

## **EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL CABINET MINUTES**

**Committee:** Cabinet **Date:** 1 December 2014

**Place:** Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.00 - 8.15 pm

**Members Present:** C Whitbread (Chairman), Ms S Stavrou (Vice-Chairman), R Bassett, W Breare-Hall, Mrs A Grigg, D Stallan, G Waller, Ms H Kane, A Lion and J Philip

**Other Councillors:** K Adams, A Mitchell MBE, Ms G Shiell, Mrs J H Whitehouse, J M Whitehouse and D Wixley

**Apologies:** -

**Officers Present:** G Chipp (Chief Executive), D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Neighbourhoods), C O'Boyle (Director of Governance), R Palmer (Director of Resources), B Bassington (Chief Internal Auditor), S G Hill (Assistant Director (Governance & Performance Management)), J Twinn (Assistant Director Benefits), M Warr (Economic Development Officer), J Warwick (Sports Development Manager), G J Woodhall (Democratic Services Officer) and A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer)

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### **87. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION**

The Chairman made a short address to remind all present that the meeting would be broadcast on the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

### **88. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

(a) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor H Kane declared a personal interest in agenda item 17, Town Centres Fund, by virtue of being a member of the Waltham Abbey Town Centre Partnership. The Councillor had determined that her interest was pecuniary and would leave the meeting for the consideration of the issue.

### **89. MINUTES**

**Resolved:**

(1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2014 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### **90. REPORTS OF PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

There were no verbal reports provided by any of the Portfolio Holders present.

### **91. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

There had been no questions submitted by the public for the Cabinet to consider.

**92. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee reported that the following items of business had been considered at its meeting held on 10 November 2014:

- (a) a presentation from the Integrated Commissioning Director (West) at Essex County Council about Children Services and the current commissioning intentions based upon a recently completed "Early Years" review;
- (b) a Department of Communities & Local Government consultation seeking views on proposed changes to the Planning Policy and Guidance for the Travelling Community; and
- (c) a review of the Scrutiny Work Programmes for the last six months.

The Council's Key Decision List was reviewed but there were no specific issues identified on any of the listed items.

**93. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2015/16**

The Finance Portfolio Holder presented a report concerning the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2015/16.

The Portfolio Holder reminded the Cabinet that, as part of the major changes to the Welfare Benefits system, from 31 March 2013 Council Tax Benefit had ceased and was replaced by a new scheme called Local Council Tax Support (LCTS). A key principle of the scheme was the protection of people who were of an age where they could claim Pension Credit. The Government introduced Regulations to ensure that pensioners who previously received Council Tax Benefit would continue to receive the same level of assistance they had prior to LCTS being introduced. The Pan Essex LCTS project group, comprising of all the billing authorities and the unitary authorities in Essex, was created in January 2012 to devise a modular approach upon which all Essex authorities could base their local schemes according to local needs. The precepting authorities of Essex County Council, Essex Fire Authority and Essex Police had been involved from the beginning of the project. The project was being managed by the Benefit Managers under guidance from the Essex Finance Officers Association.

The Portfolio Holder reported that the Council had approved the Epping Forest LCTS scheme for 2013/14 in December 2012 and, following consultation during 2013/14, the Council had approved an unchanged scheme for 2014/15 in December 2013. On 21 July 2014, the Cabinet had approved the general principle that the Local Council Tax Support scheme for 2015/16 should aim to be cost neutral for the Council and that public consultation should be undertaken on certain elements of the scheme. Consultation on the 2015/16 scheme was undertaken from 29 August 2014 to 19 October 2014 and, based upon the responses received and the experiences of the Scheme's operation over the last two years, it was being proposed that the scheme remain unchanged for 2015/16. The only exception to this would be the annual uprating of premiums, allowances, non-dependent deductions and any changes to the national pension age scheme that had to be mirrored in the Council's Scheme.

