

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL CABINET MEETING MINUTES

Monday 18 September 2023, 7.00 pm - 7.55 pm

Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping

Members Present:	Councillors C Whitbread (Chairman), N Bedford (Vice-Chairman), R Balcombe, S Kane, J Philip and H Whitbread
Other Councillors:	Councillors R Brookes, J Parsons, J M Whitehouse and D Wixley
Other Councillors (Virtually):	Councillors S Heap and C McCredie
Apologies:	Councillors S Patel and K Williamson
Officers In Attendance:	Georgina Blakemore (Chief Executive), Surjit Balu (Interim Director of Housing and Property), Tom Carne (Corporate Communications Team Manager), Jennifer Gould (Strategic Director and Chief Operating Officer), Vivienne Messenger (Democratic Services Officer), Rebecca Moreton (Corporate Communications Officer), Nigel Richardson (Service Director (Planning Services)), Krishma Shah (Senior Urban Design Officer) and Gill Wallis (Community, Culture & Wellbeing Service Manager)
Officers In Attendance (Virtually):	Christopher Hartgrove (Interim Chief Financial Officer), Andrew Small (Strategic Director, Corporate and Section 151 Officer) and Gary Woodhall (Team Manager - Democratic & Electoral Services)
By Invitation:	Mr S Hunt (Museum Consultant)

[A RECORDING OF THIS MEETING IS AVAILABLE FOR REPEATED VIEWING](#)

27 WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Leader of Council made a short address to remind everyone present that the meeting would be broadcast live to the internet, and would be capable of repeated viewing, which could infringe their human and data protection rights.

28 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- (a) Pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor H Whitbread declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Epping Forest District Museum (restricted) agenda item by virtue of being a Trustee of the Epping Forest District Museum, and that she would remain in the meeting for its consideration in private session.
- (b) Pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor R Brookes declared a non-pecuniary interest in the Epping Forest District Museum (restricted) agenda item by virtue of being a member of the Museums Association, and that she would remain in the meeting for its consideration in private session.

29 MINUTES

That the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 10 July 2023 be taken as read and signed by the Leader as a correct record.

30 REPORTS OF PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

There were no verbal reports made by Members of the Cabinet on current issues affecting their areas of responsibility.

31 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE CABINET

The Cabinet noted that no public questions or requests to address the Cabinet had been received for consideration at the meeting.

32 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The Chairman of the Committee, Councillor D Wixley, reported that the Cabinet and Scrutiny Chairmen Joint Meeting in September had been postponed to 14 November 2023. The next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be held on 24 October 2023.

33 APPROVAL FOR CONSULTATION OF LATTON PRIORY DESIGN CODE

Councillor N Bedford introduced the report. The Strategic Design Code focused particularly on strategies to encourage sustainable movement and create a high-quality public realm with the aim of realising a vibrant and resilient new neighbourhood in line with the Garden Town Vision. The design code also supported other policies within the adopted Local Plan, SP2 (Placeshaping) and SP3 (Development and Delivery of Garden Communities in the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town), including those relating to green and blue infrastructure (policies SP6 and DM5), sustainable transport choices (Policy T1) and high-quality design (Policies DM9 and DM10). The report provided an update on the aims, objectives and scope of the design code and confirmed the proposed consultation timescales on the draft design code document.

The Cabinet noted that the Strategic Design Code would be endorsed at a future Cabinet meeting, as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications for the Latton Priory strategic masterplan area.

The report set out the options considered, if any, and the reasons for the recommendation and the decision.

Decision

- (1) That the Draft Latton Priory Strategic Design Code (Appendix A) be approved for public consultation for a six-week period; and
- (2) That the Planning Services Director, in consultation with the Place Portfolio Holder be authorised to make minor amendments to the Draft Latton Priory Strategic Design Code prior to publication for consultation.

