



Working for our future

A corporate plan for Epping Forest District Council
2015 - 2020



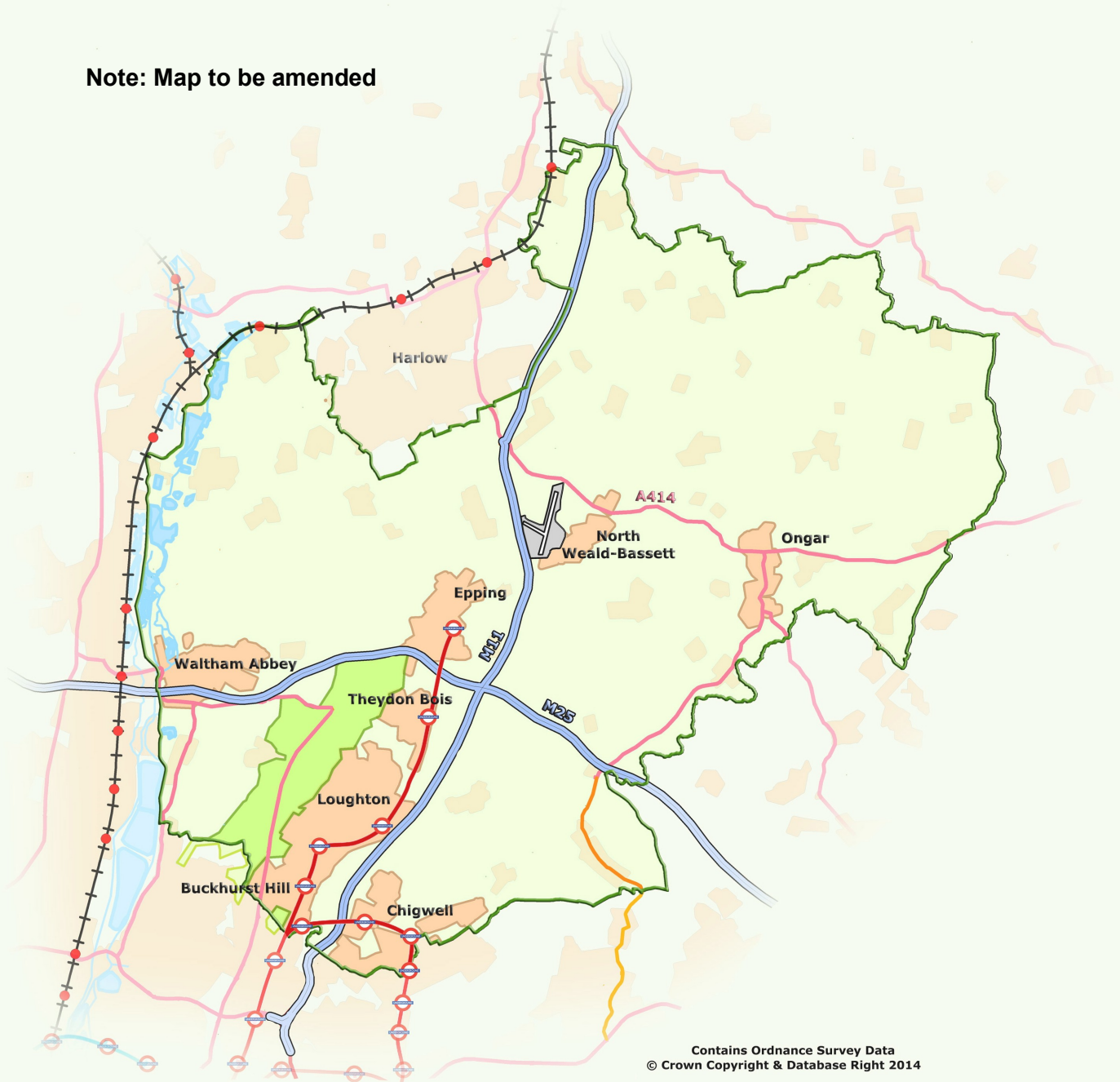
**Epping Forest
District Council**

www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Epping Forest - a district full of character. We want it to continue to be great place to live, work, play, study and do business.