The Assistant Director of Resources (Benefits) reported that the Council's scheme did vary slightly with some of the other schemes being implemented across Essex; the maximum of 80% Council Tax Support would be different by only a few percentage points across the County. All of the Councils across Essex, along with the other precepting authorities, were working together. The Portfolio Holder

highlighted that the Scheme required final approval by the Council and put forward an extra recommendation to the Cabinet to that effect.

**Decision:**

(1) That the responses to the consultation on the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2015/16 be noted;

(2) That, in view of the consultation responses and the experience of the first two years of the scheme, no changes be made to the scheme for 2015/16, other than the annual uprating of premiums, allowances, non-dependant deductions and any changes to the national pension age scheme that need to be reflected in the Council's scheme; and

(3) That the proposed Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2015/16 be recommended to the Council for approval.

**Reasons for Decision:**

The Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2015/16 was required to be agreed by 31 January 2015 under the Local Government Finance Act 2012.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

To reduce the maximum amount of Council Tax support from 80%, or to include Child Benefit in the calculation for household income. However, the current scheme offered stability for current recipients as they would already know the approximate amount of support that they would receive.

**94. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2014/15 - 2018/19**

The Finance Portfolio Holder presented a report on the Annual Review of the Capital Programme for the period 2014/15 to 2018/19.

The Portfolio Holder set out the Council's Capital Programme for the five year period 2014/15 to 2018/19, which included: the forecast capital investment in Council owned assets; estimates of capital loans to be made for private housing initiatives; and projected levels of revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute. The capital programme had been prepared by updating the programme approved in February 2014, amended for any slippage and re-phasing approved in June 2014, as well as new schemes and allocations approved by the Cabinet subsequently. Each scheme within the Capital Programme had been reviewed and Spending Control Officers had reassessed estimated final costs and the phasing of expenditure profiles for each scheme. Recommendations had been made to make amendments as appropriate.

The Portfolio Holder reported that the Council's overall programme of capital expenditure had been summarised for each Directorate in Appendix 1 of the report and this had revealed a commitment to invest £108.518million in Council-owned assets over the five year period under consideration. Of this amount, £95.781million (nearly 90%) would be spent on improving or increasing the Council's housing stock. Details of individual schemes or groups of projects were listed in Appendix 2 of the report for the General Fund Capital Programme and an analysis of works into specific categories was listed at Appendix 3 of the report for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme. Appendix 1 also highlighted the Council's commitment to finance capital loans up to a maximum of £2.113million and planned expenditure of

£2.613million, which was classified as revenue expenditure but which could be financed from capital resources over the five year period. Analysis of these figures were given in Appendices 4 and 5 of the report respectively.

The Portfolio Holder stated that Appendix 1 of the report also set out the proposed sources of finance for funding the Capital Programme over the five-year period to 2018/19, based on maximising the funding available to finance each scheme. The report identified estimated external funding from grants and private sources in the sum of £5.412million, and it was proposed that capital receipts in the sum of an estimated £23.062million and revenue contributions in the sum of an estimated £84.770million be applied to finance the capital programme over the next five years. The estimated level of capital resources available now and in the future were given in Appendix 6. In summary, the balance of capital receipts was expected to fall from £17.467million as at 1 April 2014 to £4.715million by 31 March 2019 and the Major Repairs Fund balance was expected to decrease from £11.359million to £1.927million by the end of the period.

The Cabinet welcomed the report, particularly the building of new Council Housing and the updating of the existing stock, which had been financed by prudent financial management over a number of years. It had illustrated that the Council was investing in its stock and not just 'banking' the rents received. The Safer, Greener & Transport Portfolio Holder highlighted the project to purchase and install new pay-and-display machines across all the Council-owned car parks. The new machines would prove to be a good purchase and offer better features than the current, obsolete machines.

The Leader of the Council highlighted the problems that the Council had experienced in performing a number of parking reviews across the District on behalf of Essex County Council. The Safer, Greener and Transport Portfolio Holder reassured the Cabinet that the Buckhurst Hill Parking Review would be completed next year, and that the final proposed scheme in Loughton Broadway (Debden) would commence immediately afterwards. The Portfolio Holder was confident that additional funding over and above that already agreed would not be needed.