34 QUALIS QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT QUARTER 3 (YEAR 4)

Councillor J Philip (Finance and Economic Development Portfolio Holder) presented the third quarterly monitoring report that covered the period from 1 January – 31 March 2023. Beyond the difficulties and challenges created by the economic factors previously reported, Qualis continued to make positive returns in 3 of its 4 companies, albeit below target levels. As

reported in quarter 2, Qualis Living was finding achieving targets the most difficult, which was attributed to over optimistic targets for the year given the current economic conditions. This would be addressed in the next Qualis Business plan when targets would be revised again to reflect current market conditions. Despite the difficult trading conditions, the position still included almost £2 million of interest payments made by Qualis to the Council (over the previous 12 months) for its lending and these directly supported the Council's continued provision of valued services. Although Qualis reported a loss for quarter 3, this was largely attributed to delays in completing the Cottis Lane car park in Epping and receiving car park income and lower fees for the management of the EFDC assets. The Portfolio Holder answered members questions', but no further actions were raised.

The report set out the options considered, if any, and the reasons for the recommendation and the decision.

Decision:

That the Cabinet noted and agreed the report.

35 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Financial Planning Framework 2024/25 to 2028/29

The Finance and Economic Development Portfolio Holder introduced the report and highlighted the financial pressures that were being driven by a difficult economic backdrop, as the Council had no control over inflation, energy costs and construction costs. The report set out the financial challenges on the General Fund budget and Housing Revenue Account. A tailored Financial Planning approach, which developed the 2024/25 Budget and updated Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) through to 2028/29 was therefore proposed, within a governance framework spanning five months that began with this report and would culminate in full Council setting a balanced budget in February 2024. The Portfolio Holder answered questions from councillors which centred on employee costs, unfilled posts, and interim positions.

The report set out the options considered, if any, and the reasons for the recommendation and the decision.

Decision:

- (1) That the Cabinet noted the backdrop to the Financial Planning process for 2024/25 to 2028/29, including the Balance Sheet trajectory in the light of the 2022/23 budget outturn and the latest 2023/24 spending forecast; and
- (2) That the Cabinet agreed the proposed approach to Financial Planning for 2024/25 to 2028/29, including the reporting and governance timetable summarised in Appendix A.

(b) Quarter 1 Budget Monitoring Report 2023/24

This report set out the 2023/24 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account budget positions, for both revenue and capital, for the first quarter as at 30th June 2023. It also considered a range of other Financial Performance and Risk indicators alongside the budget position. In terms of General Fund revenue expenditure, a budget overspend of £1.523 million was projected. The position at quarter 1 was generally positive with performance and compliance in most areas not raising any concerns, although there were some challenges that should be noted, including the collection of Sundry Debts and rising Financing costs. In

response to questions, the Portfolio Holder advised service areas would be looking at overspends and looking to make savings, if possible.

The report set out the options considered, if any, and the reasons for the recommendation and the decision.

Decision:

- (1) That the Cabinet noted the General Fund revenue position at the end of Quarter 1 (30th June 2023) for 2023/24, including actions being undertaken or proposed to ameliorate the position, where significant variances had been identified (including Appendix A);
- (2) That the Cabinet noted the General Fund capital position at the end of Quarter 1 (30th June 2023) for 2023/24 (including Appendix B);
- (3) That the Cabinet noted the Housing Revenue Account revenue position at the end of Quarter 1 (30th June 2023) for 2023/24, including actions proposed to ameliorate the position, where significant variances had been identified;
- (4) That the Cabinet noted the Housing Revenue Account capital position at the end of Quarter 1 (30th June 2023) for 2023/24 (including Appendix C); and
- (5) That the Cabinet noted the wider position on Financial Performance and Risk at the end of Quarter 1 (30th June 2023).

36 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the item of business set out below on grounds that it would 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
12	Epping Forest District Museum	3

37 EPPING FOREST DISTRICT MUSEUM

Councillor J Philip (Finance and Economic Development Portfolio Holder) introduced the report, which was discussed in private session and answered the Committee's questions along with Mr S Hunt (Museum Consultant) and G Wallis (Service Manager – Community and Wellbeing).

The report set out the options considered, if any, and the reasons for the recommendation and the decision.

Decision:

That the Cabinet considered the Epping Forest District Museum Grant Support Options Report as set out at Appendix 1 and agreed to grant funding support Option 2.