

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

**Committee:** Cabinet **Date:** 3 December 2015

**Place:** Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.00 - 10.30 pm

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

**Other Councillors:** K Angold-Stephens, N Bedford, J Knapman, G Mohindra, R Morgan, S Murray, A Patel and J M Whitehouse

**Apologies:** -

**Officers Present:** G Chipp (Chief Executive), D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Neighbourhoods), A Hall (Director of Communities), R Palmer (Director of Resources), D Bailey (Head of Transformation), J Chandler (Assistant Director (Community Services)), S G Hill (Assistant Director (Governance & Performance Management)), J Twinn (Assistant Director Benefits), T Carne (Public Relations and Marketing Officer), A Petty (CCTV Operations Manager), M Warr (Economic Development Officer), G J Woodhall (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and P Seager (Webcasting Officer)

---

### **93. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION**

The Leader of Council 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.

### **94. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

(a) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor J M Whitehouse declared an interest in agenda item 18, Capital Review 2015/16 – 2019/20, by virtue of being a resident of St John's Road in Epping as well as a Member of Epping Town Council and Essex County Council. The Councillor had determined that his interest was non-pecuniary and would remain in the meeting for the consideration of the issue.

### **95. MINUTES**

**Decision:**

(1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2015 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### **96. REPORTS OF PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

There were no further reports from the Portfolio Holders present on current issues that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

**97. PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

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

**98. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY**

The Cabinet noted that there was nothing to report by the Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee as the next meeting of the Committee was not scheduled until 5 January 2016.

**99. ASSET MANAGEMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CABINET COMMITTEE - 15 OCTOBER 2015**

The Portfolio Holder for Asset Management & Economic Development presented the minutes from the meeting of the Asset Management & Economic Development Cabinet Committee, held on 15 October 2015.

The Cabinet Committee had made recommendations to the Cabinet concerning the results of a marketing exercise for an Operating Partner at North Weald Airfield. Other issues considered by the Cabinet Committee included: the Economic Development Team Progress Report; the Asset Management Co-Ordination Group Report; the monitoring arrangements for the construction of the Epping Forest Shopping Park; and an update report on the St John's Road development.

**Decision:**Results of a Marketing Exercise for an Operating Partner at North Weald Airfield

(1) That, in assessing the Expressions of Interest received as a result of the marketing exercise for an Operational Partner at North Weald Airfield, the following key considerations for the procurement exercise be agreed:

- (a) a long lease be granted;
- (b) the non-aviation area be excluded;
- (c) the Council might wish to invest in this project; and
- (d) the new partner would manage all existing tenants.

**Reasons for Decision:**

The Cabinet was satisfied that the Cabinet Committee had fully addressed all the relevant issues.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

The Cabinet was satisfied that the Cabinet Committee had considered all the relevant options and that there was no further options to consider.

**100. HOUSING REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE HUB**

The Housing Portfolio Holder presented a report on the proposed Housing Repairs and Maintenance Hub at North Weald.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the Council needed to re-locate its Housing Repairs Service from the Epping Depot, to enable the proposed re-development for the St Johns Road area of Epping to proceed. Having searched for alternative vacant buildings around the District and other potential development sites to relocate to, and with none found to be suitable, agreement was being sought to the construction of a new Repairs and Maintenance Hub on a Council-owned vacant brownfield site at Blenheim Way, North Weald. This would also create the opportunity for the Housing Repairs team to be co-located with the Housing Assets Team, currently based at the Civic Offices, which would not only result in operational benefits but, more importantly, free up accommodation at the Civic Offices – on the ground floor, close to Reception – to assist with the Council's Accommodation Strategy. It was proposed to fund the new Hub, at an estimated cost of approximately £3.3million, from the Housing Revenue Account through Revenue Contributions to Capital Outlay (RCCO), further borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board, or a combination of both.

The Portfolio Holder reported that, in order to meet the very tight deadlines necessary to build a new facility and thereby vacate the existing Depot before the date that the Council was required to give the developer vacant possession, a waiver to Contract Standing Orders was required in order to quickly appoint the Architects, Building Consultants and Project Manager. It was proposed to appoint Pellings LLP as the Architects and Building Consultants, and Mears as the Project Managers. A planning application would also be required and authority was being sought to make an application.

The Portfolio Holder commented that the Council had become aware that the Parish Council had been seeking to provide a play area in the vicinity of the recently completed residential development adjacent to this site. Therefore, it was proposed that a play area be provided at the site if the Parish Council formally made such a request prior to the submission of the planning application and agreed to fund the cost of the play area. If no such request or undertaking was received then the space would provide further parking for the proposed Hub.

In response to questions, the Portfolio Holder added that the Council needed to vacate the current depot site in Epping as soon as possible to allow the redevelopment of St John's Road to proceed; it was estimated that it would take four months for the planning application to be submitted and considered. North Weald Airfield was considered too costly as a potential site for a temporary Hub, and there was currently no alternative plan since no other sites were available. It was confirmed that the Building Control work would be performed by the Council's own Officers.

The Leader of Council suggested an amendment to Recommendation 1, that the Hub be built subject to not only planning permission being granted, but also contracts being exchanged for the planned redevelopment of St John's Road in Epping.

**Decision:**

(1) That, subject to planning permission and contracts exchanged for the planned redevelopment at St Johns Road in Epping, a new Repairs and Maintenance Hub be constructed on Council-owned land at Blenheim Way, North Weald to enable the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Services to be co-located, thus freeing up land at the existing Epping Depot site for the planned redevelopment at St Johns Road and free up office accommodation at the Civic Offices, Epping;

- (2) That Contract Standing Order C6 (Contracts in Excess of £50,000) be waived and that Pellings LLP be appointed to undertake the architectural and all other multidisciplinary building consultancy services for a fee of £170,000, subject to:
- (a) a presentation by Pellings LLP confirming their experience, expertise and proposed approach to the delivery of the project to all members of the Cabinet; and
  - (b) following which the Housing Portfolio Holder be authorised to confirm or otherwise the formal appointment of Pellings LLP;
- (3) That Mears be appointed to act as Project Managers to deliver the relocation/co-location project, as a “Key Deliverable” under the terms of their existing Repairs Management Contract, at their tendered rate;
- (4) That the capital costs, estimated to be around £3.3million including construction costs and fees, associated with the new Repairs and Maintenance Hub be funded from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA);
- (5) That a Supplementary Capital Estimate in the sum of £300,000 to cover fees and works in 2015/16 be recommended to the Council for approval, with the balance of £3million being included in the Capital Programme for 2016/17;
- (6) That the required HRA funding be provided through either revenue contributions to capital outlay (RCCO) and/or further borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB);
- (7) That the Director of Resources be authorised to determine:
- (a) the most appropriate form of capital funding; and
  - (b) if further borrowing was required then the most appropriate PWLB loan to secure and obtain;
- (8) That the transfer of the land from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account be recommended to the Council for approval, with an appropriate adjustment being made in the balances due between the funds;
- (9) That a planning application be submitted for the new Repairs and Maintenance Hub; and
- (10) That the provision of land for a play area to be provided by North Weald Bassett Parish Council not be included as part of the development, unless a formal request was received from the Parish Council in advance of the submission of the planning application.

