

## ***Report to the Cabinet***



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

***Report reference:*** C-052a-2020-21

***Date of meeting:*** 22 December 2020

**Portfolio:** Leader

**Subject:** Post Covid 19 Projects, Waltham Abbey Town Centre, Waltham Abbey Town Centre Hub

**Responsible Officer:** Nick Dawe (07939449512)

**Democratic Services:** Adrian Hendry (01992 564246).

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### **Decisions / Recommendations**

**In respect of the Town Centre Regeneration General Report (C052b):**

- 1. To note progress and issues that will arise in current and subsequent individual town centre reports.**

**In respect of the Waltham Abbey Town Centre Project (C052c):**

- 2. That Cabinet considers the attached report produced by independent business consultants, Studio 3, on the economic viability of Waltham Abbey Town Centre, which includes recommendations to improve short and medium -term sustainability of businesses in Sun Street;**
- 3. That Cabinet agrees to proceed with the recommended actions contained within the report, including the proposal to introduce a Town Centres Project Manager, (Waltham Abbey and Ongar), on a fixed term basis for a period of 3 years at a cost of c £50k per annum. This postholder will organise and deliver on the specific project targets to lead and implement a phased programme of work in each of the Town Centre's across the district in conjunction with town and parish councils, businesses and other interested policies; and,**
- 4. That £150,000 is earmarked from the unallocated General Fund balance, to the District Development Fund Reserve, to fund the initiative – at £50,000 per annum – for three-years commencing 2021/22”.**

**In respect of the Waltham Abby Community Hub Paper:**

5. **In line with proposals outlined in the 2020/21 Budget, that Cabinet agrees to support the creation of a Community and Cultural Hub in Waltham Abbey as part of phase 1 of the regeneration of the Town Centre. This will be achieved by combining Epping Forest District Museum (39-41 Sun Street) with Waltham Abbey Library (37 Sun Street), subject to Essex County Council contributions and statutory agreements; that will strengthen the community hub approach to service delivery currently being created with the Civic Office at its heart, and**
6. **That officers are authorised to further explore the operational and management model for the hub with Essex County Council and associated service level agreement between EFDC and ECC for operation of the hub, and**
7. **That officers undertake further work as to the financing and completion of the project, noting that required resources are included in the current 2021/22 Budget Assumptions to meet any set-up costs and the borrowing costs that support the proposed capital expenditure.**

### **Executive Summary**

Initially the concentration of the Cabinet has been to make all the town centres “safe places” through a series of projects and initiatives and through providing advice and support and rapid access to businesses of specific grants and locally prioritised grants.

In July Cabinet approved a series of projects to assist the District in its recovery from the Covid 19 and associated challenges as it appreciated the District’s future role in both economic recovery and improving general well-being was significant.

Projects were identified in July that wherever possible, would build upon previous strategies and work, e.g. the provision of torn hubs, regenerating the high street, using digital investment to advantage.

These projects would also, whenever possible, correlate with the proposals that would arise from the Sustainable Transport and Climate Emergency / Environmental Sustainability Initiatives.

The projects therefore consisted of the following:

- Procurements and Contracts (to stimulate and reflect local contribution)
- Town Centre rejuvenation: Waltham Abbey
- Town Centre rejuvenation: Waltham Abbey Hub Project
- Town Centre rejuvenation: Ongar
- Town Centre rejuvenation: Loughton
- Town Centre rejuvenation: Buckhurst Hill
- Town Centre rejuvenation: Epping
- Digital Gateway (to promote local manufacturing, supply retail and food provision)
- North Weald Employment Land (post masterplan bringing forward a series of enterprise options).

Priority with projects would be given to the following with the aim of bringing forward proposals before the end of December:

- Procurements and Contracts (the subject of a separate Cabinet paper and approval).

- Town Centre rejuvenation: Waltham Abbey
- Town Centre rejuvenation: Waltham Abbey Hub Project

The remainder of the projects are being worked on, but decision papers would be brought to Cabinet in February and March. It should be noted that:

- The Ongar Town Centre Report is at final drafting stage and can be brought forward in January. This will include overlapping concerns and issues raised recently by the Ongar Town Council.
- The Digital Gateway Report is also in final drafting stage and can be brought forward in January.
- The associated Climate Emergency / Sustainable Growth paper concentrating on tree planting will also be available in January.
- The review of Loughton Town Centre has also commenced.

It should be noted that all projects include, economic, well-being and sustainable growth issues and cross working with various teams across the Council and engaging with statutory and voluntary and other representatives of the business and non-business communities

Details of each project currently being considered are shown in the following papers.