Note: Map to be amended



Introduction

Welcome to Epping Forest District Council's Corporate Plan 2015 - 2020. This document sets out a framework for Council policy and decision-making over that five year period. It helps the Council to carry out its responsibilities in an ordered and logical way.

This Plan does four things:

1. It sets out a **vision** of where the Council wishes the district to be in five years' time.
2. It outlines **key aims and objectives** for the Council which are designed to ensure that the vision becomes a reality.
3. It indicates for its **partners in service provision** the path which the Council intends to take.
4. It **informs the local community** about what the Council wants to achieve, allowing Council Tax payers and others who live or work in the district to monitor progress and judge how successful the Council is in meeting local needs.

What does the Plan contain?

Section 1 (P4-5) District overview and vision

Epping Forest District profile as at 2015, highlighting important issues to be addressed over the five years of the Plan and beyond. A summary of the Council vision for the district in 2020.

Section 2 (P6-9) Strategic Aims and Key Objectives

The Council's three fundamental aims to achieve its vision, and the key objectives which support them - addressing the issues affecting the district and service delivery.

Section 3 (P10-11) Reporting the Council's Performance and Partnership Working

With information and hyperlinks to performance information about the Council and its partnerships with other organisations.

Our district

Epping Forest District in Essex takes its name from the forest which runs from its southern boundaries northwards. The district shares boundaries with Greater London and Hertfordshire.

The three main settlements of Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell and Loughton contain more than half the district's population of approximately of 124,700 people. However, this southern area amounts to only five percent of the district. The remaining 95 percent is made up largely of separate market towns, villages and hamlets in attractive countryside. Most of the district is designated within the protective status of the Metropolitan Green Belt.

Services are provided at three levels by Essex County Council, Epping Forest District Council and local Town and Parish Councils.

District Council services include:

- housing
- street cleansing
- waste collection and recycling
- sports and recreation
- planning applications for homes and business
- voter registration
- benefit administration
- council tax and business rate collection
- environmental health

County Council services include:

- education
- social care
- highways and transportation

Parish and Town Council services include:

- allotments
- burial grounds and cemeteries
- public halls
- playgrounds and sports grounds

Forecasts suggest that the population of the district could rise significantly from the current 124,700 over the next twenty years.

A key factor in this estimated growth, is that life expectancy in the district is higher than the national average and rising. Projections indicate that by 2020 over 55 percent of the district's population will be 60 years+.

Although the population of the district is fairly affluent there are some areas of deprivation with children living in poverty. Nearly a quarter of the district's adult population and almost a fifth of children in school year six are classified as being obese.

Unemployment is generally low. Many residents commute to jobs in London. The district is well connected by eight London Underground stations and a National Rail station. The M25 and M11 provide good road links including a fast route to Stansted Airport. Local employment opportunities centre on distribution, hotels, restaurants, banks and finance and public services.

Whilst crime and fear of crime remain a cause of local concern, in comparison with many other places, the district is a safe place to live and work.

Our vision

We want to make best use of existing infrastructure to meet the district's need for development in the most sustainable locations with the least possible impact on our natural and historic environment.

We want to keep the individual character, identity and separateness of our towns and villages by protecting the Green Belt.

We want new homes to meet the needs of local people while also supporting economic development. The scale of development should be appropriate to the size of our towns and villages, bringing vitality and other benefits to our communities.

We want to maintain and protect access to our open and natural spaces including Epping Forest, The Lea Valley Regional Park and the countryside.

We want more and better cultural, community and recreational facilities.

We want to keep our strong links with London whilst also developing a more sustainable local economy including increased leisure and tourism, aviation, research and development, food production and the building industry.

We want to build relationships with our partners to develop initiatives and service improvements with reduced costs, greater efficiency and better value for money.

We want to design and build our services around the needs of our aging population and residents living in deprivation.

We want a low Council Tax.

We want to embrace modern technology and innovation as we strive to improve the quality and efficiency of our services.



