

# **Supplementary Committee Agenda**



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

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## **Cabinet Monday, 17th December, 2007**

**Place:** Civic Offices, High Street, Epping  
**Room:** Council Chamber  
**Time:** 7.00 pm  
**Committee Secretary:** Gary Woodhall (Democratic Services Officer)  
Email: gwoodhall@eppingforestdc.gov.uk Tel:01992-564470

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**5.a AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREA - EPPING (Pages 3 - 4)**

(Environmental Protection Portfolio Holder) To consider the attached report (C/092/2007-08).

**5.b ESSEX LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT 2 - THE EPPING FOREST STORY OF PLACE (Pages 5 - 12)**

(Leader of the Council) To consider the attached report (C/093/2007-08).

**8.a FINANCE AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT CABINET COMMITTEE - 10 DECEMBER 2007 (Pages 13 - 16)**

(Chairman of the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee) To consider the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2007 and the recommendations therein (C/094/2007-08).

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## **Report to the Cabinet**

**Report reference: C/092/2007-08.**

**Date of meeting: 17 December 2007.**



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Portfolio: Environmental Protection.**

**Subject: Air Quality Management Area – Epping.**

**Officer contact for further information: John Gilbert (01992–564062).**

**Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992–564470).**

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### **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

**That a District Development Fund Growth bid in the sum of £4,000 for 2008-09 be approved in respect of the costs associated with the declaration of an Air Quality Management Area in Epping.**

### **Report:**

1. The Council has for many years routinely monitored air quality throughout the District. This is undertaken through the use of nitrogen dioxide diffusion tubes, which are situated at some 40 locations. The air quality within the district is generally satisfactory, although there are one or two areas of concern. The National Air Quality Objectives (NAQO) state that nitrogen dioxide should not exceed a yearly average of 40ug/m<sup>3</sup> (approx. 21 parts per billion)
2. Recent analyses from Epping identified an area where the NAQO had not been met and this required the Council to declare the area as an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). A Portfolio Holder Decision undertook this declaration on 17 October 2007 (Decision reference EP/003/2007-08).
3. Declaring an AQMA means that the Council has to consider what action is required to reduce nitrogen dioxide and to undertake additional monitoring in the AQMA itself and other potential locations in the vicinity of the AQMA. This will require additional funding from the District Development Fund estimated at £4,000.

### **Statement in Support of Recommended Action:**

4. The declaration of the AQMA was a statutory requirement as is the subsequent monitoring and management plan. The £4,000 funding request is being put forward as a DDF bid at this time since it is uncertain whether any further expenditure will arise following the additional monitoring

### **Other Options for Action:**

5. The only alternative is not to follow the AQMA declaration with relevant additional monitoring and action planning. Given the statutory nature of this process, this cannot be recommended.

### **Consultation Undertaken:**

6. Consultation within the area affected by the AQMA will be undertaken as part of the AQMA process. No further consultation is required as part of this bid for additional funding.

**Resource Implications:**

**Budget Provision:** £4,000 DDF.

**Personnel:** Nil.

**Land:** Nil.

**Council Plan 2006-10/BVPP Reference:** "Green & Unique".

**Relevant Statutory Powers:** The Environment Act 1995.

**Background Papers:** Portfolio Holder Decision EP/003/2007-08 dated 17 October 2007.

**Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications:** Further monitoring of AQMA and local environs to assess air quality and to prepare a management plan.

