

Supplementary Council Agenda



Epping Forest District Council

Council Tuesday, 29th March, 2011

Place: Civic Offices, High Street, Epping
Room: Council Chamber
Time: 7.30 pm
Committee Secretary: Council Secretary: Ian Willett
Tel: 01992 564243 Email: iwillett@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

6. REPORTS FROM THE LEADER, CHAIRMAN OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AND MEMBERS OF THE CABINET (Pages 3 - 12)

To receive reports from the Leader, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and members of the Cabinet on matters falling within their area of responsibility:

- (a) Report of the Leader;
- (b) Report of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
- (c) Report of Environment Portfolio Holder;
- (d) Report of Finance and Economic Development Portfolio Holder - attached;
- (e) Report of Housing Portfolio Holder;
- (f) Report of Legal and Estates Portfolio Holder;
- (g) Report of Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder - attached;
- (h) Report of Operational Planning and Transport Portfolio Holder - attached;
- (i) Report of Performance Management Portfolio Holder - attached;
- (j) Report of the Safer and Greener Portfolio Holder - attached.

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Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 29 March 2011

Subject: Finance and Economic Development Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Councillor C Whitbread

Item: 6(d)

Recommending:

That the report of the Finance & Economic Development Portfolio

Holder be noted

Accountancy

There are some key issues where we are still waiting for final confirmation from the Department for Communities and Local Government. It is anticipated that the amount of New Homes Bonus we are to receive in 2011/12 will be confirmed during April. However, the amount of debt that the Council will be required to take on as part of the reform of the Housing Revenue Account, and the effect this will have on the General Fund, is unlikely to be confirmed until the Autumn.

The recent meetings of the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel and the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee were updated on the probable outturn for 2010/11. When the original estimates for 2010/11 were revised it was anticipated that the planned use of reserves would reduce from £544,000 to £309,000 and the outturn should be in line with this figure.

Benefits

The performance data for the third quarter was reported to the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel on 10 March. Despite increases in caseload and the number of documents being processed performance has continued to improve. New claims are now being processed on average in 23.45 days. This is an improvement of more than 10 days against last year's figure of 34.81 days and is inside the target of 25 days. Changes of circumstance are now being processed in 8.92 days and this continues the improving trend from the first quarter of 10.67 days and the second quarter of 9.39 days. The target of processing changes in an average of 8 days should be achieved before the year end.

Revenues

Collecting local taxes remains an extremely challenging activity. At the end of the third quarter 77.94% of Council Tax had been collected. This is slightly behind the quarter three figure for last year of 78.44% but it is still anticipated that the target for the 2010/11 of 97.8% will be achieved. Conversely, Non-Domestic Rate collection is slightly ahead of last year's third quarter performance (81.64% v 81.25%). However, it is likely that performance for the year will fall slightly short of the target of 98%.

Sickness Absence

This is a subject that is more usually commented on by the Performance Management Portfolio Holder but, in view of the report presented to the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel on 10 March, I felt it appropriate to highlight the figures for the Directorate of Finance and ICT. The figures at the end of the third quarter show a reduction in average absence for the Council as a whole from 6.19 days in 2009/10 to 5.84 days in 2010/11. Within these overall figures the Directorate of Finance and ICT has the lowest level of sickness of the five service directorates with an average of only 3.75 days absence.

North Weald Airfield

The Halcrow report was considered by the North Weald Airfield and Asset Management Cabinet Committee at its meeting held on the 22nd. I will provide Members with an update of the outcome of that meeting and any recommendations put forward for Cabinet to consider at its meeting on the 18th of April.

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 29 March 2011

Subject: Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Brian Rolfe

Item: 6(g)

Recommending:

That the report of the Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder be noted

Community Services

Limes Farm Hall Re-development: At its meeting on March 7th, Cabinet agreed to approve the award of Building Contract for Limes Farm Hall re-development to Beardwell Construction Ltd. of Grays, Essex. Five companies from within Essex tendered for the building contract, but the Beardwell tender was successful in winning the tender on the basis of cheapest price whilst complying with the specified quality criteria required for the work. Beardwell will take over the site at Limes Farm, Chigwell in late March and have a 24 week completion timeframe for the building works, which will result in a completely refurbished and extended community building. The new building will offer a range of new services to local residents of Limes Farm and the locality, including Benefits advice and Primary Care Services, new offices for Housing Services and improved provision of Children's Centre and extended schools activity.

