

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Asset Management and Economic Development Cabinet Committee **Date:** Thursday, 10 December 2015

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.00 - 8.57 pm

Members Present: Councillors A Grigg (Chairman), W Breare-Hall (Vice-Chairman), S Stavrou, D Stallan and G Waller

Other Councillors: Councillors K Angold-Stephens, A Boyce, G Mohindra, C Whitbread and J M Whitehouse

Apologies: H Kane

Officers Present: D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Neighbourhoods), M Warr (Economic Development Officer), J Leither (Democratic Services Officer) and G J Woodhall (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

Also in attendance: C Pasterfield (Asset Management Development Consultant), L Edwards (Colliers International), A Charalambous (White Young Green) and A Warer (Harvey Spack Field Ltd)

21. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman reminded everyone present that the meeting would be broadcast live to the internet and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

22. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Cabinet Committee noted that Councillor D Stallan substituted for Councillor H Kane.

23. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(a) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor J M Whitehouse declared a personal interest in agenda item 9, St John's Road Development by virtue of being a member of Epping Town Council and a resident of St John's Road, Epping. The Councillor had determined that his interest was non-pecuniary but would leave the meeting if the discussion became too detailed.

24. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2015 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

25. CHANGE OF ORDER

The Chairman advised the Cabinet Committee that Item 6, Epping Forest Shopping Park Monitoring Report would be moved to the end of the Agenda and be heard with Item 13, Epping Forest Shopping Park Progress Report.

26. ASSET MANAGEMENT CO-ORDINATION GROUP REPORT

The Director of Neighbourhoods presented a report to the Cabinet Committee and updated them on further progress which had been achieved since the publication of the Agenda.

(1) **Epping Forest Shopping Park** – There was a separate report before the Cabinet Committee at Agenda Items 6 and 13 which would be heard together at the end of the Agenda.

(2) **Oakwood Hill Depot** – Construction of the new depot was progressing as planned and was hoped to be completed by April 2016. There would be planting of hedges and trees along the boundary to act as a shield between the building and the residents that live close by.

(3) **Pyrles Lane Nursery** – A revised planning application has been submitted and was due to be considered by the District Development Management Committee on the 24 February 2016.

(4) **St. John's Road** – Approval of the Scheme by the Secretary of State under the 'State Aid' requirement had now been received and negotiations were on going between, Essex County Council, Frontier Estates and Epping Forest District Council.

The main issue to be resolved was an agreement of the 'anti-embarrassment' clause to protect the County Council in the event that the composition of the development was changed.

(5) **North Weald Airfield** – At the last meeting of the Cabinet Committee, on the 13 October 2015, the Council's Consultants, Savills, gave a verbal presentation of the outcome of an Expressions of Interest Exercise. The Cabinet Committee also recommended a number of key considerations to shape any further procurement exercise. In the intervening period, officers have taken further legal advice on the procurement requirements of letting a "concessionary" contract of this potential nature. Savills have submitted a fee proposal to undertake additional work, but this would require a waiver of contract standing orders and further supplementary funding. It is officers' view at this stage that the work can be progressed internally with the use of other specialist support only as required.

(6) **Winston Churchill / The Broadway, Debden** – The Housing Association, who were due to develop the affordable units to the rear of the development, have withdrawn as they deem it was no longer viable for them to undertake this project since the changes to market rents which have been announced by Central Government. A report by the Director of Communities will be going to the next meeting of the Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee on the 19 January 2016 for them to consider.

(7) **Ongar Academy** – Heads of Terms have been agreed for the sale of the playing fields to accommodate the new school, subject to planning consent being agreed and would be considered at the District Development Management Committee in early 2016.

(8) **Town Mead Depot** – As a result of the Environment Agency's advice that the site was not suitable for any form of residential development other options were still being considered for the use of this land.

(9) **Hillhouse, Leisure/Community Hub** – Funding for the Masterplanning exercise, as part of the Local Plan Budget Report was agreed by Cabinet on the 3 December 2015.

Resolved:

To note the progress on the Council's Asset Management and Development projects.