The Leader of the Council also emphasised that current projections indicated there would be only £4million of usable capital receipts remaining at 31 March 2019. The Leader highlighted that the Programme currently contained annual allocations of £30,000 for both the replacement of wheeled bins to residents and the replacement of vehicles for the Ground Maintenance section, and queried whether these annual allocations were necessary. The Finance Portfolio Holder reassured the Cabinet that all Capital expenditure was regularly monitored.

**Decision:**

- (1) That the latest five-year forecast of capital receipts be noted;
- (2) That the level of usable capital receipts currently predicted to be £4,715,000 at 31 March 2019 be noted;
- (3) That the following amendments to the Capital Programme be approved:
  - (a) carry forwards totaling £2,051,000 from 2014/15 to 2015/16 in respect of General Fund capital schemes as outlined in the report;
  - (b) an additional allocation in the sum of £12,000 to purchase a franking machine for the Business Administration team;

- (c) an overspend in the sum of £49,000 in respect of fees on the purchase of the lease at Torrington Drive;
- (d) a carry forward in the sum of £473,000 from 2014/15 to 2015/16 and 2016/17 in respect of the Open Market Shared Ownership initiative and a reduction the sum of £292,000 for Private sector Housing Loans in 2014/15;
- (e) re-phasing the Disabled Facility Grant budget as outlined in the report and an additional allocation in the sum of £9,000 to complete the programme of non-repayable Private Sector Housing Grants;
- (f) virements within the Housing Revenue Account in respect of the categories of work identified in the report; and
- (g) re-phasing of the Council Housebuilding Programme, Planned Maintenance Programme and Off-Street Parking Initiative financed within the Housing Revenue Account as identified in the report.

**Reasons for Decision:**

The Capital Programme was based on previously approved decisions or decisions to be considered later in the meeting. The expenditure profiles suggested were based on agreed timescales and practical considerations. The decisions proposed were intended to make the best use of the capital resources currently available and forecast to become available for capital schemes up to 2018/19.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

To reconsider the inclusion of some new schemes or re-assess the inclusion of some existing schemes in order to reduce overall capital expenditure as the revenue consequence of reducing the level of capital receipts over the next five years would be to reduce investment income.

To reduce the Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay contributions by increasing the use of usable capital receipts, beyond that which was currently required. However, the levels suggested in the report were affordable within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), according to current predictions, and any further use of usable capital receipts for HRA purposes would have the effect of reducing the capital resources available for the General Fund.

**95. CHRISTMAS/NEW YEAR CIVIC OFFICE CLOSURE**

The Portfolio Holder for Technology and Support Services presented a report on the closure of the Civic Offices over the Christmas and New Year period.

The Portfolio Holder reminded the Cabinet that consultation with both staff and the Management Board about access to services over the Christmas/New Year period had taken place. This indicated the most efficient way to meet this demand was by signposting services rather than opening the whole office, due to the lower demand for services over this period. All essential services were covered either by the out-of-hours contact centre or specific staff on call over the period. The Management Board also supported the continuation of the arrangements for the next five years. However, the Joint Consultative Committee were proposing that these arrangements be continued for a period of three years before being reviewed again.

When this issue was previously considered by the Cabinet in March 2014, a public consultation with Members and Residents on the closure of the Civic Offices over the holiday period was agreed. These consultation exercises were now complete and in summary, 209 residents had responded to the consultation with:

- 99% of these stated they had not been inconvenienced by the Civic Office closure;
- 82% said they were aware of available services over the Christmas period;
- 46% of respondents tended to use the Council's website to find out about services; and
- 45% would use the website to find out information about services over the Christmas Period.

Only three members had responded to their consultation survey. One member indicated that they had received a complaint regarding the Civic Office closure, although the comments did not indicate whether this was a recent or older complaint. All respondents were aware of available services during this period and one had been inconvenienced, but again the comments did not indicate whether this was a recent issue.