**Key Decision Reference (if required):** Not a Key Decision.

## **Report to the Cabinet**

**Report reference: C/093/2007-08.**

**Date of meeting: 17 December 2007.**



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Portfolio: Leader.**

**Subject: Essex Local Area Agreement 2 – The Epping Forest Story of Place.**

**Officer contact for further information: Derek Macnab (01992-564000).**

**Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992-564470).**

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### **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

- (1) To consider and comment accordingly on the draft Story of Place for the District of Epping Forest, as requested by the Essex Partnership, to assist in the development of the Essex Local Area Agreement 2, and**
- (2) To note the action taken in submitting the draft to the County Council to comply with the deadline set by that Authority.**

### **Introduction:**

1. In October 2007 the District Council received correspondence from the County Council's Head of Community Planning and Regeneration, with respect to the Essex Local Area Agreement 2. Contained with this communication, which was also circulated to the Chairman of the Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership and Director of West Essex PCT, was a request to develop a "Story of Place", for the Epping Forest District. This report details how this has been dealt with and seeks the Cabinet's endorsement.

### **Report:**

2. The Essex Partnership (the countywide Local Strategic Partnership) have expressed a desire to ensure that the revised Essex Community Strategy and new Local Area Agreement 2 (LAA 2), properly reflect the diversity of the County and take into account local priorities.

3. In addition to building up a picture from locally adopted Community Strategies, is the notion of "telling the story of place". This concept is being promoted by Central Government, though their guidance note, "Negotiating New Local Area Agreements". In essence, the Government defines "the story of place" in general terms, as a sustainable community strategy that "sets out where the area has come from, where it is at, and where it wants to be, with social, economic and environmental considerations addressed in a "joined up way". The advice goes on to say that the whole Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) should be involved in developing the story of place, to include districts, third sector and countrywide public sector bodies.

4. With this consideration in mind all leads of the Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership Sub Groups were provided with a series of prompts, and a request to submit a contribution on behalf of their theme. Similarly, the Council's Management Board was asked to contribute. In order to achieve a consistency of presentation, the Council's Public Relations Manager was tasked with bringing together the disparate contributions and writing the draft Story of Place, in a style that our local community could relate to. The Steering Group of the LSP has commented upon the draft, and it is hoped to achieve formal endorsement by the main LSP Board on the 20 December.

5. Unfortunately, because of the tight timescale set by the County for submission, in advance of the countywide partnership forum on the LAA 2, attended by the Leader, Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder and Chief Executive, on the 10 December, it was not possible to have sign-off by the Cabinet. As such the Cabinet and LSP Board have submitted the draft Story of Place on the clear understanding that it may well change as a result of formal consideration. The draft is attached at Appendix 1 for consideration and comment.

**Statement in Support of Recommended Action:**

6. The development of a "Story of Place" is an integral part of the LAA 2 process, in which the Council has been invited to participate. Irrespective of whether the local "Story of Place" had any fundamental bearing on the "Essex Story of Place" the document is a useful joint visioning tool in the development of the new Sustainable Community Strategy, and could form the basis of any future local LAA.

**Other Options for Action:**

7. It would have been possible to decline to respond to the request to develop the "Story of Place".

**Consultation undertaken:**

8. Local Strategic Partnership Steering Group, Management Board, West Essex PCT, EFDC Forward Planning.

**Resource implications:**

**Budget provision:** - The new LAA 2 will influence funding priorities at a County level and may contain opportunities for Performance Reward Grant.

**Personnel:** Nil.

**Land:** Nil.

**Council Plan 2006-10/BVPP reference:** N/A.

**Relevant statutory powers:** Community Wellbeing Act 2000, with respect to the Council's County Leadership role.

**Background papers:** Letter from Essex County Council's Head of Planning and Regeneration dated 11 October 2007. Contribution from LSP Steering Group.

**Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications:** N/A.

**Key Decision reference (if required):** Not a Key Decision.

## **The District of Epping Forest – Story of Place**

### **Introduction**

'Story of Place' is part of Epping Forest District's contribution towards the Local Area Agreement for Essex. It describes the District from an objective perspective. The framework draws on the main headings of our Local Strategic Partnership Community Strategy (plus Children and Young People) incorporated within the themes published in the November 07 briefing paper provided by Essex County Council. In this approach we seek to create clear links between the issues identified by the LSP and the broader strategic issues dealt with under the LAA.