Reasons for Decisions:

To comply with the Cabinet Committee's previous request to monitor the development of the Council's property assets on a regular basis.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

None, as the monitoring report in for information, not action.

27. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TEAM PROGRESS REPORT

The Economic Development Officer (EDO) presented a report to the Cabinet Committee and updated them on a number of projects and issues being explored by the Economic Development Team.

(1) **Eastern Plateau Rural Business Funding** – Economic Development Officers have been trailing and promoting the Eastern Plateau without the ability to actively encourage applications to be submitted. Eastern Plateau have now finalised organisation and administrative arrangements with Defra and are open to receive applications from our rural businesses.

The goals of the programme are to create jobs, develop rural businesses; and support the rural economy. Outline application forms can now be issued to rural businesses interested in accessing funding to increase farm productivity; support micro and small businesses and farm diversification; boost rural tourism; provide rural services; provide cultural and heritage activities; and increase forestry productivity.

EDOs will work with Eastern Plateau to promote and publicise the scheme to our rural businesses and to ensure they are able to access the available advice and give support to complete their applications.

(2) **Town Centres** – The Economic Development Officers have been working closely with Waltham Abbey Town Partnership to submit an application to the Essex County Council Community Initiatives Fund for funding towards design consultancy support, to design a wayfinding project for Waltham Abbey town centre. The application has been successful and £20,000 has been awarded.

The first and second rounds of the Town & Village Centres Opportunities Fund had now closed and it is hoped that further bids will be received. Work had been ongoing to assist one town partnership to develop its bid for seed funding. The EDOs have been developing some outline ideas to be taken forward in the last few months of the year subject to submitting applications to the Portfolio Holder for consideration. A

number of these potential bids are focused on building capacity amongst our town centre partnerships and a deeper understanding of the issues that face the towns.

A report went to Cabinet on the 3 December 2015 to request a further £35,000 of District Development Funding for 2016/17 for the operation of the Town & Village Centres Opportunities Fund in 2016/17. This was approved to go forward as a growth bid to the DDF and will be assessed alongside other funding requests during the budgeting cycle.

(3) **Superfast Broadband** – The construction phase of the Rural Challenge Project (Phase 2b of the Superfast Essex Rollout) had now begun. The first cabinet had been built in the Bobbingworth and Bovinger area. Connections to residential properties were currently being installed and the first live customer would be connected before Christmas.

The Superfast Broadband would give coverage to just over 95% of residents in the rural areas, residents who would not be able to have the fibre broadband would be able to apply to have satellite broadband which would give them speeds of up to 20mb per second.

(4) **Local Plan / Economic Development Strategy** – EDOs recently attended a planning policy workshop on the Economic Development Strategy which was an opportunity for Members from District, Town and Parish Councils to have an input into the priorities on economic development

(5) **Visitor Economy** – Work was underway with partners looking at opportunities to better join-up and package the tourism offer across Epping Forest District, Broxbourne and East Herts. There was the potential for further collaboration with North London counterparts and joining with Harlow to the north. At the heart of this emerging work was Lee Valley Regional Park's immense visitor offer.

The Tourism and Visitor Board had confirmed that Annual Tourism Summit will be held on 4 March 2016.

(6) **Business Support** – The Economic Development Team had received a number of enquiries from individuals looking to set up in business locally and existing businesses looking to invest in the district.

BEST Growth Hub were proposing a suite of workshops for start-up and established businesses in West Essex and EDOs will be liaising to ensure these are relevant to local business need and will be promoting locally to encourage a strong take-up.

(7) **Partner Liaison** – The Economic Development team continued to liaise with, support and attend meetings with a number of Partner Organisations.

The ED team were working with Essex County Council and it had been agreed to establish meetings on a regular basis with key Members and Officers at Epping Forest District Council and Essex County Council, who are involved with economic development.

Resolved:

That the progress and work programme of the Council's Economic Development Section be noted.

Reasons for Decision:

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

Other Options Consider and Rejected:

None, as this monitoring report was for information not action.

