

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Asset Management and Economic Development Cabinet Committee **Date:** Thursday, 27 June 2019

Place: Council Chamber - Civic Offices **Time:** 7.00 - 7.30 pm

Members Present: Councillors A Patel (Chairman), N Avey and S Stavrou

Other Councillors: Councillors S Heap, D Plummer, C Whitbread, H Whitbread and A Lion

Apologies: N Bedford

Officers Present: J Nolan (Service Director (Commercial & Regulatory Services)), J Houston (Strategic Partnership Specialist and Economic Lead), M Warr (Economic Development Officer), G Woodhall (Senior Democratic Services Officer), S Mitchell (PR Website Editor) and S Bevans (ICT Officer)

Also in attendance: -

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 no substitutes had been appointed for the meeting.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(a) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor N Avey declared a personal interest in agenda item 6, 'Asset Management Development Projects – Progress Reports' for the St. John's Road Development, by virtue of being a member of Epping Town Council. The Councillor had determined that his interest was pecuniary and would leave the meeting if the St John's Road Development was discussed.

4. MINUTES

Resolved:

(1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2019 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

5. ASSET MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS - PROGRESS REPORT

The Service Director for Contract & Regulatory Services presented a progress report

on a number of major projects that the Council was managing which involved its assets.

The Director highlighted two further updates for the Cabinet Committee to consider. In relation to the St John's Road Development in Epping, Whyte, Young & Green had been appointed as consultants to project manage the development and the requirements from the Local Plan had been outlined to them. The project would proceed according to the Masterplan to be agreed by the Cabinet in December 2019. The Council intended to work with Places for People for the possible provision of a new Leisure Centre, and with prospective providers for a small cinema.

With respect to North Weald Airfield, the Brief had been sent out to five Masterplanning organisations, with responses expected by early July. The Council would also ensure the North Weald Airfield Masterplan would blend with the North Weald Bassett Masterplan.

The Cabinet Committee reminded the Officers present that the Portfolio title had been amended from Asset Management & Economic Development to Commercial & Regulatory Services to match the name of the Service Directorate.

In response to questions from members of the Cabinet Committee, the Service Director stated that, in relation to the Landmark Building, the Co-Operative had discontinued negotiations as the space on offer was the wrong size. The other part of the site had been reassigned to a different use class of D2 and the Council was currently negotiating with a yoga studio.

In respect of the St John's Road Development, full planning permission would be sought straight away, rather than outline permission and then full planning permission. The Council had yet to be advised of the application date, but it was expected to be in the Spring of 2020. The Council had worked with Whyte, Young and Green in the past, who were in the process of drawing up a broad timeline for the project; the first major milestone would be the agreement of the Masterplan by the Cabinet in December 2019. The Leader of Council reiterated that good progress was being made with the St John's Road Development, with planning permission being sought for the whole site, and asked whether Epping Town Council had been kept informed of progress? The Director reassured the Cabinet Committee that the Council had been in communication with the Town Clerk, and a formal meeting with the Town Council was being arranged.

Cllr Lion highlighted that there had been major issues with car parking and access at the Epping Forest Shopping Park, and enquired what the next stages to improve the situation was. The Service Director acknowledged that there had been major problems at the Shopping Park during the Christmas period, and also from local workers using the car park at the Shopping Park. Restrictions had now been introduced in the Car Park, which had helped to ease this problem. Cllr Lion added that there was major congestion at the Shopping Park at weekends, which then backed up onto the surrounding roads.

Cllr Plumber pointed out that the report had made no mention of any previous discussions to reduce car use and protect the local biodiversity. The Service Director stated that the report only provided a general update on the progress with the different projects, hence there was provably a lack of detail for each of the projects, but this was something that could be considered for future reports. The Chairman also emphasised that the emerging Local Plan would also give rise to a number of such policy decisions. The Leader of Council informed the Cabinet Committee that the Highways issues surrounding the Shopping Park had been raised at the Local

Highways Panel, and any concerns should also be taken up with Cllr Mohindra who was the County Council member for the area.

Resolved:

(1) That the progress made to date with the Council's Asset Management & Development projects be 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 the report is for information only.

6. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - 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.