This response is based in large part on consultation carried out with partners on the LSP. The LAA themes identified by Essex County Council are wide-ranging. Categorising our local headings within the LAA must therefore carry a degree of flexibility. The narrative on Children and Young People in particular covers very broad themes and is therefore explicitly included twice below.

We face a series of challenges. Pressure for development, welfare and education of our young people, crime and fear of crime, traffic congestion and the general stress of 21<sup>st</sup> century life are at the top of our agenda. We look forward to the challenges and to change but always within the perspective of protecting and conserving all that is best in our District.

### **1. Protect and Enhance the Natural Environment for Prosperity**

- Green and Unique

Our District takes its name and much of its character from Epping Forest. Most of the 131 square miles of our District are green and rural. The Forest is administered by the City of London Corporation. It is an area of protected wildlife habitats and ancient woodland managed on behalf of residents and visitors. Much of our western boundary is formed along the line of the Lee Valley Regional Park, a green corridor stretching into the heart of London. We are entirely within the Metropolitan Green Belt. Horticulture and farming feature heavily in land use.

Approximately half of our 122,900 residents live in a very small and congested area comprising around 5.2 percent of the District close to our boundary with London. The main conurbation comprises Grange Hill, Chigwell, Buckhurst Hill and Loughton. Our other main population centre is Waltham Abbey which borders London and Hertfordshire.

Most of the rest of our population lives in a mixture of market towns such as Epping and Chipping Ongar, large villages such as Sheering, Theydon Bois and Nazeing or in small rural hamlets such as the Lavers.

Our District's long history has left its mark. We have outstanding historic buildings of many kinds. Waltham Abbey and Greensted Church, The Kings Head at Chigwell and the Royal Gunpowder Mills are among the best-known examples. We have many Grade I and Grade II listed buildings and extensive building conservation areas.

Pressure for development has always been intense. However, the demand for more sustainable homes, jobs and leisure has never been greater. The East of England Plan proposes an additional new 3,500 houses to be built by 2021 plus an estimated 3,000 more where the boundaries of Harlow might expand into what is currently Epping Forest District.

Balancing the needs of an increased population against the desire to protect and conserve the predominantly rural nature of the District presents a major challenge. The District currently suffers from inadequate infrastructure and services. Epping Forest is already the most polluted Site of Special Scientific Interest in the UK. Without careful planning at a local level and major regional investment, the fragile eco-systems of the forest and beyond that provide the green lung for Epping Forest District, London and other areas will be placed at serious risk.

## **2. Supportive Communities**

- Homes and Neighbourhoods

Each of the towns, villages and hamlets of Epping Forest District has its own unique identity and personality. We do not have a single homogenous population. Many of our residents moved from or are the descendents of people who moved out from the East End of London in search of a better life. We also have a large and well-integrated Jewish community and many people of Italian extraction.

Epping Forest District has a reputation for great affluence. In part this is true but the affluence has a tendency to mask the existence of areas of deep social deprivation. Four wards in Loughton, Waltham Abbey and Ongar are among the ten most deprived in Essex. Serious social deprivation and associated instances of poor private sector housing are also to be found 'pepper-potted' across the District in urban and rural areas. For those on the lowest incomes, fuel poverty and affordable warmth is a significant additional factor to other deprivation issues.

More than four fifths of housing is in private ownership, rented, mortgaged or owned outright. Levels of demand have contributed to high prices and a lack of affordable housing beyond the means of many people on average and low incomes. The Council's Housing Waiting List has in the region of 3,500 applicants. Despite the environmental concerns, there is a widely perceived need for substantial provision of more new affordable housing.

Historically, many of our communities have been small and isolated. Communication and access to services is a cause of increasing concern (see below). There is also fear that the social fabric that binds people together in mutual support is being eroded. Where the local church, post office and pub once provided much of the social foundation of rural life, these are now disappearing. The latest announcement of post office closures has been met with particular anxiety. The young, old and vulnerable are becoming increasingly isolated. There is increasing reliance on stretched voluntary services for support.