28. PARK & RIDE DESKTOP RESEARCH REPORT

The Director of Neighbourhoods stated that the report from Essex County Council (ECC) regarding the Park & Ride Scheme at North Weald Airfield had still not been received. He advised that ECC were preparing this report on a voluntary basis and it had not been a priority as Officers were currently working on the Local Plan and the M11 Junction 7a.

The Director advised the Cabinet Committee that the Economic Development Team had prepared a report based on desktop research of schemes in Colchester and Chelmsford.

The Economic Development Officer advised that at the Asset Management Cabinet Committee meeting in October 2014 the idea of utilising North Weald Airfield for a Park and Ride Scheme to Epping was raised. It was agreed to explore the issue further with Essex County Council as the transport authority and, in particular, in relation to their experience at Chelmsford.

Contact was made with Essex County Council (ECC) and a meeting took place between officers from EFDC and ECC to discuss this. It was agreed with ECC that the outputs of work already underway as part of the Council's Local Plan work, were relevant and that they would prepare a report. However, to date, despite a number of reminders, we have not received a report on the feasibility of such a Park and Ride scheme.

Desktop research had been undertaken in order to pull together some facts around the most recently opened park and ride scheme at Cuckoo Farm, Colchester. Evidence around the impact of this scheme was limited due to the short period that had elapsed since it opened in April 2015 however, as with the Chelmsford research, a range of ECC, Colchester Borough Council and other publicly available sources have been examined in order to pull out relevant facts and observations.

Amongst the research, some of the key themes to emerge were:

- The motivating factor of the price differential between park and ride rates and town centre parking rates
- The levels of subsidy that are having to be contributed by ECC in order to maintain the service at the lower prices and thereby maintain demand
- The importance of bus priority, bus stop and signal change measures to the success of the schemes
- The provision of fast journey times and service reliability
- The scale of town centre land freed up for development by the migration of long-stay parking from the town centre to the park and ride schemes
- The aims of the schemes to relieve key congestion pinch-points

This research document was not intended to replace the proposed detailed feasibility report from Essex County Council in respect of a North Weald scheme however it was hoped that the information gathered to date was of interest and value to Members, in assessing whether there was merit in still pursuing the County Council to produce the bespoke piece of work for North Weald Airfield. This is particularly relevant as the report seems to cast doubt on the viability of North Weald Park and Ride.

Resolved:

(1) To note the attached findings of desktop research into Park and Ride schemes in Chelmsford and Colchester, and their relevance to any potential park and Ride proposal for North Weald Airfield.

(2) To decide on the basis of the further information provided, whether to still pursue the bespoke work from Essex County Council Highways.

Agreed:

Members agreed that a Park & Ride Scheme at North Weald Airfield would not be viable and that they would not pursue the report from Essex County Council.

Reasons for Decisions:

To provide the committee with some background to the park and ride schemes developed elsewhere in Essex in lieu of receiving a detailed and technical feasibility report from the County Council in respect of a potential park and ride scheme at North Weald.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To consider whether it is still worth pursuing the report from Essex County Council.

29. NORTH WEALD AIRFIELD - AIR SHOW

The Director of Neighbourhoods presented a report to the Cabinet Committee regarding an Air Show at North Weald Airfield to commemorate the anniversary of 100 years.

The Director advised that the Local Strategic Partnership Tourism Board had developed a proposal to host a Centenary Air Show at North Weald Airfield in September 2016. Specialist aviation event management advice was commissioned to undertake a feasibility study and develop a business case. Unfortunately the tragic accident at the Shoreham Air Show and the ensuing restrictions and review of display flying implemented by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), had introduced a degree of uncertainty around the management of future Air Show events. It was recognised that this would present an unacceptable risk to the Council for an Air Show in 2016. However, for future years, an event may well be feasible. It was proposed, as on previous occasions, to host a Community Day with an aviation element which would form part of the North Weald Airfield Centenary Celebrations in 2016.