**Reasons for Decision:**

In July 2014 the Cabinet agreed the Heads of Terms for a development agreement for the development of a site in St John’s Road, Epping, which included the current Council’s Housing Repairs Depot, for the purpose of redeveloping the site to create a food store, car park, small cinema, restaurants, ancillary commercial uses and residential development. This required the existing Housing Repairs Depot to be vacated at relatively short notice.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

To not use Council-owned land, which could be used for another purpose, and to buy land elsewhere in the District to construct a new building. However, the capital costs would be far higher and, in any event, Officers were not aware of any other suitable sites.

To not use the brownfield site in North Weald, and use an alternative Council-owned site elsewhere in the District. However, no suitable site had been identified, and construction needed to commence quickly.

To not construct a new Repairs and Maintenance Hub and instead use an existing building, either in the Council's ownership or rented from a private landlord. However, in the last 3 years, very few buildings had been identified and those that had been were not considered suitable.

To fund the construction from the General Fund, as was the case for all other Council assets, and for the HRA to pay a contribution to the General Fund by way of rent. However, there were insufficient General Fund capital resources available in the short and medium term after taking account of all other commitments the Council had in place.

To not waive Contract Standing Orders and appoint Pellings LLP and appoint the company or an alternative architect and other necessary Building Consultants, either from the Essex Procurement Hub or through a competitive tender exercise instead. However, that would cost considerably more or add a considerable delay to the project, which required a fast track approach; there would also be an additional cost to undertaking a procurement exercise.

**101. LOCAL PLAN BUDGET AND RESOURCES UPDATE**

The Planning Policy Portfolio Holder presented an update report on the Budget and required resources for the Local Plan, and apologised for the Appendix being tabled at the meeting as it had not been included on the agenda.

The Portfolio Holder reported that the preparation of the Local Plan for Epping Forest District was an on-going and complex process, as the level of expert evidence that was required to support the emerging Local Plan was significant. The guidance on exactly what this should cover continued to evolve in light of the National Planning Policy Framework and its associated Guidance, and emerging Inspector Reports into other Local Plan Examinations throughout the country. Much of the evidence and support required expert knowledge on specific topics, and therefore necessitated commissioning external consultants with the requisite expertise and experience.

The Portfolio Holder stated that there was £496,410 currently allocated to the Local Plan in the District Development Fund, with the estimated total Budget for the preparation of the Local Plan currently £1,472,800. Therefore, a further budget of £976,390 from the District Development Fund was required before the planned adoption of the Local Plan in the Autumn of 2018, as per the current Local Development Scheme. It was also highlighted that, following the restructure of the Planning Policy Team to improve resilience and provide career progression opportunities, it was estimated that an increase in the Continuing Services Budget for the Planning Policy Team of £25,000 would be required for the remainder of 2015/16 and an increase of £75,000 from 2016/17. Therefore, a supplementary estimate was proposed for approval by the Council in 2015/16 and a growth bid for 2016/17.

The Cabinet welcomed the inclusion of a contingency for 2018/19, and an allocation for Public Relations support in 2016/17. However, it was feared that the allocation for Public Relations support would need to be increased to keep residents fully informed, and that the costs would escalate if the Local Plan was not approved by the Planning Inspector.

The Portfolio Holder confirmed that the figure for Public Relations support listed in 2016/17 would probably be spent over a number of years, and was in addition to the efforts of the Council's own Public Relations team. The Portfolio Holder was happy to review the budget for Public Relations support and provide Members with an update at the next meeting of the Cabinet. The Director of Neighbourhoods added that the brief for Public Relations support could be extended to future years and the market could be tested as to the likely cost. It was intended to procure the Public Relations support early in 2016, and a confirmed cost could be reported back to the Cabinet following the completion of the procurement exercise.

The Portfolio Holder added that the forecasts were based on best estimates, and detailed answers to any queries could be provided to Members after the meeting. The Planning Policy team had been restructured to improve its resilience, and the replacement Project Officer was for a member of staff who was retiring and had been working primarily on Gypsy & Traveller issues. The costs of providing assistance for Neighbourhood Plans were met by the Continuing Services Budget, although the first £5,000 of the cost of each Plan was claimed back from the Government. It was the responsibility of the Local Council concerned to produce its own Neighbourhood Plan. All responses to public consultations were analysed by Planning Policy Officers as they had the necessary local knowledge.

The Director of Neighbourhoods indicated that the Council had spent approximately £3.3million on the generation of its Local Plan to date, and the Portfolio Holder undertook to provide Members with a definitive figure in the near future.

#### **Decision:**

- (1) That a growth bid in the sum of £976,390 for the District Development Fund Local Plan budget be agreed to cover the period up to and including 2018/19;
- (2) That a Continuing Services Budget supplementary estimate in the sum of £25,000 for 2015/16 be recommended to the Council for approval;
- (3) That a growth bid for the Continuing Services Budget in the sum of £75,000 in 2016/17 be agreed to formalise the previously agreed restructure of the Planning Policy team; and
- (4) That a revised figure for Public Relations Support be reported back to the Cabinet in early 2016 following the completion of the planned procurement exercise.

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

The preparation of a Local Plan was a statutory duty for Local Authorities, and must be formulated taking into account robust and up-to-date evidence. Any Local Plan that was not supported by such evidence was more likely to be found unsound when examined by the Planning Inspectorate.

Best endeavours had been and continued to be made, to seek savings and cost efficient working where possible, for example, by making best use of economies of scale in preparing jointly commissioned evidence where appropriate. Examples of

this to date included the preparation of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Functional Economic Area study across a four authority area.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

There were no other reasonable options for action as the preparation of a Local Plan was a statutory duty for the Council.

**102. TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME**

The Leader of Council presented a report on the scope of the Transformation Programme.

The Leader reminded the Cabinet that Local Government was facing an unprecedented series of challenges as Central Government sought to reduce the budget deficit. Local Councils had already been working hard to improve efficiency and effectiveness and were being asked to do even more over this Parliament. Against this background of severe financial constraint, customer demands were increasing and advances in technology had led customers to expect that their local council would interact with them in very different ways. In addition, the Council acknowledged the increasing pressure on services from an ageing population. Given this challenging environment, even well run Councils with strong reserves like Epping Forest had to accept that the current operating model was unsustainable in the long run.

The Leader stated that if the Council was to meet the challenge posed by increasing customer demands and reduced Revenue Support Grant then a fundamental review of the way that services were delivered was required; the Transformation Programme would seek to do just that. The broad scope of a programme of work was set out that would fundamentally question what the Council did and how the Council did it. The initial programme would last for 18 months and be led by the Council's Leadership Team and be co-ordinated by the Head of Transformation within existing resource budgets. It was anticipated that the programme would recommend investments in technology and changes to working practices that would improve customer service and deliver efficiency savings. Major recommendations brought forward through the programme would be reported with fully costed business cases for either the Cabinet or Council to approve any investment required. After the initial period, the programme would be reviewed and consideration given to extending it. Bids for extra resources would be required if the programme was to continue to deliver transformational change.