- Getting About

In Epping Forest opportunity and access is inextricably linked to the ability to get about.



The District is criss-crossed by the M11 and M25 motorways. It is the only District in Essex to enjoy the benefits of London Underground services. British Rail services touch the District briefly in Roydon but are also accessible to many of our residents via stations such as Harlow, Broxbourne and Chingford.

Travelling to and from work in London is part of the daily routine for thousands of resident commuters. For people travelling further, Stansted is just 20 to 30 minutes away. However, despite rail and road links, many people struggle to travel in and around our District.

High levels of car ownership are a sign of economic prosperity, but this in turn means a higher level of unsustainable traffic growth. Rail networks tend to allow easy travel to and from the district but not around it. Making bus services more attractive is key although in the rural areas it has to be acknowledged that where the traditional bus is not sustainable, using community transport and the voluntary sector may be the only viable alternative. People living without daily access to a car can be very isolated which can lead to restrictions in terms of work, health, education and leisure opportunities.

Elderly and young people, those groups with least access to the car, are particularly badly affected.

However, even easy access to a car can feel like a mixed blessing. Traffic congestion is a major problem with half the population of the District living in such a small area so close to London and many other people travelling through on a daily basis. This places pressure on road conditions from which there is a requirement to ensure adequate investment is secured. Parking is also a major problem as residents, shoppers, commuters and workers all battle for somewhere to leave their cars.

### **3. Fulfil Potential in Education, Work and Leisure**

- Economic Prosperity

Without doubt, Epping Forest District is an area of high prosperity. Unemployment is low and many residents enjoy a very high standard of living. For some people the 'Premier League' dream really does exist. Some of country's top footballers live in the District along with club owners and managers as well.

Many residents take advantage of the employment opportunities available in London. The local economy has also developed as companies such as Higgins, Keir, Clinton Cards and Sainsbury's have grown or moved in. These have replaced older employers such as Royal Ordnance (now gone), The Royal Gunpowder Mills (reinvented as a centre for heritage and tourism) and the Bank of England Printing Works, which was once the most important employer in the District.

Horticulture and farming continue to play a role but tourism and leisure is growing. The historic town of Waltham Abbey including the Abbey, Royal Gunpowder Mills and Lee Valley Regional Park, Epping Forest, North Weald Airfield and many pretty towns and villages are a draw to people from London and further afield. The scope for development of tourism has been further enhanced by the successful London Olympic bid. The District stands at the motorway gateway to Stratford and within a short distance of both the mountain bike and white water canoe events.

While much of the workforce is highly skilled and flexible, this can mask higher levels of unemployment in parts of the District, notably the socially deprived areas of

Loughton and Waltham Abbey. Demand for housing also requires sustainable local provision of jobs and services, placing more stress on a District already struggling to protect its fragile green areas.

- Life-Long Learning

Life-long learning begins before school and continues into old age. However, to maintain a motivated and skilled workforce it is essential that a good educational foundation is continually built upon and developed. Residents of Epping Forest District are generally highly skilled but as referred to above, pockets of social deprivation can be linked to poor educational opportunities. Lack of suitable public transport may also limit access.

- Children and Young People

Primary school education is perceived to be of a generally high standard though out Epping Forest District. However, the picture becomes more mixed at secondary and further education levels.

While moving in the right direction, three of the District's six state secondary schools have experienced periods of poor performance and special measures in recent years. Two others have performed well while one has achieved outstanding good results. Successful schools are heavily oversubscribed, a situation made worse in the south of the District where children from outside the District take up a large proportion of annual admissions. The local college of further education also takes the majority of its admissions from outside the District.

There is no secondary school provision within the District north of Epping. Many children are forced to travel large distances to school outside the District, motivated by the desire to attend a high performing school or simply because no place is available locally. For those parents able to afford it, they may pay thousands of pounds in annual travel costs. Poorer parents face real dilemmas in trying to find the best possible educational opportunities for their children.