The Director stated that the CAA had taken action to restrict the operation of vintage jet aircraft at overland flying displays be limited to flypast and associated positioning manoeuvres only. The CAA are still investigating the Shoreham Air Show crash and a report outlining new regulations would be due later in 2016.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Cabinet Committee positively considered the feasibility of hosting a major Air Show at North Weald to be held in 2017 and recommend to Cabinet accordingly;
- (2) That the Cabinet Committee supports the programme of activities planned to celebrate 100 years of flying at North Weald Airfield and encourage the inclusion of an aviation element in the planned Community Day event; and
- (3) That the Cabinet Committee receive an update at the next meeting outlining proposals for the Community Day event to be held in September 2016, marking the 100 year anniversary of North Weald Airfield,

Reasons for Decisions:

The Council is committed to generating additional aviation related income in order to reduce the current subsidy for flying. The hosting of an Air Show could not only achieve this objective, but also generate additional benefits for other Tourism/Day Visitor related businesses.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To discount the idea of having an Air Show at North Weald.

30. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

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

31. EPPING FOREST SHOPPING PARK MONITORING REPORT

The Director of Neighbourhoods presented a report to the Cabinet Committee regarding the monitoring for the Epping Forest Shopping Park.

The Director advised that the Cabinet have been receiving regular high level progress reports on the Epping Forest Shopping Park Project. Now that the Council has acquired sole ownership and will be investing significant resources on the construction of the Park, the Cabinet had requested that the Cabinet Committee undertake more detailed monitoring and bring any areas of concern to their attention.

Consultants from White Young Green, Colliers International and Harvey Spack Field were in attendance at the meeting. However, given that the project is dynamic and progressing at a considerable rate, the formal reports of the Consultants, would be heard in private session.

Resolved:

That the Cabinet Committee considered the reports of the Council's Project Management and Marketing/Lettings Consultants, in relation to the Epping Forest Shopping Park and recommend to Cabinet accordingly.

Reasons for Decisions:

To comply with the requirement of Cabinet to undertake more detailed monitoring of the Shopping Park Development, to mitigate risk to the Council.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

None, as the Cabinet Committee has previously agreed to the request of Cabinet and decided how this will be particularly achieved.

32. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**RESOLVED:**

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the items of business set out below on the grounds that they would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972:

| <u>Agenda Item No.</u> | <u>Subject</u> | <u>Exempt Information Paragraph Number</u> |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| 13 | Epping Forest Shopping Park Progress Report | 1 and 3 |

33. EPPING FOREST SHOPPING PARK PROGRESS REPORT

The Director of Neighbourhoods presented a report to the Cabinet Committee regarding the Epping Forest Shopping Park progress to date. The Director advised that the report would update the Cabinet Committee on progress on the retail park project as discussed at previous meetings. It also recommended the award of the Section 278 Highways contract to Walker Construction (UK) Limited.

The Director stated that due to a combination of delays relating to the tendering of the main construction contract and delays in obtaining agreed Heads of Terms with some anchor shop tenants it was not considered viable to have the shopping park completed and with sufficient tenants open to trade for Christmas 2016. Therefore Easter 2017 was now the recommended target date for the Shopping Park's launch.

Resolved:

(1) To recommend to Cabinet the tender of £2,070,029.12 from Walker Construction (UK) Ltd to carry out the Section 278 road works in Chigwell Lane relating to Epping Forest Shopping Park subject to revisions required by Essex County Highways regarding Thames Water required works, keeping a budget of £2,250,000 as approved in the Cabinet Report of 11 June 2015 to allow a contingency of £179,970.90 (8.7%).

(2) To note the marketing report from Colliers International and Harvey Spack Field regarding progressing on the leasing of units in the Epping Forest Shopping Park.

(3) To note the report on Project Management from White Young Green regarding the procurement of the main construction contract for Epping Forest Shopping Park and general progress.

(4) To note that the revised target opening date for the Shopping Park is Easter 2017 (April 16th Easter Sunday).

Reasons for Decisions:

To comply with the Cabinet Committee's previous request to monitor the development of the Council's property assets periodically and in particular report in detail on progress relating to the development of the Epping Forest Shopping Park.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To not recommend the tender from Walker Construction (UK) Ltd which would result in a delay in these works being carried out.

CHAIRMAN