

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-016-2014/15

Date of meeting: 8 September 2014



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Asset Management and Economic Development

**Subject: Phase II Resource for the Economic Development & Asset
Management Team**

Responsible Officer: Chris Pasterfield (01992 564124)

Democratic Services: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the proposed structure for the Economic Development and Asset Management Team set out at Appendix 1 to be approved;**
- (2) That two new posts of Economic Development Officer be created at Grade 8;**
- (3) That two new posts of Assistant Asset Management and Economic Development Officers be created at grade 4 - 6;**
- (4) That the posts in (3) and (4) be subject to job evaluation and the Business Manager; and**
- (5) That, in order to finance the above, a Continuing Services Budget supplementary estimate in the sum of £30,770 for 2014/15 and a growth bid in the sum of £92,310 for 2015/16 be recommended to the Council for approval.**

Executive Summary:

The Council is committed to supporting local businesses, attracting inward investment and utilising its own assets to drive economic regeneration. To ensure that these objectives are met there is a need to progress the Economic Development Strategy and the area or theme specific economic development plans which support it. This requires a dedicated team to work both within the Council and beyond utilising existing productive partnerships and seeking innovative additional ways of working/funding these aims.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

There is common consensus that the Council needs to produce an Economic Development Strategy to inform the Local Plan and support the economic aspirations of the Council. This will require dedicated permanent resource. The proposed structure will support the financial and economic aims which in turn will reduce the Council's reliance upon central government grant.

Other Options for Action:

To do nothing – the current team of a secondee, a three day a week Economic

Development Officer and a temporary assistant will not be sufficient to deliver the Council's stated aims

Some lesser resource - the extent of work to be undertaken would be compromised by a smaller or temporary external resource.

Report:

1. The top management restructure introduced an asset management and economic development team which currently is managed within the Governance Directorate – with a transfer to Neighbourhoods from April next year.
2. At Appendix 1 the proposed structure with existing posts shown shaded for context with proposed additional posts in outline.
3. As can be seen the asset management team is fully staffed on the professional side. However it is proposed to address both internal audit requirements for resilience in managing and operating the commercial rent collection and estate administration computer system and initial stages of debt recovery.
4. This can be accomplished by adding duties to the proposed Assistant Asset Management and Economic Development officers' job descriptions which will mean that should the Business Manager be absent the computer system aspect of her role is covered.
5. The two new posts would be responsible for the early stages of debt collection prior to potential reference to legal. This will assist in income recovery.
6. There is a current temporary resource at present for one of these posts (subject to job evaluation) – but the need to provide support across the team will require the two assistants as set out.
7. The economic development posts would be tasked with providing a focal point for the local business community and third parties in both public and private sectors. They would develop and implement a range of initiatives aimed at promoting sustainable economic growth. They will contribute to the formulation of an Economic Development Strategy.
8. Work already undertaken has indicated the potential for economic development. Due to the diverse nature of the District, work is being commenced on a number of towns starting with Waltham Abbey and the first draft of the plan was produced in July. Due to current resource levels only a certain amount of work can be progressed at this time. It is anticipated that these plans will be updated monthly and for Waltham Abbey there are a number of consultants' reports still awaited and consultation with local members and stakeholders will commence in September. Over time it is hoped that targets will be identified e.g. unemployment (especially youth and long term) and solutions found which will be documented in future reports.
9. A number of other studies will be undertaken in due course such as tourism, transport which will be on a District wide basis but more relevant to some areas than others (Tourism – Waltham Abbey).
10. Once evidence is gathered for different geographic and specific areas then this will be fed into an overall Strategic Economic Development Plan which will provide a cohesive structure for the District and help to form the Local Plan.

11. The Council's ability to meaningfully consult with partners / public in order to both produce and implement strategies and ensure that databases / documents comprising the Council's evidence base are relevant will be seriously diminished if the posts are not funded.

Resource Implications:

The proposed structure will require the creation of four new posts. The costs of these posts using the mid point grade ranges and including pension costs are:

Grade 4	£21,700
Grade 6	£29,630
Grade 8	£39,840

Assuming two posts at grade 4 and two at grade 8, the total cost would be £123,080.

As the posts are unlikely to be appointed before January 2015 they could be funded by a CSB Supplementary estimate of £30,770 for 2014/15 and a growth bid of £92,310 for 2015/16.

These posts will help generate growth in non domestic rates which will help mitigate some of these costs.

Legal and Governance Implications:

All recruitment will be in accordance with Council procedures.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

None.

Consultation Undertaken:

None to date but all District members Parish / Town Council members and stakeholders in due course.

Background Papers:

Organisation Chart.

Risk Management:

In the past the Council has punched above its weight by working with partners and the private sector to facilitate a number of initiatives, supporting town centres, tourism and the food industry. However, lack of resources has restricted the Council's ability to produce a co-ordinated economic development strategy to inform the Local Plan.

Reorganisations within the council have depleted the already limited resource and without sufficient capacity there is a risk that not only an Economic Plan is not developed but also that current activities will have to cease.