The Cabinet accepted the outcome of the consultation exercises, and felt that they had been merited despite the poor level of response from both residents and Members. It was acknowledged that the Christmas closure of the Civic Offices was appreciated by the staff and the results of the consultation indicated that the public were not inconvenienced unduly by the closure. However, it was felt that adequate external notices should be displayed to inform the public that the Civic Offices were closed during this period, and that this arrangement should be reviewed again in the future. The Portfolio Holder reassured the Cabinet that this would happen, and that the external Security Guards would also be briefed before the closure period.

#### **Report:**

- (1) That the results of the public and Member consultation exercises be noted; and
- (2) That, with regard to the outcome of the consultation exercises and as recommended by the Joint Consultative Committee, the current Christmas/New Year arrangements be continued for a further three years from 2015/16 to 2017/18.

#### **Reasons for Decision:**

To recognise the strong support amongst staff for the closure of the Civic Offices during the Christmas and New Year period, and that this closure did not currently unduly inconvenience the public.

#### **Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

To not continue with the current arrangements. However, the public were not unduly inconvenienced by the closure of the Civic Offices during the festive period, and it was a popular measure with the staff.

## **96. RESTRUCTURE OF THE BENEFITS DIVISION**

The Finance Portfolio Holder presented a report on the proposed restructure of the Benefits Division.

The Portfolio Holder reminded the Cabinet that, as part of the Welfare Reform Act 2012, the responsibility for Housing Benefit fraud investigation would be transferring from local authorities to the Single Fraud Investigation Service within the Department of Work & Pensions. Although it had taken four years since the original announcement, it was known that this function within Epping Forest District Council would transfer on 1 October 2015. However, it was only the Housing Benefit Fraud Investigation function that would be transferred; responsibility for Local Council Tax Support fraud investigation would remain with the District Council.

The Portfolio Holder stated that, in addition to investigating Housing Benefit fraud and Local Council Tax Support fraud, the current Benefit Investigation team also assisted in non-benefit related corporate fraud investigations, working with both Internal Audit and the Housing Tenancy Fraud Officers. A dedicated Corporate Fraud team was now being set up and was the subject of a further report to Cabinet. The Corporate Fraud team would however be investigating Local Council Tax Support fraud.

The Portfolio Holder reported that the transfer of Housing Benefit fraud investigation to the Single Fraud Investigation Service, and the creation of the Corporate Fraud team had necessitated a reorganisation of the current structure of the Benefits Division. The current Benefit Investigation team had all been put into scope to transfer to the Department for Work and Pensions from 1 October 2015 but the transfer of this function from the Council had also created a new liaison function which would need to be resourced. There would be the opportunity for at least some of the current Investigation Officers to either work in the Corporate Fraud team or to remain within the Benefits Division in a compliance or liaison role. The revised structure would achieve potential full year savings of £134,030 in the Benefits Division.

The Cabinet welcomed the report as it was important to ensure that benefits were received by the rightful recipients. The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the proposed structure would be reviewed in 2015/16.

**Decision:**

- (1) That the new national arrangements for investigating housing benefit fraud under the Single Fraud Investigation Service be noted; and
- (2) That the revised structure for the Benefits Division, as set out at Appendix 2 of the report, be approved.

**Reasons for Decision:**

The main purpose of the Benefit Investigation team was to investigate Housing Benefit fraud and Local Council Tax Support fraud. As both of these functions were to be transferred to the Single Fraud Investigation Service and Corporate Fraud, the structure of the Benefits Division needed to be reviewed.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

To do nothing. However, if the Benefits Division was not restructured, there would not be a management structure for some of the Benefit staff, the Council could lose income from failing to protect the tax base, and there would be no resource available to assist the Single Fraud Investigation Service with the investigation of Housing Benefit fraud, resulting in a loss to the public purse.

**97. RESTRUCTURE OF THE INTERNAL AUDIT UNIT AND CREATION OF A CORPORATE FRAUD TEAM**

The Portfolio Holder for Governance & Development Management presented a report on the proposed restructure of the Internal Audit Unit and the creation of a Corporate Fraud Team.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the National Fraud Authority, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Audit Commission had all published advice highlighting the importance of a corporate counter-fraud response within local authorities. The introduction of the Single Fraud Investigation Service, as explained in the previous report concerning the restructure of the Benefits Division, would affect councils' priorities in tackling fraud. Because the Single Fraud Investigation Service would investigate benefit fraud, councils had an opportunity to focus more resources on other frauds that had a local impact, such as housing tenancy and right to buy fraud, procurement, business rate, council tax discounts and local council tax support fraud, grant fraud and internal fraud including such areas as payroll and expenses.

