting would be set up to discuss options.

Councillor Avey asked when would discussions take place with Epping Town Council.

The ACE advised that he had recently spoken with the Town Council to establish the values and a formal meeting would be arranged within the next 2-3 weeks.

Resolved:

That the Committee noted the current position regarding the St John's Road site.

Reasons for Decision:

To appraise the Committee on the current progress of the project.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

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

26. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

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

27. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Cabinet Committee noted that there were no items of business on the agenda that necessitated the exclusion of the public and press from the meeting.

CHAIRMAN