Essex Book Festival – 15th March: World renowned Journalist and News Presenter Peter Sissons, presented a talk on his 45 years in journalism with readings from his recent autobiography, as part of the 2011 Essex Book Festival, hosted by Epping Forest Arts at St Mary's Church, Loughton. The talk was given to an audience of 160 local people and included the Chairman of Council, Cllr Anne Grigg. The festival, now in its 12th year, aims to encourage readers to widen their reading choices. Epping Forest Arts is a partner of the festival which presents 5 events in the district each year.

Motiv8 – 5th and 6th April: Over 200 local children and young people aged 6 to 20 years will be performing to an audience of over 500 at Motiv8, Epping Forest Arts annual youth and community dance showcase which will be taking place at Epping Forest College on 5th and 6th April. Motiv8 is a partnership project with Epping Forest College and has been integrated as a practical learning opportunity within the curriculum for students; EFC students, working to a brief provided by Epping Forest Arts, designed the publicity and marketing materials, technical theatre students will be providing the technical support during the performance, and dance students will be performing a piece created specially for Motiv8.

Active Health: Now in its third year of development, the Active Health programme which is funded by Big Lottery through Age Concern continues to be a hugely

successful health improvement programme for older people. The programme which is unique in that it is provided across Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford has seen a range of innovative projects established across the three areas, including Lifewalks; seated exercise classes; Wii Fitness sessions and a range of allotments located at Sheltered Housing accommodation. The funding for the project comes to an end in March 2012 and the Project Officer David Hogg, is now working very hard to ensure the long term sustainability of the activities that have been introduced, through providing training; supporting groups to become formally constituted and enabling them to secure funding for equipment and further provision of sessions.

Museum Service: Following the success in securing a further year's funding from Renaissance in the Regions for the Assistant Exhibitions post, the Museum will be able to continue with provision of a Touring Exhibitions programme during 2011/12. This will see the production of a range of exhibitions that will initially be on display at the Museum in Sun Street, Waltham Abbey and then will be toured across venues in Essex and in the East Region. The Museum will also be looking at opportunities to tour these displays further afield, with the aim of establishing a new income stream.

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet **Date:** 29 March 2011
Subject: Operational Planning & Transport
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Syd Stavrou **Item:** 6(h)

Recommending:

The report of the Operational Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder be noted

Parking

The second meeting of the shadow board for the North Essex Parking Partnership took place on the 16th of March in Colchester. I was able to confirm that we had decided to join the Partnership and looked forward to working with other Council colleagues to deliver a cost effective parking enforcement service.

Epping Parking Review is progressing in line with the published programme. All the responses received during the December 2010/January 2011 public consultations have been compared with the public responses received in the earlier consultation to ensure that, as much as possible, residents' views and comments are incorporated. As promised I have shared the recommendations made by County Officers with Ward Members. I have agreed to recommend implementation of changes where there was a clear preference by residents. In instances when there was no clear consensus among residents I have consulted with the Ward Members and asked for their advice.

Local Highways Panel

The Local Highways Panel met again on the 24th of March and I will provide Members with a verbal update of anything significant arising from it

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Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Subject: Performance Management Portfolio

Date: 29 March 2011

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Richard Bassett

Item: 6(i)

Recommending:

That the report of the Performance Management Portfolio Holder be noted.

Key Performance Indicators Q3 2010/11 – Progress Report

The aim of the KPIs is to focus improvement on the Key Objectives and achieve comparable performance with that of other local authorities. Improvement plans are produced for each of the KPIs each year, setting out actions to be implemented in order to achieve or maintain target performance, and to reflect year on year changes in service delivery.