The Portfolio Holder highlighted that 36 properties had been recovered since the appointment of the Council's Housing Fraud Officers, and investigations into Right-to-Buy applications had resulted in the return of a further 7 properties (saving approximately £500,000). Other investigations into Private Sector Housing Grants had resulted in a further saving of £25,000. The costs for the proposed additional Fraud Investigator posts had been allocated on a 50/50 basis between the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account, but the current Audit time recording system would be used to charge more accurately. It was proposed that the additional costs for the Housing Revenue Account would be funded from the Housing Improvements and Service Enhancements Fund.

The Portfolio Holder advocated that the creation of a Corporate Fraud Investigation Team working closely with the enhanced Internal Audit Unit would save the Council money and enable the Chief Internal Auditor to provide more robust audit cover, which in turn would give a higher level of assurance in the fraud prevention and detection work within the Council and strengthen the Annual Governance Statement.

**Decision:**

- (1) That, with effect from 1 April 2015, the proposed structure for the Internal Audit and Corporate Fraud Investigation Unit be approved, as set out at Appendix 1 of the report;
- (2) That, subject to job evaluation, a new post of Senior Fraud Investigator be created;
- (3) That, subject to job evaluation, three new posts of Fraud Investigator be created;
- (4) That the post of Auditor (0.4FTE) be made full time;
- (5) That, in order to finance the General Fund costs of the above, a Continuing Services Budget growth bid in the sum of £58,075 for 2015/16 be made;
- (6) That the additional £41,265 required funding from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) be funded from the HRA's Housing Improvements and Service Enhancements Fund;



(7) That the location of the existing Benefits Fraud staff be continued within the Resources Directorate, under the management of the Assistant Director (Benefits), until they transfer to the Single Fraud Investigation Service from 1 October 2015; and

(8) That an annual saving of £134,030, arising partly in 2015/16 and partly in 2016/17, be noted following the transfer of the Benefit Fraud staff to the Single Fraud Investigation Service and other consequent changes to the Benefits Division.

**Reasons for Decision:**

A Corporate Fraud Investigation Team was included in the Directorate restructuring plan approved by the Council on 17 December 2013.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

To do nothing. However, this would leave the Council vulnerable to financial loss due to fraudulent activity that could remain undetected.

**98. PRIVATE PILOT'S LICENCE TRAINING - NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD**

The Portfolio Holder for Asset Management & Economic Development presented a report on the introduction of Private Pilot's Licence training for fixed wing aircraft at North Weald Airfield.

The Portfolio Holder reported that, until April 2010, the ability to learn to fly in a fixed wing or rotary wing aircraft was not possible from North Weald Airfield. This was due to an Air Navigation Order (ANO) which stated that training for a Private Pilot's Licence (PPL) could only be undertaken at a licensed airfield. This Order had now been amended to allow such activity and North Weald Flying Group had requested permission to undertake such training from the Airfield.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the Airfield Management Team had completed a risk assessment for the introduction of Private Pilot's Licence training at the Airfield and the findings were that the current resources at the Airfield (e.g. staffing levels and fire cover) were sufficient. Therefore, the Airfield could fulfil its legal obligation to provide adequate facilities for the safe conduct of the Training.

The Portfolio Holder advised the Cabinet that the major concern was the effect the training would have on the local community, as the air movements would increase with a potential increase in nuisance complaints from local residents. However, the Chief Flying Instructor had provided a degree of reassurance by stating that only 25% of the training involved circuit flying above the airfield, and that other nearby airfields at Andrewsfield and Duxford would also be used to mitigate concerns. Consequently, the Portfolio Holder proposed an additional recommendation to note the use of these other two airfields by North Weald Flying Group in their provision of training.