Our strategic aims and key objectives

The Council has identified three key strategic aims in achieving its vision for the district over the course of the five-year plan.

Objectives have also been identified as key to achieving the three aims of the Plan. For each of the objectives the Cabinet will each year agree a Corporate Key Action Plan. Specific actions and target dates will be set out for each yearly plan. Progress will be monitored quarterly.

The aims and objectives are the Council's top strategic priorities which we want to address over the lifetime of the Plan. Therefore they are not a full list of all the things the Council does. The Council provides many services which will continue to be provided throughout the life of the Plan and beyond. The aims and objectives provide a framework within which we can develop our detailed service plans and allocate our resources over the five year period.

Aim 1 - To ensure that the Council has appropriate resources, on an ongoing basis, to fund its statutory duties and appropriate discretionary services whilst continuing to keep the Council Tax low.

(a) Budgets - Our Objective

To ensure that the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy plans meet the Council's financial and service requirements for any forward five year period, whilst minimising any reliance on Government funding.

Concern about the national budget deficit and borrowing will continue to influence the Council's financial planning. We expect further reductions in Government funding over the five-year period

which will continue to challenge our financial planning and local service delivery.

The Council will therefore continue to review its services to find ways of reducing costs and achieving better value for money.

All budgets relating to 'statutory' services (those which must be provided by the Council) and 'discretionary' services (which the Council is not required by law to provide) will be reviewed critically each year.

Whilst the Council's primary aim is to provide residents with good quality services, we also aim to keep Council Tax levels as low as possible and deal with financial pressures by managing our budgets with care.

(b) Property Assets - Our Objective

To continue reviewing and developing the Council's own property and landholdings for appropriate uses, in order to maximise revenue streams and capital receipts, and to deliver the following key projects:

- the Epping Forest Shopping Park, Loughton
- the Council House Building Programme
- St John's Redevelopment Scheme, Epping
- North Weald Airfield

The Council owns land including a wide-ranging and significant number of residential, commercial, industrial and operational properties.

The Council will continue to explore new ways of using its land and assets to generate more capital receipts and income to support the delivery of services to our residents.

In so doing, the Council will give our own council house building and economic development schemes added impetus. With the key sites listed above in mind, the Council's investment will boost the local economy of the district at the same time.

Aim 2 - To ensure that the Council has a sound and approved Local Plan and commences its delivery.

(c) Joint Working - Our Objective

To explore appropriate opportunities to make savings and increase income through the shared delivery of services with other organisations, where such arrangements would provide improved and/or more cost effective outcomes.

Working with our partners including other councils, we will seek new opportunities for cost savings and improved value for money by providing services across more than one district. Activities likely to be suitable for this approach are highlighted in the Plan.

(a) The Local Plan - Our Objective

To undertake consultation with local residents and work with neighbouring Councils, and to publish a sound Local Plan which meets the needs of our communities whilst minimising the impact on the district's Green Belt.

We plan to achieve the right balance between the employment, housing and leisure needs of our residents while protecting the special character of our district and the Green Belt in particular. We will do this by producing a Local Plan to ensure new development with all necessary infrastructure in the most suitable and sustainable locations.



Our strategic aims and key objectives.....continued

(b) Economic Development Strategy - Our Objective

To increase opportunities for sustainable economic development and new local employment in the district.

The promotion of sustainable economic development, employment and support for local business is a key issue for the Council. Key objectives put forward relate to local town centres, business partnerships and young peoples' apprenticeship schemes.

(c) Leisure & Cultural Strategy - Our Objective

To deliver the Council's new Leisure and Cultural Strategy, in order to maximise participation and value for money in leisure and cultural services for local residents and visitors.

Proposals to develop cultural and recreational facilities in the district are included in the Plan. Key objectives highlight both new facilities and existing establishments that are to be enhanced and expanded. These proposals link with the review of the Council's property assets. They also improve local employment prospects and recognise the importance of partnerships in delivering some new facilities.

Aim 3 - To ensure that the Council adopts a modern approach to the delivery of its services and that they are efficient, effective and fit for purpose.