The Portfolio Holder for Governance & Development Management acknowledged that there were risks with the Programme, and that the Council should look to implement some measures quickly to provide the Programme with some momentum. Two suggestions offered by the Portfolio Holder were:

- (i) co-locate all the members of the senior management team in an open plan office; and
- (ii) relinquish the Members' Room and for Members to use the Staff Recreation Room directly beneath.

The Portfolio Holder for Technology & Support Services commented that the Planning Reception desk should be moved to the ground floor from its current location on the second floor, and that staff should be given the flexibility to work in the best location – whether that be at home or in the Civic Offices. The Leader of

Council added that a federated version of a Combined Authority was being considered as part of the Essex devolution proposals.

The Chief Executive welcomed the comments and suggestions from the Cabinet, and re-iterated that the Programme would cover a wide range of issues, as would be shown by the next report. All comments and suggestions would be considered fully.

The Planning Policy Portfolio Holder cautioned that budgets and timescales for measures arising from the Programme would need to be carefully monitored. As part of the Programme, the Council could consider co-location with other services such as the Police, the Citizens Advice Bureau and Voluntary Action Epping Forest. It was highlighted that the Council was already looking to co-locate with the Police before April 2016.

The Chief Executive reminded the Cabinet that the scope of the Programme was wide, and would involve cultural change throughout the Council as well as significant investment. The next report would detail specific business cases with costs for the Cabinet to consider. A review of the location of the staff currently based at the Civic Offices in Epping would be included in the Programme, as indicated by paragraph 13 of the report.

**Decision:**

- (1) That the scope of the Transformation Programme be agreed;
- (2) That the appointment of the Head of Transformation from within existing resources be noted;
- (3) That the Programme was likely to identify significant changes to the way the Council delivered services, which might require significant capital investment, be noted; and
- (4) That the major changes recommended as part of the Programme be the subject of future reports to the Cabinet and supported by a fully evaluated business case.

**Reasons for Decision:**

As Government funding continued to reduce, the Council had to develop a co-ordinated strategy to deliver the outcomes set out in the Corporate Plan.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

No other options were appropriate in this respect. Failure to review the Council's processes and procedures would result in stagnation, and against a background of financial constraints this would inevitably lead to reduced services or increases in Council Tax.

**103. DISTRICT CCTV PROVISION - STRATEGIC DIRECTION**

The Safer, Greener & Transport Portfolio Holder presented a report on the strategic direction for Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) provision within the District.

The Portfolio Holder reminded the Cabinet that it had considered a report at its meeting on 23 July 2015 concerning the issues associated with the ongoing expansion of CCTV operated by the Council across the District, including costs of



maintenance, repair and replacement of equipment and agreed, in principle, to continue to provide and invest in CCTV for the future. A fully-costed CCTV Strategy for the District was now presented for approval, setting out details of all systems currently in operation by the Council and all proposed CCTV installations over the next five years.

The Portfolio Holder reported that the Strategy set out the Council's current CCTV provision, detailing respective locations, numbers of cameras, condition and costs for maintenance, repair and replacements over the next seven years, along with recommendations for de-commissioning of equipment. It also provided a CCTV Funding Plan setting out the capital and revenue budgets required each year over the next 5 years in order to plan for the scheduled replacements of existing CCTV systems and routine servicing and repairs, differentiating between the funding required by the HRA and the General Fund. Separate to the Funding Plan, an assessment would be made each year of those systems coming towards the end of their expected life to ensure that actual replacements/renewals were prioritised in the order of greatest need, and that renewals were only undertaken when required.

It was suggested that the Council's CCTV cameras could be used for car park monitoring, traffic management in the District, and to provide free wi-fi to residents. The Portfolio Holder cautioned that certain uses were highly specialised, and the CCTV Operations Officer added that the Council was already remotely accessing the CCTV in car parks to monitor the cash payment machines. Traffic management would require the feeds from the cameras to be continuously monitored.

It was also suggested that the Police be charged a fee, in the same manner as Insurance Companies, when they required access to the feeds from the Council's CCTV cameras. However, it was noted that the Council had a duty to provide the Police with any information in relation to the detection of crime. The CCTV Operations Officer informed the Cabinet that the Council could link up with Local Council cameras via a phone line, and assist in the control of their cameras. Officers also supported Local Councils to ensure that they met the twelve guiding principles of CCTV usage. It was felt that perhaps this could be raised at a future meeting of a Local Councils Liaison Committee meeting.

It was highlighted that some private companies had CCTV as well, and consideration should be given to the use of covert CCTV, to catch instances of fly tipping for example. The CCTV Operations Officer stated that cameras for covert use were large, needed to be hidden and generally only had a maximum of six weeks battery life. Such cameras cost £1,000 each, and also required regular maintenance.

There were concerns expressed that the cost of the maintenance contract had more than doubled when there had only been a 33% increase in the number of cameras. There were also concerns about the additional Trainee CCTV Officer post being requested, and it was suggested that if this post was necessary then Recommendation 3 of the report (review across all Directorates to identify any existing capacity to support the CCTV Operations Officer) was superfluous. The Portfolio Holder reminded the Cabinet that if there was an increase in the number of cameras then a request to increase the number of staff was reasonable and the additional CCTV work envisaged would require a new trainee post. However, Recommendation 3 was still relevant and the review would be undertaken before a new post was created.

The Leader of Council commented that the Council was facing a tough budget round, and that some of the requested growth bids across the Council would not be able to be agreed for inclusion in the budget for 2016/17. Therefore, it was appropriate to

review the Council's existing capacity whenever a new post was requested. The Portfolio Holder stated that possible links with Harlow and Epping Forest Colleges would be carefully considered for the trainee post, and that local ward members would be consulted before any cameras were removed.

**Decision:**

- (1) That, as attached to the report, the CCTV Strategy 2016-2022, including the associated Funding Plan, be approved;
- (2) That the CCTV General Fund Capital Budget of £40,000 per annum be re-profiled as below over the next 4 years, and that Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital be funded from the HRA, to meet the requirement of the CCTV Strategy's Funding Plan:

	<u>General Fund</u>	<u>HRA</u>
2016/17	£74,000	Nil
2017/18	£23,000	£14,000
2018/19	£13,000	Nil
2019/20	£50,000	£24,000

- (3) That in order to meet the extended workload generated through the ongoing development of CCTV provision, a review be undertaken by Officers across all Directorates to identify any existing capacity to support the workload of the CCTV Officer and Assistant;
- (4) That, subject to decision 3 above being unsuccessful, a District Development Fund growth bid in the sum of £16,140 per annum be made for three years from 2016/17 – 2018/19 to cover the appointment of a Trainee CCTV Assistant post, on a fixed term basis;
- (5) That a Continuing Services Budget growth bid in the sum of £1,000 in 2016/17 be agreed, to cover the increased costs of CCTV repairs and that future, annual budget requirements as set out in the CCTV Strategy be included in future revenue budgets over the following four years; and
- (6) That opportunities for providing a CCTV service to other Local and District Councils be explored.