The Economic Development Officer reported that more than 30 responses had been received for the Economic Strategy Consultation, entitled 'Nurturing Growth'. However, a number of these responses had highlighted the relatively short nature of the consultation period, and it was intended to extend the consultation period for a further two months. This would enable greater engagement and the reviewing of the responses at a key stakeholder conference planned for September, which in turn would inform the production of a delivery plan.

The Economic Development Officer stated that the most recent Smart Place seminar had been held at Fletcher's Lea in Ware on 26 April 2019, and had attracted a wide range of speakers and delegates. An executive report from the seminar had been produced and was available from the Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ) website (www.diz.org.uk). The DIZ Digital Innovation Strategy was continuing to be endorsed by the various partner organisations. This Council had endorsed the Strategy at its meeting of the Cabinet on 13 June 2019. Presentations on the Strategy had been delivered to the Hertfordshire Infrastructure Planning Partnership and the Six Authorities Leaders Group. The Rural Connected Communities Programme had recently held an exploratory workshop with partners from across the Digital Innovation Zone, which considered whether to bid to establish a 5G testbed within the DIZ. A second event was planned once the programme had been formally launched to develop the potential bid further.

The Economic Development Officer informed the Cabinet Committee that the Visit Epping Forest website continued to grow in both content and number of visitors. Analysis of the website over the recent bank holidays had shown a 40% increase in visitors and a 60% increase in the number of pages visited when comparing 2019 to 2018. Officers from the Council had continued to lead in the development of cross-border working on tourism across the five Districts of Epping Forest, Broxbourne, Harlow, East Herts and Uttlesford, including a workshop held at Stansted Airport looking at infrastructure investment and joint promotion. The outcomes from this workshop would be reported at the next meeting of the Cabinet Committee.

The Economic Development Officer reminded the Cabinet Committee that the aim of the Green Arc project was to focus on the area where the metropolis of London met the countryside, considering initiatives to increase and protect the canopy, explore new ways of allowing residents and visitors to enjoy the green and unique areas within the quadrant, as well as increasing the community involvement in programmes. The One Partnership had recently taken over the project, and the first Steering Board meeting was scheduled for 12 July 2019. It was expected that representatives from not only the District Council would attend, but also representatives from the Greater London Authority, Essex County Council, the Corporation of London, the Friends of Epping Forest and the Woodland Trust.

The Cabinet Committee advised the Officers present that the Portfolio Title should have been Community & Partnerships, not Commercial & Regulatory Services.

Cllr Plumber stated that it was imperative to limit CO₂ emissions but there was no mention of climate change in the report, which seemed strange considering it was the most important issue we were currently facing.

The Strategic Partnerships Specialist responded that the Council was trying to move these issues to the mainstream, and was looking at smart approaches for economic growth which included cleaner approaches. For example, we needed to get clever about how we moved people around the District, particularly in the rural areas, with an Integrated Transport Strategy which would enable residents to make good choices. The Council understood its obligations in respect of green issues and acknowledged that they were not mentioned explicitly in the report, although they could be in the future. The aim in developing the Economic Strategy for the District was to bring everyone together and have a Strategy that everyone worked towards.

Cllr H Whitbread enquired whether any tourism public relations campaigns had been undertaken, was the Council working with Local Schools, and could the Youth Council get involved.

The Strategic Partnerships Specialist replied that the Visit Epping Forest website attempted to bring different tourism aspects together in one place. It was extremely expensive to advertise on London Underground, and the Council was trying to share the possible costs of this with others. Tourism within the District had increased by 7% over the last twelve months, but more could be achieved with a coalition of the willing. The Council was interested in reaching out to local schools and the Youth Council, and working with younger people. Progress would be reported back to the next meeting of the Cabinet Committee. Cllr Lion added that there was a project considering what digital meant to schools and the Youth Council, and further such projects would be considered in the future.

Cllr Plumber opined that any expansion at Stansted Airport was short-sighted and selfish.

Resolved:

(1) That the progress made by the Economic Development Team with their current initiatives be noted.

Reasons for Decision:

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

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

None, as the report is for information only.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

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

8. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Cabinet Committee noted that there was no business which required the exclusion of the public and press from the meeting.

CHAIRMAN

This page is intentionally left blank