The provision of secondary school education is perhaps one of the most controversial issues in Epping Forest. Nevertheless, there is a general feeling that greater confidence in local education is required and that some young people suffer from lack of opportunity due to current standards of school provision.

#### **4. Safe and Healthy**

- Children and Young People

Access to educational opportunity goes hand in hand with other issues facing children and young people in Epping Forest District. Substance abuse and life style issues such as sexual health can be linked to educational opportunities and attainment. Poor housing and social deprivation can also be linked.

Young people are prone to becoming victims of crime. Widely reported instances of street violence have occurred due to organised groups of young people travelling into the District from London via the Central Line.

- Safer Communities

In comparison with many other places, the District of Epping Forest is a safe place to live and work. However, crime is a cause of local concern. Fear of crime can be almost as debilitating for vulnerable groups within the community, particularly the very oldest and youngest generations.

Anti-social Behaviour and Dispersal Orders (mostly associated with young people) have been utilised. Essex Police is stretched and the demand for officers created by the influx of teenagers from outside the District can be hard to meet.

### **Fit For Life**

There are health inequalities between wards in Epping Forest and overall improvement in access to services is needed for the District to keep up with the improvement in health that is going on in the rest of the country.

Life Expectancy varies depending on where you live in Epping Forest District. Analysis of trends shows that for men, life expectancy is not increasing as fast as the national rate and there is a 10-year difference in life expectancy between the highest (80-86 years) and the lowest wards. (between 70 and 75 years)

All dimensions of deprivation (health, education, housing, access to services, isolation and barriers to opportunity) impact significantly on the health of the local population and although Epping Forest is considered to be relatively affluent there are nevertheless pockets of deprivation which are the focus of attention for health improvement activity.

Lifestyle factors (smoking, diet, exercise, levels of alcohol / substance misuse and people's sense of well being) also play a key role in both quality of life and life expectancy, the young, vulnerable and elderly being the most likely to suffer disproportionately.

Peoples' health and well being in Epping Forest is not only affected by how but also where they live. Transport impacts on 3 key areas of peoples' lives ie road casualties, access to services and social interaction.

The rate of people of all ages killed or severely injured in road traffic accidents in Epping Forest has been showing a steady decrease but still remains the highest in West Essex and consistently above the East of England and National average.

Although Epping Forest has a smoking prevalence of between 22% and 27%, which is below the Essex average, among 15- 17yr olds the prevalence is 27%, which is second highest across West Essex.

With respect to obesity, the national average for is 22.1% and whilst Epping Forest has only 3 wards that are above this, there is a 10% difference in obesity rates across the District.

Epping Forest adults compare favourably with the national average for adults participating in 30 minutes of exercise at least 3 days a week but attention needs to be paid to the exercise opportunities for young people who may not have the freedom or means to access physical activity programmes etc especially in the holidays.

## **Conclusion**

The District of Epping Forest is an area of contrasts. It is a green and open land of fields, hedgerows and woodland but parts of it suffer from heavy levels of congestion and pollution. It has good communications and transport links in and out but is difficult to get around. Access to many services can be very difficult if you do not have a car. Young people are at a particular disadvantage compared to friends in other districts or boroughs. Housing is at a premium and more affordable homes are needed.

However, sustainable homes also means infrastructure including employment, roads, sewers, shops, health, education and a wealth of other facilities. That needs to be balanced against the needs of fragile eco-systems we are committed to protecting and preserving. Our District is wealthy and healthy but we have some of the poorest areas of deprivation in Essex.

We are not one community but several but it is in our people that we are strongest and we look forward to the challenges of the future.

**EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL  
COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**Committee:** Finance and Performance **Date:** 10 December 2007  
Management Cabinet Committee

**Place:** Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, **Time:** 6.30 - 7.15 pm  
High Street, Epping

**Members Present:** C Whitbread (Chairman), M Cohen, Mrs D Collins, Mrs A Grigg and D Stallan

**Other Councillors:** D Jacobs

**Apologies:** Mrs M Sartin

**Officers Present:** P Haywood (Chief Executive), D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive), I Willett (Assistant to the Chief Executive), R Palmer (Director of Finance and ICT), J Boreham (Assistant Public Relations and Information Officer), G J Woodhall (Democratic Services Officer), S Mitchell (PR Website Editor) and S G Hill (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

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**33. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION**

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

**34. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2007 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct.

**36. PROVISIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT 2008-09 TO 2010-11**

The Chairman had determined, in accordance with Section 100(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 and paragraphs (6) and (24) of the Council's Procedure Rules, that a report concerning the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2008-09 to 2010-11 could be considered as urgent business due to its effect upon the Draft General Fund Budget to be considered later in the meeting.

The Director of Finance and ICT reported that the Department of Communities and Local Government had announced the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for the period 2008-09 to 2010-11 on Thursday 6 December 2007. The 'four block' system that had been introduced for the 2006-07 settlement had remained in place, however the model had been reviewed and the grants that had previously been paid separately for Waste Performance and Efficiency, Contaminated Land, New Conduct Regime, and Stray Dog Control were now included in the overall settlement. This had resulted in the Council's formula grant for 2007-08 being restated to £9,229,386. The provisional Formula Grants had given grant increases of only 1% (against the adjusted figure), 0.5% and 0.5% for the three years of the settlement, which had represented a poor settlement for the Council in comparison to the 9% and 6.2% increases granted in the preceding two years. The settlements were also below that which had been forecast for the next four years, resulting in a deficit in excess of £500,000 against the forecasted grant for 2010-11.

The Director of Finance and ICT advised that the total amount of finance available to the Council for 2008-09, assuming a 2.5% increase in the Council Tax, would now be £17.009million. The current estimated Continuing Services Budget expenditure for 2008-09 was £16.503million, which was within the agreed budget guideline of £17.314million. However, as the budget guideline now exceeded the funding available, the Cabinet Committee had been advised to consider a reduction in the guideline to £16.8million. It was agreed that the effects of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement would be considered when the draft General Fund Budget was considered later in the meeting.

The Director of Finance and ICT explained that the Floor Damping Block ensured a minimum grant increase for all authorities. However, with the Council's floor support reducing to £36,000 by 2010-11, it would in real terms be effectively removed. The fluctuations in the Council's Formula Grant had been difficult to comprehend, and required the re-issue of the Medium-Term Financial Forecast. The Cabinet Committee was disappointed that the continual changing of the formula by the Government made financial planning for the future by the Council extremely difficult.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the details of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for the period 2008-09 to 2010-11 be noted; and
- (2) That the effects of the Settlement upon the Draft General Fund Budget for 2008-09 be considered under item 7 of the agenda.

**37. NATIONAL FRAUD INITIATIVE - SUPPLY OF ELECTORAL REGISTER**

The Electoral Registration Officer presented a report concerning the request by the Audit Commission for the Council to supply a copy of the Electoral Register as part of the National Fraud Initiative. The Cabinet Committee was informed that the Audit Commission had requested an electronic copy of the electoral register from each District Council as part of the National Fraud Initiative. The intention was to crosscheck those persons claiming Council Tax discounts or Housing Benefit in order to identify any possible cases of fraud. The request was presented to Councils as pertaining to information that the Commission was entitled to under the Audit Commission Act 1998. However, the request had provoked considerable controversy. Many Councils had complied with the request but a number had not, supported by the Association of Electoral Administrators and the legal opinions of numerous Monitoring Officers due to the possible conflict with the Representation of the People Regulations 2001. Other issues had also arisen, including:

- (i) the need to give Council Tax payers notice under the fair processing rules;
- (ii) possible conflicts with the Data Protection and Human Rights Acts;
- (iii) electors who had specified that their personal data should not appear in the published register; and
- (iv) the position of the Council as custodian of the register rather than the Electoral Registration Officer to whom the request had been addressed.