**Reasons for Decision:**

The level of CCTV coverage requested by Directorates for key locations in the District had increased significantly over the last few years, but the budget held by Community Safety had not increased in line with this. The regular maintenance work undertaken under contract had kept the costs of repair to a minimum over the last few years, but the budget was now unable to accommodate the levels of expenditure required for continued growth, ongoing maintenance, equipment repairs and replacement.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

To not increase the current CCTV budget and to phase out respective systems as they failed. However, this option was discounted at the Cabinet meeting in July 2015, since this would leave those areas of the District currently covered without CCTV coverage and therefore a lack of detection in the case of vandalism or crime.

To reduce the resources required for the Funding Plan, with systems renewed beyond their expected useable life. However, this was not recommended due to the reliance placed on ensuring that systems were maintained in good working order and the importance of all systems being fit for purpose.

#### **104. EPPING FOREST MUSEUM - CAPITAL BUDGET**

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure & Community Services presented a report on the Capital Budget for the redevelopment of the Epping Forest District Museum.

The Portfolio Holder stated that, following delays with the agreement of the lease for purchase of the first floor at 37, Sun Street and a range of subsequent issues, work to extend and redevelop the District Museum facilities commenced at the end of April 2015. The planned building works programme totalled 27 weeks, with an initial, expected completion date of 27 October 2015. However, since the first week of the building contract phase, a range of other unforeseen issues had delayed the works programme, including discovery of archaeological finds in the floor of the Georgian part of the building where the lift was now situated, and additional fire protection works required due to a change of use of the second floor of 37, Sun Street. This had resulted in a longer building works programme than expected and additional cost of building works and professional fees amounting to £88,000, which was an increase of approximately 6% of the original build cost.

The Portfolio Holder reported that the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) had been approached for a contribution towards the increased costs but this was not possible as the HLF had already invested a large sum in the project. Consequently, a capital supplementary estimate in the sum of £88,000 would be sought from the Council to cover the shortfall, and this had been included in the later report on the Review of the Capital Programme.

The Cabinet acknowledged that a considerable amount of work had been undertaken to improve the facilities at the District Museum, for which a large proportion of the cost had been met by Grant funding, and therefore it was accepted that the project had gone slightly over-budget. The Finance Portfolio Holder, herself a Member for Waltham Abbey High Beach, stated that she had been impressed with the progress made on a recent tour, and felt that the Museum would be a great asset to Waltham Abbey and the District when it was completed.

#### **Decision:**

(1) That the 6% uplift in the cost of works associated with the District Museum redevelopment due to unforeseen delays, additional building works and associated professional fees be noted; and

(2) That the recommendations within the separate report on the Capital Programme in respect of the budget for this issue be noted.

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

Due to unforeseen delays and additional building works, the cost of the main contract for the Museum redevelopment had increased by 6% or £88,000.

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

None.

**105. KEY OBJECTIVES 2015/16 - QUARTER 2 PROGRESS**

The Leader of Council presented a report on the progress made during the second three months of the municipal year with the Corporate Plan Key Action Plan for 2015/16.

The Leader stated that the Corporate Plan was the Council's key strategic planning document, setting out its priorities over the five-year period from 2015/16 to 2019/20. The priorities or Corporate Aims were supported by Key Objectives, which provided a clear statement of the Council's overall intentions for these five years. The Key Objectives were delivered by an annual Action Plan, with each year building upon the progress made in previous years. The annual Action Plans contained a range of actions designed to achieve specific outcomes, to ensure the actions remain relevant and appropriate, and to identify opportunities to secure further progress or improvement. Since the Action Plan for 2015/16 was agreed by Cabinet in March 2015, five additional actions had been identified as appropriate to progress the Key Objectives during 2015/16, and these were added to the Action Plan for Quarter 2.

The Leader reported that, after the first six months of 2015/16, progress was as follows:

- 49 (89%) of the individual actions had been achieved or were on schedule to be achieved by the target date or a revised target date before the end of the year;
- 5 (9%) of the individual actions were behind schedule and might not be completed before the end of the year; and
- 1 (2%) of the individual actions were on hold as a result of external circumstances.

**Decision:**

(1) That the progress made with the achievement of the Council's Key Objectives during the second quarter of 2015/16 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 slippage or under-performance.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

None, as 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 might mean that opportunities for improvement were lost.

**106. HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION LICENSING POLICY**

The Housing Portfolio Holder presented a report on the Licensing Policy for Houses in Multiple Occupation.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the Council's existing Houses In Multiple Occupation (HMO) Policy was now several years old and pre-dated the corporate restructure in

2008 and the transfer of private sector housing functions to the former Housing Directorate. Therefore, it was now appropriate to review and update the policy to reflect how Officers in the new Communities Directorate would carry out their HMO licensing functions.

The Portfolio Holder reported that an additional condition should be added under Section 10.2 of the proposed Policy as a result of the introduction of the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations 2015. This was to ensure that a Carbon Monoxide alarm was fitted in any room used as living accommodation and which also contained a solid fuel burning combustion appliance.

The Portfolio Holder added that the Government was currently consulting with local authorities to extend the mandatory licensing of HMOs in England. If the scope of mandatory licensing was extended to other types or sizes of HMOs, then it would be necessary to review and update the Council's HMO Licensing Policy accordingly, to take into account the legislative changes. The draft revised Policy for approval by the Cabinet was attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

**Decision:**

(1) That the updated version of the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing Policy, as attached at Appendix A of the report, be approved and adopted;

(2) That the following additional condition be added under Section 10.2 of the revised Policy, 'Mandatory and Discretionary Licence Conditions', as a result of the introduction of the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations 2015:

- "Ensure that a Carbon Monoxide alarm is installed in any room in the house which is used wholly or partly as living accommodation and contains a solid fuel burning combustion appliance and provide a declaration as to its condition and location;" and

(3) That if the Government exercised its proposal to extend the mandatory licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation in England, the new Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing Policy be reviewed and updated to take into account the legislative changes.

**Reasons for Decision:**

In order to ensure that service users were fully aware of what to expect from Council Officers and could be satisfied that they would be treated fairly and proportionately.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

To not adopt a Policy. However, this course of action would leave the Council open to criticism as it could not demonstrate a fair and open approach towards its HMO licensing function.

**107. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2016/17**

The Finance Portfolio Holder presented a report on the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2016/17.

The Portfolio Holder reminded the Cabinet that, as part of the major changes to the Welfare Benefits system, Council Tax Benefit ended on 31 March 2013 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 had previously received Council Tax Benefit would continue to receive the same level of assistance they had prior to LCTS being introduced.

The Portfolio Holder reported that 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 also been involved from the beginning of the project. The project was managed by the Benefit Managers under guidance from the Essex Finance Officers Association.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the Council had approved the Epping Forest LCTS scheme for 2013/14 in December 2012, and, since that first year, the Scheme had remained unchanged. On 23 July 2015, the Cabinet had approved the general principle that the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2016/17 should aim to be cost neutral for the Council and that public consultation should be undertaken on certain elements of the Scheme. Two changes to the Scheme were proposed for consultation. The first change was the reduction in the maximum support available for people of working age from the current 80% to 75%. This would entail the amount of support being reduced by £1.15 per week for a Band B property at current rates, and would reduce the overall cost of the scheme by £204,000. The second change was the introduction of a minimum income floor for self-employed people of working age, to be set at the National Living Wage for people aged 25 or over and the National Minimum Wage for people aged under 25. Claims from self-employed people were the most difficult and time consuming to process, as many people did not have audited accounts. The introduction of a minimum income floor for self employed people would greatly reduce the administrative burden on the Council, and align the LCTS with other Government Welfare Reforms to provide a consistent approach.