The Portfolio Holder reported that there was no intention to permit any type of Commercial Pilot's Training, and that the training for Private Pilot's Licences would not involve any night flying. It was anticipated that the income from this contract would exceed £5,000 per annum.

A local ward Member for North Weald Bassett accepted the need to raise income for the Council and encourage businesses to locate at the Airfield. However, the local Member was encouraged to see the proposed financial penalty clauses and potential

review of the lease should the provider exceed the agreed number of movements per year.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the aircraft proposed to be used by the Group would be fixed wing Cessna aircraft, which were relatively quiet, and the number of aircraft movements would be recorded by the staff in the Control Tower at the Airfield. The Director of Governance added that the Officers would negotiate the best possible agreement for the Council, and the Council would obtain better value if it could offer more certainty, particularly in terms of the length of the lease.

**Decision:**

(1) That Officers be authorised to enter into a negotiated agreement with The North Weald Flying Group to allow them to commence Private Pilot's Licence training for fixed wing aircraft at North Weald Airfield;

(2) That the moratorium on the maximum term of the lease at the Airfield, which presently stands at four years, be ended for this lease only; and

(3) That the use of other airfields at Andrewsfield and Duxford for the Private Pilot's Licence training by the North Weald Flying Group be noted.

**Reasons for Decision:**

To increase the income from the Airfield.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

To not allow the introduction of fixed wing Private Pilot's Licence training.

To allow Private Pilot's Licence training but with the restriction of a four-year lease.

**99. CORPORATE PLAN KEY OBJECTIVES 2014/15 - QUARTER II PROGRESS**

The Leader of the Council presented a progress report on the Council's key objectives for the second quarter of 2014/15, as contained within the Corporate Plan.

The Leader reminded the Cabinet that the Corporate Plan was the Council's key strategic planning document, which set out the Council's priorities over the four-year period from 2011/12 to 2014/15, with strategic themes reflecting those of the Community Strategy for the District. Updates to the Corporate Plan were published annually, to reflect the key objectives for each year of the plan period and progress against the achievement of objectives for previous years.

The Leader reported that a range of key objectives for 2014/15 was adopted by the Cabinet in April 2014. Progress in relation to individual actions and deliverables was reviewed by the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly and outturn basis. At the end of the second quarter of the year, 44 (81.5%) of the individual deliverables or actions supporting the key objectives had either been completed or achieved, or were anticipated to be completed/achieved in accordance with in-year targets, 4 (7.5%) might not be completed or achieved by year-end; and 6 (11%) were currently on-hold as a result of external factors.

**Decision:**

(1) That the progress in relation to the achievement of the key objectives for

2014/15 in the second quarter of the year be noted.

**Reasons for Decision:**

It was important that relevant performance management processes were in place to review progress against the key objectives, to ensure their continued achievability and relevance, and to identify proposals for appropriate corrective action in areas of under-performance.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

No other options were appropriate in this respect. Failure to monitor and review performance against the key objectives and to consider corrective action where necessary, could have negative implications for the Council's reputation and judgements made about its progress, and might mean that opportunities for improvement were lost.

**100. LONDON STANSTED CAMBRIDGE CONSORTIUM SUBSCRIPTION**

The :Leader of the Council presented a report for the renewal of the Council's subscription to the London Stansted Cambridge Consortium.

The Leader reported that the Council was currently a member of the London Stansted Cambridge Corridor Consortium (LSCC). The Consortium consisted of a number of public and private sector members with a common interest in promoting economic growth and investment across a corridor stretching from London in the South to Cambridge in the North.

The Consortium promoted business within the area, supported the diversification of the United Kingdom economy, lobbied for increased investment, supported innovation, and looked to raise the skills levels of the local work force. The Consortium provided a strong voice to lobby for investment in key enabling infrastructure which was critical to the Council's developing Economic Strategy. The subscription for 2014/15 was £10,000 which provided the Council with a place on the Consortium's Board.