As at the end of the third quarter of the year (1 April to 31 December 2010), 21 (67.74%) of the KPIs for 2011/12 had achieved the performance target for the year. Although it is not yet known whether the Council's overall aim of achieving target performance for at least 70% of the KPIs for 2010/11 will be achieved we are hopeful as many of the indicators that did not make their target are fairly close and a good Q4 could enable us to make our target performance.

At the recent Performance Scrutiny meeting a new Key Performance Indicator was suggested for 2011/12, LPI45, to report the level of planning appeals allowed against the refusal of all types of planning applications, where member decisions to refuse applications were made contrary to a recommendation of the Director of Planning and Economic Development. A great deal of discussion occurred on what this indicator was trying to achieve. It was agreed that the definition of this indicator as stated was not suitable and further work needs to be made to better define what should be measured and then what any targets should be.

Risk Management Register

At the recent Finance and Performance Cabinet Committee the corporate risk register was reviewed. The Risk Management Group and the Corporate Governance Group considered and agreed three new risks for the Corporate Risk Register. These are:

- 1. The Reform of the Housing Revenue Account** - Where the Council is likely to have to take on approximately £200m of debt when the current system ends. Financial modeling shows this level of debt can be managed. However variables in the model may change and the government may increase the level of debt. Accounting arrangements may impact on General Fund.
- 2. Changes to the Benefit system** - The government is undertaking a major reform of the welfare system this is likely to have serious impacts on the Council, benefit claimants and staff.

- 3. Budget reductions for future years** - The medium term financial strategy requires CSB reductions of £2.5m. The largest single saving is the £1.3m required in 2012/13.

Sickness Absence

The Council's annual target for sickness absence under LPI28 is an average of 8 days per employee (2 days per quarter). The quarter outturn figures for 2010/2011 are Q1 = 1.88 days, Q2 = 1.81 days and Q3 = 2.15 days. Whilst there was an increase in Q3 the Council is currently below the accumulated target figure of 6 days.

I am naturally disappointed that there has been a rise in sickness in Q3. However we are still below our accumulated target and we can hope that we will make the yearend target. In reviewing the figures for the reasons for illness I see that Infections/Colds and Flu for Q3 jumped significantly from an average of 192 days for Q1/2 to 404 days for Q3. I know there were several nasty bugs going round and we seem to have suffered. Also in area which have lots of contact with the public I would assume the risk of infection would be high. I am also interested in sickness reported during the bad weather period in December and if a person could not get in to work was it classified as a "sick" day or allowed absence?

During Q3, 4.9% staff met the trigger level of 5days absence or above, 29.9% had sickness absence but did not meet the triggers and 65.2% had no absence. I shall be reviewing this with management to see if there is anything further we can do to reduce these numbers.

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 29 March 2011

Subject: Safer and Greener Portfolio

Item: 6(j)

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Penny Smith

Recommending:

That the report of the Safer and Greener Portfolio Holder be noted

Scrutiny

The last meeting of the Safer, Cleaner, Greener Scrutiny Panel was held at St Mary's Church in Loughton, looking at issues around licensing and the night time economy. Members who attended found it very informative but I was disappointed that so few of the local community chose to come along and find out about what the Police, the Council and other agencies are doing. I have asked officers to look again at how we can better engage with local communities and encourage their attendance at such meetings.

Anti social behaviour

We are in the process of considering the implications on the proposed new legislation to replace ASBOs and the many other specific pieces of legislation intended to tackle anti-social behaviour. The proposed new legislation is intended to streamline current anti-social behaviour laws and reduce them to four new offences replacing the existing legislation. The proposals will also include a community trigger to force partners to take action against anti-social behaviour complaints when nothing has been done. This is likely to be introduced in 2013 and until that time current legislative powers will remain.

Awards

Epping Forest SCP were very successful at the High Sheriff's Awards last week organised by Essex Community Foundation with funding awarded to Voluntary Action Epping Forest towards work books for workbooks for every child attending Crucial Crew. Other organisations recognised were Safe and Sound, our home safety Scheme, Voluntary Action Mow n Grow, Home Start Epping Forest and Loughton Youth Project (LYP) who were the worthy winners of the Essex Police Cup

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