The Portfolio Holder informed the Cabinet that consultation on the 2016/17 Scheme, including the two proposed changes, was undertaken between 27 August 2015 and 11 October 2015. A total of 43 responses were received, which was broadly similar to consultations in previous years, and there were not any issues highlighted to give cause for reconsideration of the two proposed changes. The Cabinet was requested to agree the amended Scheme for 2016/17, and recommend its approval to the Council.

The Portfolio Holder explained that there was no specific Government Grant for Council Tax Support anymore. The Director of Resources added Officers had assumed within the report that as the overall Revenue Support Grant to the Council was reduced then the previous Grant for Council Tax Support would have been reduced. The Portfolio Holder reminded the Cabinet that the Council had a small Exceptional Hardship Fund to assist those households experiencing exceptional difficulties in paying their Council Tax, and debt advice was also on offer from the Citizens Advice Bureau funded by the Council.

**Decision:**

- (1) That the responses received to the consultation on the scheme for 2016/17 be noted;
- (2) That the scheme be amended to reduce the maximum liability percentage for people of working age from 80% to 75%;

- (3) That a minimum income floor for self-employed people of working age be introduced into the scheme; and
- (4) That the proposed Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2016/17 be recommended to the Council for approval and adoption.

**Reasons for Decision:**

Due to reductions to Government funding, the cost to the Authority of the LCTS Scheme was increasing and, if the aim was to make the Scheme as cost neutral as possible, changes would need to be made to the Scheme for 2016/17. It was therefore proposed to reduce the maximum percentage of the Council Tax liability that was included in the calculation of LCTS entitlement for people of working age from 80% to 75%, and to implement a minimum income floor for self-employed people who declared income below the National Living/Minimum Wage. These changes would reduce the overall cost of the Scheme and align the LCTS with how income from self-employment was treated in Universal Credit.

If any changes were to be made to the current Scheme then the Council needed to approve the final Scheme at its meeting scheduled for 15 December 2015.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

If the Council did not approve any amendments to the Scheme by 31 January 2016, the existing Scheme would have to continue in 2016/17.

**108. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT - TASK & FINISH REVIEW**

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee introduced a report on a Review of Youth Engagement within the District, following which the final report of the Task & Finish Panel was presented by its Chairman.

The Chairman of the Task & Finish Panel reported that, as part of the Council's budget setting process in 2014/15, the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee had requested that Officers undertook a review of the most effective use of the Council's budget for Youth Engagement. In response, the Portfolio Holder for Leisure and Community Services submitted a proposal to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee to establish a Task & Finish Review Panel to undertake this work. This was agreed and the review was undertaken between April and September 2015.

The Chairman stated that the scope of the Review included the detailed analysis of the work undertaken by the Youth Council, Community Services and Safety Teams, and Essex County Council. Presentations were given on each area of work and supported by feedback and case studies. The Panel was very impressed with the work and commitment of the Epping Forest Youth Council and the level of communication with their peer group, which extended across their school community and the local area in which they lived. The second phase of the work focused on the youth engagement work undertaken by the Council's Community Services and Safety Teams, and the work of Essex County Council, which had a statutory responsibility for the provision of youth services. The Panel heard that external revenue funding in excess of £750,000 had been generated by the Community Services Team over the past five years to develop specific programmes for target groups. The Panel was also appraised about the Council's 'Crucial Crew' and 'Reality

Roadshow' initiatives, which provided personal safety and wellbeing advice to children and young people.

The Chairman informed the Cabinet that the final report of the Task & Finish Panel was presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 20 October 2015, and the following recommendations to the Cabinet had been agreed:

- (1) That the Council retains and continues to support and develop the Youth Council in terms of wider youth engagement;
- (2) That the Youth Council be afforded the opportunity to present a report/update twice a year to all Members of Council through a suitable meeting;
- (3) That the Youth Council acts as a consultee for stakeholder presentations at Overview and Scrutiny Committees;
- (4) That the current operational budget for the Youth Council be maintained at £12,000 per annum;
- (5) That Cabinet considers a request for Continuing Services Budget (CSB) Growth of £8,000 per annum, for an enabling fund that the Youth Council can access for projects to be agreed by the Neighbourhoods & Communities Select Committee;
- (6) That the Council pursues the devolvement of the budget and responsibilities for Youth Provision from Essex County Council to the District Council; and
- (7) That Cabinet considers a request for Continuing Services Budget (CSB) Growth of £25,000 per annum, for targeted work by Community Services and Safety and not at the detriment of the current service.

The Chairman commended the report of the Task & Finish Panel to the Cabinet and the recommendations therein.

Two other Members of the Task & Finish Panel acknowledged that the Panel was proposing small budgetary increases in relation to Youth Engagement, but if agreed then these would deliver huge positive results. The Panel had not been particularly impressed with the presentation from Essex County Council, but was very impressed with the level of support provided by the Council's own Community Services Team particularly for the issue of bullying.

The Portfolio Holder for Leisure & Community Services thanked the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for conducting the review, and the Chairman of the Panel for presenting the findings. The Portfolio Holder commented that she had also been impressed with the contributions made by the Youth Council Members. The Portfolio Holder commended Recommendations 1 to 4, and 6, to the Cabinet for approval, but felt that the budgetary pressures being experienced by the Council meant that Recommendations 5 and 7 should not be supported.

The Cabinet recognised that the Youth Council had evolved over the years and was now a strong body, and that the Community Services team had also performed highly, particularly on the issue of bullying. However, the Council was facing difficult financial times and no good justification had been given for increasing the Continuing Services Budget at the current time. There was also the belief that the County



Council would not agree to devolve both its youth responsibilities and associated budget to the District Council. One suggestion was that the funding for the Youth Council projects could be made available from the District Development Fund.

The Chairman of the Task & Finish Panel accepted that the Cabinet was unlikely to agree Recommendation 7, but urged that Recommendation 5 (the setting up of an £8,000 enabling fund for the Youth Council to access for projects agreed by the Select Committee) be agreed for the next stage of the budget setting process. It was not felt that Youth Council projects could be planned a year or more in advance. Other members of the Panel felt that to include the funding for projects within the District Development Fund would be cumbersome, and the Select Committee would provide the necessary oversight for the expenditure.

The Leader of Council acknowledged the good work performed by the Youth Council over the past few years, and that £8,000 was a very small amount in the Council's total budget. However, the Leader felt that this funding should not be included in the Continuing Services Budget, and proposed that a growth bid of £8,000 from the District Development Fund should be made instead. The Finance Portfolio Holder indicated her support for the Leader's proposal, and the Chairman of the Task & Finish Panel again urged the Cabinet to support the additional funding for Youth Council projects from the District Development Fund, with the Youth Council to present to the Cabinet to gain agreement for the funding of individual projects.

The Leader of Council called for a vote on each proposal put forward by the Task & Finish Panel.