This aim focuses on the Council's ways of working and our responsiveness to the needs of the local people.



(a) Customer Contact - Our Objective

To have efficient arrangements in place to enable customers to easily contact the Council in a variety of convenient ways, and in most cases have their service needs met effectively on first contact.

The possibilities opened up by the use of new technology are among the issues under review as the Council focuses on the ways of improving the ways we contact and communicate with our residents.

(b) Modernising Council Operations - Our Objective

To utilise modern technology to enable Council officers and members to work more effectively, in order to provide enhanced services to customers and make Council services and information easier to access.

Our key initiatives include the Council's focus on information technology to support our working practices. Key projects have been identified to ensure the Council's IT infrastructure is upgraded to ensure it meets future demands.

Other proposals deal with the way in which the Council operates as an organisation. The Council will examine where information technology can be used to cut costs, improve efficiency, allow more flexible working patterns, release office space and provide a wider range of information to the public online and through our website.

(c) District Demographic Profile - Our Objective

To ensure that the Council understands the effects of an ageing population and works with other agencies to make appropriate plans and arrangements to respond to this need.

The Council already has research data drawing attention to the age profile of our local population and on areas of social deprivation. The average age of residents is increasing but the implications of this for Council services are not fully understood.



Our performance

To ensure the Council remains on target, it is essential to monitor the progress of our aims and objectives. Performance monitoring allows the Council to see problems as they arise and intervene to bring us back on track. We monitor our performance against our Key Action Plan and publish progress reports every three months.

Residents and councillors can keep track of the Council's performance. Various monitoring reports are published online. These are regularly updated working documents for staff and councillors responsible for the key actions in the Plan.

Performance information is available through via the following links:

See the latest quarterly Key Action Plan performance report.

See how we are performing against our key performance indicators.

Read the Council's Directorate Business Plans.



Our partners

The Council works in partnership with many other agencies. These include Essex County Council, the Health Service, the Police, Essex Fire and Rescue, Parish and Town Councils, voluntary organisations and the private sector.

Working to reduce costs and deliver services efficiently and effectively on a wider basis, this Plan stresses the importance of seeking and reviewing opportunities for partnerships. Working with our partners, the Council can utilise the co-ordinated strengths and expertise of each organisation for the benefit of our own community as well as the wider area of West Essex with which we have particularly good links.

Partnership Case Studies:

1) Herts and Essex Housing Options Consortium

Applicants for council housing apply through the 'Choice Based Lettings Scheme' which we operate in partnership with five other councils and an agency. The partnership approach reduces costs in several ways.

Sub-contracting the management of the housing register allows homeseekers to apply online. Homelessness applications and annual renewals can be managed more efficiently. Partners share experience, ideas and best practice.

Vacated properties (including homes let by housing associations) are advertised online every fortnight. Each property listing includes location, type (eg house, flat, bungalow etc), rent, service charge, Council Tax band and landlord. Homeseekers can make an application by

'expressing interest' on up to three properties by phone, text, email or website. The Council then makes an offer according to the rules of the Housing Allocations Scheme. Usually this means the applicant with the highest priority band registered for the longest time.

Each property list includes general information about the allocation of previous properties. This helps prospective applicants understand how the scheme works and their chances of a successful bid for different types of property. It includes information on the number of people expressing an interest, their priority bandings and the length of time they have been registered while waiting for housing.

2) Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership

Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership is led and administered by Epping Forest District Council. Its primary role is to reduce crime within the district, through the identification of key priorities and the delivery of targeted projects. The well-established partnership includes eleven local agencies with an interest in the district - including councils, the emergency services, probation agencies and the voluntary sector.

Partnership working has resulted in a number of successful outcomes. Essex Police and Crime Commissioner funding for a Crime Analyst with two other partnerships in Essex provides tracking and co-ordination of essential data on criminal trends. Other initiatives include the 'Crucial Crew' and the 'Essex Fire Break Project', both of which encourage young people to think about the way they conduct themselves within society.

Please tell us if you would like this information provided in large print or another format.

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