**Decision:**

- (1) That the Council's subscription to the London Stansted Cambridge Consortium (LSCC) be continued for the period 2014/15;
- (2) That, in order to finance the LSCC subscription for 2014/15, a virement in the sum of £10,000 from the Planning Policy Portfolio to the Asset Management & Economic Development Portfolio be approved; and
- (3) That, in order to finance the LSCC subscription in 2015/16, a Continuing Services Budget growth bid in the sum of £10,000 be made.

**Reasons for Decision:**

To retain a seat on the Consortium's Board and continue to influence the activities of the Consortium in support of the Council's Economic Development Strategy. The Consortium currently supported the Council's key transport and technology infrastructure funding requests as well as working with the District's Higher Educational establishments to promote the development of skills which supported people into work.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

To resign from the Consortium. However, this would risk key priorities for the Council being downgraded or even dropped from the Consortium's work programme.

To lobby in isolation outside of the Consortium. However, this would reduce the influence the Council could bring to bear on potential sources of funding.

**101. GET ACTIVE EPPING FOREST**

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Community Wellbeing presented a report on further funding for the Get Active Epping Forest initiative.

The Portfolio Holder requested approval for the use of an unexpected income share of £10,000 from Sports & Leisure Management Ltd (SLM) to improve the health and wellbeing of local residents. The Council had not anticipated this level of income share from SLM Ltd, but due to increased attendances at Loughton Leisure Centre the income share was higher than expected. It was recommended that the £10,000 be re-invested by the Council to improve the health and wellbeing of residents in the District, through a new initiative called Get Active Epping Forest linked to the county-wide initiative Get Active Essex launched in October by Active Essex. This initiative would target inactive people to improve their health and wellbeing through a series of activities and events, and would include free taster sessions, physical activity sessions, plus events to enable local communities to engage and become more physically active. The activities would be delivered in the four super output areas of the District: Paternoster Ward, Waltham Abbey; Limes Farm Estate, Chigwell; Oakwood Hill, Debden; and Shelley, Ongar. The Council's Community Services section would be responsible for the implementation of the Get Active Epping Forest Initiative.

The Cabinet generally welcomed the report, although two Members queried whether this was the best possible use of £10,000 as this was a discretionary activity for the Council. Most Members of the Cabinet expressed some concern about the proposed expenditure of £2,000 on Marketing and Promotional Incentives, especially the t-shirt and water bottle items listed. The Portfolio Holder responded that this was a one-off expenditure, hence it was a District Development Fund initiative, as the additional monies came from the Leisure Management contract then the funding should remain with the Leisure & Community Services Portfolio. It was highlighted that this initiative would be included in the new Leisure Management contract, and the Director of Neighbourhoods confirmed that the Council would look for more emphasis on Outreach and Community Engagement activities to be supported by the new Contractor during the competitive dialogue process.

In response to questions from the members present, the Portfolio Holder stated that the Council already ran a scheme for the over-50's called New Horizons. The Portfolio Holder stated that a super output area was one with poverty and health inequality issues, of which the Council had four within the District, and assured the Cabinet that the expenditure would be closely and regularly monitored to determine the impact of the initiative.

**Decision:**

(1) That £10,000 from the income share between Sports & Leisure Management Ltd and the Council be used to fund a District Development Fund initiative to engage inactive people in physical activity in order to improve their health and wellbeing; and

(2) That the initiative be monitored and evaluated to assess the impact of increasing participation of inactive people in the four super output areas of the District, namely:

- (a) Paternoster Ward, Waltham Abbey;
- (b) Limes Farm Estate, Chigwell;
- (c) Oakwood Hill, Debden; and
- (d) Shelley, Ongar.

**Reasons for Decision:**

To improve the health and wellbeing of residents through a Get Active Epping Forest initiative, particularly in the four areas of the District where there were acknowledged poverty and health inequality issues.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

To return all or part of the money to the Continuing Services Budget for use on general Council expenditure.

**102. TOWN CENTRES FUND**

The Portfolio Holder for Asset Management & Economic Development presented a report on the proposed Economic Development Fund for District Centres.