**Decision:**

- (1) That the Youth Council be retained, supported and developed as a vehicle for wider youth engagement;
- (2) That the Youth Council be afforded the opportunity to present a report/update twice a year to all Members of Council through a suitable meeting;
- (3) That the Youth Council be a consultee for stakeholder presentations at Overview and Scrutiny Committees;
- (4) That the current operational budget for the Youth Council be maintained at £12,000 per annum; and
- (5) That a District Development Fund growth bid in the sum of £8,000 for 2016/17 be agreed, for an enabling fund that the Youth Council could access for projects, subject to the Youth Council seeking formal approval for projects from the Cabinet on each occasion with representatives of the Youth Council attending the Cabinet meeting to present their request and answer any questions from Members.

**Reasons for Decision:**

To retain and expand the services currently offered to young people within the District by the Youth Council and Community Services Team.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

To agree all of the recommendations put forward by the Task & Finish Panel. However, it was felt that the additional funding for Youth Council projects should be from the District Development Fund, not the Continuing Services Budget, and that

the County Council was unlikely to agree to devolve its statutory responsibilities, and budget, for the provision of youth services within the District to the District Council.

#### **109. CAPITAL REVIEW 2015/16 - 2019/20**

The Finance Portfolio Holder presented a report on the review of the Capital Programme for the period 2015/16 to 2019/20.

The Portfolio Holder set out the Council's Capital Programme for the five year period 2015/16 to 2019/20. This 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 2015, amended for any slippage and re-phasing approved in June 2015, as well as new schemes and allocations approved by Cabinet since then.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the allocations included in 2015/16 and 2016/17 represented approved sums for capital schemes which the Council was committed to deliver. Allocations given for the years 2017/18 to 2019/20 represented forecast sums as a guide to future capital investment and the schemes to which they related would require Cabinet approval before going ahead. The projects already approved within the Capital Programme had been reviewed and Spending Control Officers had reassessed the estimated final costs and the phasing of the expenditure profiles for each scheme as part of the Review. Recommendations had been made to make amendments as appropriate.

The Portfolio Holder reported that the Council's overall programme of capital expenditure was summarised for each Directorate in Appendix 1 of the report and showed forecast investments of £152,689,000 in Council-owned assets over the five year period under consideration. Details of individual schemes or groups of projects were detailed in Appendix 2 of the report for the General Fund Capital Programme and an analysis of works into specific categories was shown at Appendix 3 of the report for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme. Appendix 1 also disclosed the Council's forecast to finance capital loans up to a maximum of £5,298,000 and planned expenditure of £3,713,000 - which was classified as revenue expenditure but which could be financed from capital resources, over the five year period. Analyses of these figures were given in Appendices 4 and 5 of the report respectively.

The Portfolio Holder informed the Cabinet that Appendix 1 of the report also detailed the proposed sources of finance over the five-year period from 2015/16 to 2019/20, based on maximising the funding available to finance each scheme. Estimated external funding from grants and private sources of £6,150,000 was identified, and it was proposed that capital receipts of an estimated £34,087,000 and direct revenue funding of an estimated £96,463,000 be applied to finance the Capital Programme over the next five years. It was forecast that external borrowing of an estimated £25,000,000 would be necessary to support the Council's investments in new developments within the General Fund. The estimated level of capital resources available now and in the future were given in Appendix 6 of the report.

The Portfolio Holder concluded that the balance of capital receipts was expected to fall from £19,615,000 as at 1 April 2015 to £5,891,000 by 31 March 2020 and the Major Repairs Fund balance was expected to decrease from £11,154,000 to £0 by 31 March 2018, with annual contributions to be used in full each year thereafter.

A local Member for Epping Hemnall queried the figures quoted for the re-

development of the St John's Road site in Epping, as the £6million estimated cost of the scheme was more than the anticipated £5million return from the sale of the site to the Developer and this did not seem like a good financial deal for the Council. The Director of Resources reminded the Cabinet that the original deal involved a fixed sum for the sale of the site to the Developer, but then the County Council had decided that they could obtain better value by not being part of the scheme, so different ways were examined to keep the scheme alive. Ultimately, it was agreed to purchase the land owned by the County Council for a sum of £6million. The Chief Executive added that both the Town Council and the Developer had provided additional funding for the scheme, although the District Council had provided the largest amount, and it should also be remembered that the District Council would receive business rates from the scheme once it had been completed. The objective had always been to promote the right scheme to regenerate the St John's Road area of Epping.

A local Member for Chigwell Village noted that the Capital Programme was very ambitious, and advised the Cabinet that more major items should not be added for the time being.

**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 £5,891,000 at 31 March 2020 be noted;
- (3) That increased external borrowing of an estimated £25,000,000 to support the General Fund Capital Programme be noted;
- (4) That the following amendments to the Capital Programme be recommended to the Council for approval:
  - (a) a supplementary Capital estimate in the sum of £88,000 for the museum development project;
  - (b) a supplementary Capital estimate in the sum of £49,000 for planned maintenance works at the Civic Offices, previously included in the Revenue accounts;
  - (c) a supplementary Capital estimate in the sum of £12,000 for two remaining private sector housing grants; and
  - (d) a supplementary Capital estimate in the sum of £7,000 for CCTV equipment at Town Mead depot, previously included in the Revenue accounts;
- (5) That the following amendments to the Capital Programme be approved:
  - (a) carry forwards totaling £18,024,000 from 2015/16 to 2016/17 and 2017/18 in respect of the General Fund Capital schemes listed below:
    - (i) Planned Maintenance Programme £70,000;
    - (ii) Upgrade of Industrial Units £200,000;
    - (iii) General ICT £89,000;

(iv)	Langston Road Shopping Park	£16,200,000;
(v)	Oakwood Hill Depot	£200,000;
(vi)	Flood Alleviation Schemes	£31,000;
(vii)	Housing Estate Parking	£400,000;
(viii)	Purchase of Bridgeman House	£309,000;
(ix)	CCTV Systems	£124,000;
(x)	Open Market Shared Ownership Scheme	£211,000; and
(xi)	Parking Review Schemes	£190,000;

(b) a reduction of £151,000 for replacement refuse bins to be compensated by an equivalent revenue allocation and a reduction of £447,000 as a result of discontinuing the Open Market Home Ownership scheme;

(c) virements within the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account in respect of:

(i) £310,000 for increased electrical testing in Council flats from the Small Capital Repairs & Voids budget; and

(ii) £200,000 for Other Categories of Work from the Kitchen & Bathroom Replacements budget; and

(d) re-phasing of the Council Housebuilding Programme, Planned Maintenance Programme and Off-Street Parking initiative financed within the Housing Revenue Account, with carry forwards of £3,663,000 as listed below:

(i)	New House Building & Conversions	£2,395,000;
(ii)	Heating/Rewiring/Water Tanks	£100,000;
(iii)	Other Planned Maintenance	£150,000;
(iv)	Structural Schemes	£100,000;
(v)	Garages & Environmental Improvements	£685,000;
(vi)	Capital Service Enhancements	£175,000; and
(vii)	Housing DLO Vehicles	£58,000; and

(6) That the appropriation of Lindsey House from the Housing Revenue Account to the General Fund be approved.