The Electoral Registration Officer added that the Corporate Governance Group had considered the issue at its meeting held on 3 October 2007, where reservations had been expressed about the legal basis under which the register was to be supplied to the Audit Commission. The Corporate Governance Group agreed to refuse the request and the Chief Internal Auditor wrote a letter dated 15 October 2007 to the Audit Commission explaining the Council's position. The Cabinet Committee was reassured that the Council was participating fully in all other aspects of the National Fraud Initiative and remained committed to anti-fraud measures.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) That the response of the Corporate Governance Group, the Electoral Registration Officer and the Monitoring Officer to not supply the details of the electoral Register to the data matching National Fraud Initiative of the Audit Commission be noted; and
- (2) That the Corporate Governance Group be requested to review the situation and report back to the Cabinet Committee when necessary.

**38. DRAFT GENERAL FUND BUDGET SUMMARY**

The Director of Finance and ICT presented a report regarding the Draft General Fund Budget Summary, including the Continuing Services Budget (CSB) and District Development Fund (DDF) lists. The Cabinet Committee were informed that the current CSB growth list revealed net savings of £171,000 for 2008-09, to give a total budgeted expenditure of £16.5million. As the ceiling for the CSB had previously been set at £17.314million, the draft budget was currently within the Council's limit. Following the small increase in the Formula Grant for the Council announced by the Government last week, as considered earlier in the meeting, it had been recommended that the current CSB ceiling of £17.314million be reduced to £16.8million. Even with this proposed reduction, it was felt that the CSB target for 2008-09 should still be achieved.

The Director of Finance and ICT reported that the current DDF budget had estimated expenditure of £822,000. The ceiling for DDF expenditure for 2008-09 had been set at £186,000 with an estimated net DDF expenditure for 2007-08 of £1,679million. However, the DDF programme had been reviewed and a number of items had now been re-profiled, with an estimated reduction in expenditure for 2007-08 of £701,000. Thus, DDF expenditure for 2008-09 could not be contained within the original target of £186,000, and it was proposed to amend the target for 2008-09 to net DDF expenditure of not greater than £1million.

The Director of Finance and ICT advised the Cabinet Committee that the previous budget guideline of aligning balances to the Council's net budget requirement, and that balances should not be permitted to fall lower than 25% of this requirement

should remain, along with target of increasing the District Council Tax by no more than the rate of increase of the Retail Price Index. The Cabinet Committee were requested to recommend that the items listed in the CSB and DDF schedules be included in the revenue budgets for 2008-09, subject to any additional late growth bids or further savings being necessary.

In response to questions from the Cabinet Committee, the Director of Finance and ICT highlighted that the additional investment income earned by the Council had been prudently split such that £312,000 had been allocated to the DDF budget, with only £102,000 allocated to the CSB budget. The Cabinet Committee were also informed that the Council had invested funds in Northern Rock, however all but one of the term deals had matured and the payments had been honoured. The Cabinet Committee were reassured that Butlers, the Council's Treasury Management advisors, used three separate credit rating agencies when advising the Council upon how to maximise its investment income without putting funds at risk.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- (1) That the previously agreed budget guidelines be amended as follows:
  - (a) the ceiling for Continuing Services Budget net expenditure for 2008-09 be no more than £16.8million, including net growth;
  - (b) the ceiling for District Development Fund net expenditure for 2008-09 be no more than £1million;
  - (c) balances be aligned to the Council's net budget requirement and be allowed to fall no lower than 25% of the net budget requirement; and
  - (d) the District Council Tax be increased by no more than the rate of increase in the Retail Price Index; and
- (2) That, subject to any additional late growth bids or further savings being necessary, the items listed in the CSB and DDF schedules reported to the Cabinet Committee be included in the revenue budgets for 2008-09.

**CHAIRMAN**