The Portfolio Holder reported that during 2013/14 the Council had agreed to fund a £35,000 Town Centres Fund which enabled a wider set of partners to undertake projects to support the local main High Streets. This fund was again made available during the 2014/15 financial year to enable Town Centre partnerships to make further project bids. It was proposed to continue the good work generated by this fund by making a further amount of £35,000 available for partnerships to bid for in 2015/16. In addition, it was also proposed to widen out the eligibility of the fund to enable smaller centres in the District to be included and to allow the Council's Economic Development Officers to propose projects. It was therefore proposed that the monies be allocated to a new District Centres Economic Development Fund for 2015/16.

The Cabinet welcomed the scheme and the proposal for the larger Villages to be able to apply for funds as well. It was suggested that this scheme should be considered as a possible addition to the Continuing Services Budget next year, as this was the third consecutive year that it had been in operation. There was some concern expressed about the Economic Development Officers being permitted to propose projects for the funding; it was felt that they should propose, not impose. The Portfolio Holder reassured the Cabinet that the Economic Development Officers could liaise with both the larger Villages regarding projects, and also liaise concerning projects embracing more than one centre; however, the Portfolio Holder would always have the final decision concerning the allocation of the funding. The Portfolio Holder also clarified that the Council preferred invoices to be produced as evidence for access to funding, however, estimates could be accepted in certain circumstances for projects.

**Decision:**

(1) That a District Development Fund growth bid in the sum of £35,000 for 2015/16 be made to establish a District Centres Economic Development Fund.

**Reasons for Decision:**

To encourage Town Centre Partnerships to think creatively about how they could sustainably promote their town centres and create initiatives that had a lasting impact on their town centre economy. By widening eligibility to take part in the scheme then these benefits could be spread to the wider economy and impact on the economies of smaller centres throughout the District. By encouraging District-wide initiatives the impact of this investment could be further widened to benefit other local economies elsewhere in the District.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

To not make the funds available for Town Centre Partnerships to bid for.

To make the funds available from the Continuing Services Budget or via a revised scheme.

**103. CALENDAR OF COUNCIL MEETINGS 2015/16**

The Portfolio Holder for Governance & Development Management presented a report concerning the proposed Calendar of Council meetings for 2015/16.

The Portfolio Holder reminded the Cabinet that it considered the calendar of meetings each year prior to its final approval by the Council. The calendar had developed over time to meet the changing needs of the authority and, where possible, meetings of a Committee had been standardised on a particular night of the week. Within the current Democratic Services Business Plan, there was an item to review the Calendar of Council Meetings, and in particular the frequency of meetings.

The Portfolio Holder highlighted the two main changes for the coming year. Firstly, all Executive meetings had been rescheduled from Monday evenings to Thursday evenings. Two of the Cabinet Committees had already been rescheduled as it was more convenient for Members, and from 2015/16 all Executive Committee meetings would take place on a Thursday evening. This had also necessitated the 'Miscellaneous' Committees moving from a Thursday evening to a Monday evening as well.

The Portfolio Holder also informed the Cabinet that an opportunity to revamp the organisation of Overview & Scrutiny had been taken alongside the current review of the structure of the Scrutiny Standing Panels. Following the initial meeting in June 2015 to confirm the membership and chairmanship of each Scrutiny Panel, there would be five Scrutiny cycles throughout the year – each spread out over a period of two months and culminating in a meeting of the full Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The Portfolio Holder requested the Cabinet to consider the draft Calendar of Council Meetings for 2015/16, but cautioned that the proposed Calendar was very congested and the addition of any further meetings should be given very careful consideration.

**Decision:**

(1) That, as attached at Appendix 1 of the report, the draft Calendar of Council Meetings for 2015/16 be recommended to the Council for adoption.

**Reasons for Decision:**

Drafting the Calendar of Council Meetings for the following municipal year was an item for action within the Democratic Services Business Plan each year.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

To vary the individual frequencies of meetings. However, in practice, additional meetings were scheduled as and when issues dictated, and meetings were cancelled when there was a lack of business.

**104. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

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

**CHAIRMAN**