#### Reasons for Decision:

The Capital Programme was based on decisions already approved by the Cabinet. The suggested expenditure profiles were based on Member 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 in the period up to and including 2019/20.

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

To reduce the General Fund and/or Housing Revenue Account Capital Programmes by re-considering the inclusion of some new schemes or re-assessing the inclusion of some existing schemes.

With regards to financing the General Fund and HRA Capital Programmes, there were a number of options available. The level of direct revenue funding was set at a high level in order to reduce the need for external borrowing. However, these contributions could be reduced by increasing the levels of external borrowing. This option had been rejected because the suggested revenue contributions were affordable within the General Fund and HRA, according to current predictions, and the cost of increased borrowing would ultimately result in higher net interest charges.

#### **110. TOWN AND VILLAGE CENTRES OPPORTUNITIES FUND**

The Portfolio Holder for Asset Management & Economic Development presented a report concerning the Town and Village Centres Opportunities Fund.

The Portfolio Holder reminded the Cabinet that the Council had agreed to fund a £35,000 Town Centres Fund in 2013/14, which had enabled a 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 and again in 2015/16, although at this point it was also agreed to widen out the eligibility of the fund to enable smaller centres in the District to bid for funding. In addition, it would allow Council Economic Development Officers to propose projects. 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 2016/17.

The Portfolio Holder proposed that the fund be opened to any appropriately constituted organisation within the District, such as village hall committees, local traders groups, local business groups, and local charitable organisations - subject to the need for any such bids to still address the key objectives of the scheme to enhance and promote the use of the District shopping centres. To support this extension of the scheme to encompass a wider range of properly constituted groups and organisations, it was proposed that a formal policy document be drafted setting out the full terms and conditions of the scheme and detailing the criteria for those groups that would be eligible to bid. This policy document would be submitted to the Cabinet for agreement before the start of the 2016/17 funding cycle.

Some concern was expressed about whether the smaller villages within the District would require assistance to bid for this funding, and whether an information pack should be made available to Parish Councils. The Portfolio Holder stated that both Roydon and North Weald Bassett had submitted bids for funding, with the Roydon bid being assisted by Economic Development Officers. The Portfolio Holder accepted that it was sometimes difficult to see how the Council was getting value from providing the funding, and explain how the funding was being spread across the District; however, the proposals before the Cabinet sought to spread the funding further across the District.

**Decision:**

(1) That a growth bid for District Development Funding in the sum of £35,000 for 2016/17 be approved to continue the work of the Town & Village Centres Opportunities Fund;

(2) That the fund be opened to all appropriately constituted organisations and bodies throughout Epping Forest District as well as Economic Development Officers from Epping Forest District Council, who would be allowed to bid for projects independently but also as partners in joint projects with other appropriate organisations; and

(3) That, prior to the launch of the 2016/17 Fund, a formal policy document be drafted to set out the nature and requirements of the Fund, detailing the criteria for both the eligibility of properly constituted groups and the eligibility of applications.

**Reason for Decision:**

Making these funds available for the Town Centre Partnerships, smaller District centres and other appropriately constituted organisations to bid for, encouraged them to think creatively about how they could sustainably promote their Town and Village centres and create initiatives that had a lasting impact on the shopping centre economy. By widening eligibility for participation in the scheme, these benefits could be spread to the wider economy and have an impact on the economies of smaller centres throughout the District. By encouraging District-wide initiatives the impact of this investment could be further increased to benefit other local economies elsewhere in the District.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

To not make the funds available.

To make the funds available in some other format or via a revised scheme.

**111. CALENDAR OF COUNCIL MEETINGS 2016/17**

The Portfolio Holder for Governance & Development Management presented a report concerning the Calendar of Council Meetings for 2016/17.

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. The Portfolio Holder highlighted the main change for the coming year: the scheduling of one date per month, predominantly but not exclusively, to be kept free for Member Briefings on the Local Plan. In addition, a further change was being proposed to move the Council in December 2016 from Tuesday 13th to Thursday 15th; this would provide for a two week gap between the December meetings of the Cabinet and Council, which would enable any reports to be referred up on the main agenda and not on a supplementary agenda.

The Portfolio Holder requested the Cabinet to consider the draft Calendar of Council Meetings for 2016/17, 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 2016/17 be recommended to the Council for adoption, subject to the following amendment:

(a) the Council meeting originally scheduled for 13 December 2016 be revised to 15 December 2016.

**Reasons for Decision:**

To review the proposed Calendar of Meetings for 2016/17, prior to its final adoption by the Council.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

The frequencies of individual Committees could be varied. However, in practice additional meetings were added as and when issues dictated; similarly, meetings could be cancelled if there was a lack of business.

**112. ANY OTHER BUSINESS****Decision:**

(1) That, as agreed by the Leader of Council and in accordance with Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972. Together with paragraphs (6) and (24) of the Council Procedure Rules, the following items of urgent business be considered following the publication of the agenda:

(a) Finance & Performance Management Cabinet Committee – 12 November 2015.

**113. FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT CABINET COMMITTEE - 12 NOVEMBER 2015**

The Finance Portfolio Holder presented the minutes from the recent meeting of the Finance & Performance Management Cabinet Committee, held on 12 November 2015.

The Cabinet Committee had made recommendations to the Cabinet concerning: "Invest to Save" Proposals; the funding of two Citizens Advice Bureau Debt Advisors; the Charging Plan for Housing Related Support Charges; and the proposed Fees and Charges for 2016/17. Other issues considered by the Cabinet Committee included: the results for the Key Performance Indicators during Quarter 2 of 2015/16; the mid-Year report on Treasury Management & the Prudential Indicators for 2015/16; the Annual Audit Letter for 2014/15; the Quarterly Financial Monitoring Reports; and the draft General Fund Continuing Services Budget and District Development Fund Lists and Savings Updates.

**Decision:****"Invest to Save" Proposals**

(1) That the proposal for Rental Loans and Landlord Deposits for Homeless Applicants, in the sum of £30,000 per annum for three years, be agreed, with the following conditions:

- (a) that the scheme be reviewed within the initial three year period of operation; and
  - (b) that priority within the scheme be given to Landlord Deposit Loans as these were more likely to be recovered;
- (2) That a report be submitted by the Housing Portfolio Holder to the next meeting of the Cabinet to consider whether or not:
- (a) use of the agreed budget referred to in Decision (1) above should also be allowed for the provision of rental loans to potentially homeless families with dependent children;
  - (b) the review referred to in Decision (1)(a) above should be undertaken by the Housing Select Committee; and
  - (c) loans and deposits repaid by applicants should be recycled to provide further loans and deposits to potentially homeless households;
- (3) That the proposal for the appointment of a Consultant to review the management of the Off-Street Car Parks by the North Essex Parking Partnership, in the sum of £15,000, be agreed;

#### Funding of Two Citizens Advice Bureau Debt Advisors

- (4) That an exception be made to the moratorium for 2016/17 on the HRA Service Improvements and Service Enhancements Fund and £42,000 be used from the Fund to extend the funding of the Citizens Advice Bureau's two existing Debt Advisors for a further year from 1 April 2016, subject to the following conditions:
- (a) that the Bureau's District Manager be requested to attend an appropriate meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to make a presentation on the use and outcomes of all of the Council's Grant Funding to the Citizens Advice Bureau in 2016/17; and
  - (b) that a review of the funding be undertaken in 2016;

