

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 15 December 2015

Subject: Local Plan Budget & Resources Update

Portfolio Holder: Councillor R Bassett (Planning Policy)

Recommending:

(1) That a Continuing Services Budget supplementary estimate in the sum of £25,000 for 2015/16 be approved.

1. The preparation of the Local Plan for Epping Forest District is an on-going and complex process. The level of expert evidence that is required to support the emerging Local Plan is significant. The guidance on exactly what this should cover continues to evolve in light of the National Planning Policy Framework and its associated Guidance, and emerging Inspector's Reports into other Local Plan Examinations around the country. Much of the evidence and support needed requires expert knowledge on specific topics, and therefore necessitates commissioning external consultants with the requisite expertise and experience.

2. At its meeting on 3 December 2015, the Cabinet considered an update report on the budget and resources available for the preparation of the Local Plan. This included the request for £976,390 of additional District Development Funding for the period up to and including 2018/19.

3. A restructure of the Planning Policy team to improve resilience and provide career progression opportunities was agreed by the Management Board in May 2014, and the need to increase the Continuing Services Budget to fully implement this was heralded in a report to Cabinet in July 2014 (C-010-2014/15).

4. In addition, a further growth item was included in the request for District Development Funding in future years to ensure that the Projects Officer position could be replaced from April 2016, following the retirement of the current postholder. An appointment will be sought for an initial 18 month contract, with the position being kept under review.

5. Following appointment to the newly created career grade and establishment posts, the extent of Continuing Services Budget growth is now clear. An additional £25,000 is required for the remainder of 2015/16, with a further £75,000 required from 2016/17, resulting in an overall growth of £100,000 per annum to the Policy Team Budget. Therefore, a request for a Continuing Services Budget supplementary estimate in the sum of £25,000 has been recommended by the Cabinet for approval by the Council.

6. We recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.