#### Charging Plan for Housing Related Support Services

- (5) That the separate charges for the Council's Careline Service, Scheme Management Service and Intensive Housing Management Support be increased annually in accordance with the following principles:
- (a) The expected amount of reduction in Essex County Council funding for the forthcoming year should be added to the current service deficit (or subtracted from the current service surplus) - this was the total deficit/surplus to be recovered/repaid;
  - (b) The deficit for the Scheme Management Service should be recovered over a five-year period and should therefore be divided by the number of years remaining between April 2016 and April 2021 - this was the service deficit to be recovered in the forthcoming year;



- (c) Any deficit/surplus for the Careline Service should be recovered/repaid in the following year - this was the service deficit/surplus to be recovered/repaid in the forthcoming year;
- (d) The prevailing level of annual pay increases, as calculated by the Office of National Statistics (ONS), should then be applied to the total current income received from current charges and added/deducted to/from the service deficit/surplus to be recovered/repaid, in the forthcoming year - this would result in the total amount to be recovered/repaid in the forthcoming year;
- (e) The total amount to be recovered/repaid should then be spread across service users, in the same proportions as currently, as follows:
- (i) Scheme management and intensive housing management charges - Sheltered tenants and area tenants; and
  - (ii) Careline charges – Council tenants and private users;
- (f) The resultant monetary increase (but not the percentage increase) for those both in receipt and not in receipt of housing benefit should be the same; and
- (g) The methodology used to calculate the increases in accordance with the above principles should be as set out at Appendices 2 and 3 attached to the Cabinet Committee report;
- (6) That only 50% of the expected Essex County Council Housing Related Support funding reduction in 2016/17 be taken into account when calculating Housing Related Support charges for 2016/17; and
- (7) Accordingly, using the above principle and the methodology at Appendices 2 and 3 attached to the Cabinet Committee report, the Housing Related Support charges for 2016/17 be set as follows:
- (a) Careline:
    - Council tenants:
      - Self-funders* - £3.60 per week
      - In receipt of housing benefit* - £0.55 per week
    - Private users - £112 per annum
  - (b) Scheme Management:
    - Sheltered tenants:
      - Self-funders* - £8.61 per week
      - In receipt of housing benefit* - £1.57 per week
    - Area tenants:
      - Self-funders* - £2.16 per week
      - In receipt of housing benefit* - £0.39 per week
  - (c) Intensive Housing Management (not paid by those in receipt of housing benefit)

Sheltered tenants	- £1.52 per week
Area tenants	- £0.38 per week

#### Fees and Charges 2016/17

(8) That the use of Labour Inflation Rate (2.8%) as a guide for any proposed increases of the Council's fees and charges for 2016/17 be agreed;

(9) That, as set out in the Appendices attached to the Cabinet Committee report, the proposed fees and charges for 2016/17 be approved subject to the following proposed increases within the Communities Directorate for Play in the Forest and Neighbourhoods Directorate for application events:

(a)	Play in the Forest	- £3.00;
(b)	Basic food hygiene course	- £75.00;
(c)	Animal boarding	- £310.00;
(d)	Dog Breeding	- £310.00;
(e)	Pet Animals Act	- £310.00;
(f)	Dangerous wild animals	- £675.00;
(g)	Riding establishment	- £675.00; and
(h)	Zoo's	- £550.00; ;

(10) That the proposed schedule of Housing Revenue Account fees and charges for 2016/17 be approved, subject to the following amendments agreed earlier in the meeting relating to Housing Related Support Charges:

(a)	<u>Careline:</u>	
	Council tenants:	
	<i>Self-funders</i>	- £3.60 per week
	<i>In receipt of housing benefit</i>	- £0.55 per week
	Private users	- £112 per annum
(b)	<u>Scheme Management:</u>	
	Sheltered tenants:	
	<i>Self-funders</i>	- £8.61 per week
	<i>In receipt of housing benefit</i>	- £1.57 per week
	Area tenants:	
	<i>Self-funders</i>	- £2.16 per week
	<i>In receipt of housing benefit</i>	- £0.39 per week
(c)	<u>Intensive Housing Management (not paid by those in receipt of housing benefit)</u>	
	Sheltered tenants	- £1.52 per week
	Area tenants	- £0.38 per week

**Reasons for Decision:**

The Cabinet was satisfied that the Cabinet Committee had fully addressed all the relevant issues.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

The Cabinet was satisfied that the Cabinet Committee had considered all the relevant options and that there were no further options to consider.

**114. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS****Decision:**

(1) That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the items of business set out below as it would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12(A) of the Act indicated and the exemption was considered to outweigh the potential public interest in disclosing the information:

<u>Agenda Item</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Paragraph Number</u>
23	Section 106 Affordable Housing – Barnfield, Roydon	3

**115. SECTION 106 AFFORDABLE HOUSING - BARNFIELD, ROYDON**

The Housing Portfolio Holder presented a report on the provision of Section 106 Affordable Housing at Barnfield in Roydon.

The Portfolio Holder stated that the Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee, at its meeting in June 2015, considered a report that explored the options available to ensure that all 1-4-1 Receipts from Right-to-Buy sales were spent within the required three years of receipt and none were passed on to the Government, with interest. Amongst others, the option of purchasing affordable homes built on Section 106 sites was recommended and subsequently agreed by the Cabinet in July 2015, with delegated authority passed to the Director of Communities to negotiate with developers. Linden Limited, who had an option to purchase and develop a Section 106 site at Barnfield in Roydon, had been approached and negotiations had been held over the purchase of eight affordable rented homes and three shared ownership homes. The negotiated value for the affordable rented homes of £1.464million was within Policy and within existing capital resources, but it required a Cabinet decision as the sum exceeded £1million.

In response to a question, the Director of Communities informed the Cabinet that the provision of shared ownership property was a specialist activity which the Council was simply not set up for. The Portfolio Holder added that all Council properties were available to all residents across the District, and not just to residents in the locality of the development.

**Decision:**

(1) That an agreement be entered into with Linden Limited to purchase 8 affordable homes, delivered as part of a Section 106 agreement at Barnfield,

Roydon, in the sum of £1.464million, funded in part from 1-4-1 RTB receipts and the balance from existing Housing Revenue Account Capital resources;

(2) That the purchase of three shared ownership properties by B3Living, one of the Council's preferred Housing Association Partners, making up the balance of the affordable housing on the Section 106 development be noted; and

(3) That the Chairman of Council be requested to waive the call-in for this decision on the grounds that there was insufficient time to wait for the call-in period to complete before the very tight deadline set by Linden Limited to complete the agreement expired.

**Reasons for Decision:**

Although the expenditure was within policy and budget, it exceeded £1million which constituted a Key Decision and required either a Cabinet or Council decision.

**Other Options Considered and Rejected:**

To not purchase the eight affordable homes from Linden Limited. However, this would almost certainly result in the Council returning 1-4-1 Right-To-Buy receipts to the Government, with interest at 4% above the base rate.

**CHAIRMAN**