CABINET
Tuesday, 22nd December, 2020

You are invited to attend the next meeting of **Cabinet**, which will be held at:

Virtual Meeting on Zoom
on **Tuesday, 22nd December, 2020**
at **7.00 pm** .

G. Blakemore
Chief Executive

Democratic Services Officer

A. Hendry (Democratic Services)
Tel: (01992) 564246 Email: democraticservices@eppingforestdc.gov.uk

Members:

Councillors C Whitbread (Leader of the Council & Leader of the Conservative Group) (Chairman), , N Avey, N Bedford, A Patel, J Philip, S Kane and H Whitbread

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PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS TO ATTEND

1. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

1. This virtual meeting is to be webcast. Members are reminded of the need to unmute before speaking.

2. The Chairman will read the following announcement:

"I would like to remind everyone present that this meeting will be broadcast live to the internet (or filmed) and will be capable of repeated viewing (or another use by such third parties).

Please also be aware that if technical difficulties interrupt the meeting that cannot be overcome, I may need to adjourn the meeting."

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To be announced at the meeting.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To declare interests in any item on this agenda.

4. MINUTES (Pages 5 - 14)

To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 16 November 2020.

5. REPORTS OF PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

To receive oral reports from Portfolio Holders on current issues concerning their Portfolios, which are not covered elsewhere on this agenda.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE CABINET

To receive any questions submitted by members of the public and any requests to address the Cabinet.

(a) Public Questions

To answer questions asked by members of the public after notice in accordance with the provisions contained within Part 4 of the Constitution (Council Rules, Rule Q3) on any matter in relation to which the Cabinet has powers or duties or which affects the District.

(b) Requests to Address the Cabinet

Any member of the public or a representative of another organisation may address the Cabinet on any agenda item (except those dealt with in private session as exempt or confidential business) due to be considered at the meeting, in accordance with the provisions contained within Article 7 of the Constitution (The Executive, Paragraphs 27 and 28).

7. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

To consider any matters of concern to the Cabinet arising from the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function and to identify any matters that the Cabinet would like the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to examine as part of its work programme.

8. DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS 2021/22 (Pages 15 - 26)

Finance and Economic Development – (C051-2020-21) - this is the draft budget proposals for the 2021/22 budget cycle.

Detailed proposals to be published separately nearer the time of the Cabinet meeting.

9. TELECARE PROVISION (Pages 27 - 38)

Housing and Community Services – (C053-2020-21) - to provide an update on Essex County Council's procurement activity in respect of this service and the subsequent impact on EFDC's telecare provision.

10. POST COVID PROJECTS, WALTHAM ABBEY TOWN CENTRE, WALTHAM ABBEY TOWN CENTRE HUB (Pages 39 - 42)

Leader – (C-052a-2020-21) – summary paper with recommendations for all Waltham Abbey and Town Centre reports included on this agenda.

11. TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION - GENERAL REPORT (Pages 43 - 52)

Leader – (C-052b-2020-21) – to provide an overview and update for Cabinet on work carried out to date on town centre regeneration.

12. WALTHAM ABBEY TOWN CENTRE (Pages 53 - 96)

Leader – (C-052c-2020-21) – to consider part of the Council's Covid Economic Recovery Programme, which has been designed to help support and improve economic viability of Town Centre's across the district.

13. WALTHAM ABBEY COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL HUB (Pages 97 - 130)

Leader – (C-052d-2020-21) – to seek Cabinet approval to continue dialogue with Essex County Council in respect of a potential Service Level Agreement (SLA) and to enable officers to progress discussions with appropriate parties.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, together with paragraphs 6 and 24 of the Council Procedure Rules contained in the Constitution requires that the permission of the Chairman be obtained, after prior notice to the Chief Executive, before urgent business not specified in the agenda (including a supplementary agenda of which the statutory period of notice has been given) may be transacted.

In accordance with Operational Standing Order 6 (non-executive bodies), any item raised by a non-member shall require the support of a member of the Committee concerned and the Chairman of that Committee. Two weeks' notice of non-urgent items is required.

15. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Exclusion

To consider whether, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press should be excluded from the meeting for the items of business set out below on grounds that they will involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the following paragraph(s) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended) or are confidential under Section 100(A)(2):

Agenda Item No	Subject	Exempt Information Paragraph Number
Nil	Nil	Nil

The Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, which came into effect on 1 March 2006, requires the Council to consider whether maintaining the exemption listed above outweighs the potential public interest in disclosing the information. Any member who considers that this test should be applied to any currently exempted matter on this agenda should contact the proper officer at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.

Background Papers

Article 17 of the Constitution (Access to Information) define background papers as being documents relating to the subject matter of the report which in the Proper Officer's opinion:

(a) disclose any facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the report is based; and

(b) have been relied on to a material extent in preparing the report and does not include published works or those which disclose exempt or confidential information and in respect of executive reports, the advice of any political advisor.

The Council will make available for public inspection one copy of each of the documents on the list of background papers for four years after the date of the meeting. Inspection of background papers can be arranged by contacting either the Responsible Officer or the Democratic Services Officer for the particular item.

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL
CABINET MINUTES

Committee:	Cabinet	**Date:**	16 November 2020
Place:	Virtual Meeting on Zoom	**Time:**	7.00 - 8.15 pm

Members Present: C Whitbread (Chairman), N Avey, N Bedford, A Patel, J Philip, S Kane and H Whitbread

Other Councillors: R Baldwin, P Bolton, L Burrows, S Heap, H Kauffman, A Lion, C McCredie, R Morgan, S Murray, S Neville, C C Pond, C P Pond, M Sartin, J Share-Bernia, D Stocker, D Sunger, B Vaz, J H Whitehouse, J M Whitehouse and D Wixley

Apologies:

Officers Present: G Blakemore (Chief Executive), N Dawe (Chief Operating Officer), S Jevans (Strategic Director), A Small (Strategic Director Corporate and 151 Officer), D Fenton (Service Director (Housing Revenue Account)), P Maginnis (Service Director (Corporate Services)), C Hartgrove (Interim Chief Finance Officer), A Marx (Development Manager Service Manager (Planning)), K Pabani (Chief Estates Officer), T Carne (Corporate Communications Team Manager), A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer), V Messenger (Democratic Services Officer) and S Mitchell (PR Website Editor)

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77. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Leader of Council made a short address to remind everyone present that the meeting would be broadcast live to the internet, and would be capable of repeated viewing, which could infringe their human and data protection rights.

78. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

79. MINUTES

Decision:

The Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 19 October 2020 be taken as read and would be signed by the Leader as a correct record.

80. REPORTS OF PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

The Customer and Corporate Support Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor S Kane noted the government had introduced new grants to support businesses through Covid. These grants were to be administered by Local Authorities. There were three schemes; the first was a local restrictions support grant (closed) to support businesses that had to close under the national restrictions. The second was the local restrictions support grant (open) to support businesses that could remain open but were severely impacted by the restrictions. Thirdly, was the additional restrictions

grant, for businesses that remained open, was severely impacted, but did not qualify elsewhere. This was discretionary scheme, details of which were still being worked through with the County Council. The first two scheme's application forms were available on our website.

81. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE CABINET

The Cabinet noted that no public questions or requests to address the Cabinet had been received for consideration at the meeting.

82. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee reported that they had not had a meeting since the last Cabinet meeting. However, they would be having one in a couple of days' time, when they would have John McGill, Director of the Innovation Corridor, and Dr Ann Limb, Chairman of the Innovation Corridor to speak about the Innovation Corridor, formerly the London-Stansted-Cambridge Consortium.

83. COUNCIL HOUSEBUILDING CABINET COMMITTEE - 8TH SEPTEMBER 2020

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community noted that she wished to defer item 12 of the agenda "new policy- disposal of HRA assets", so that it could be taken to the Communities Select Committee for consideration before it came back to Cabinet. This was agreed.

On the Cabinet Housebuilding Cabinet Committee minutes, Councillor Neville asked about the parking allocations policy, referring to all new developments to have allocated parking, was that true and if so, from what stage. The Director, HRA Functions, D Fenton replied that in terms of taking the council housebuilding programme forward, they were committee to being more collaborative and liaising more. They will be asking the public what their needs were in the local area. Any application either with or without car parking would have to go through planning. They are also committed to making the best use of what they have, while meeting the needs of the residents.

Councillor Morgan asked about the Matching Green application that had been refused permission because of lack of parking. Had any progress been made on this site. D Fenton said that would contact Councillor Morgan directly on this matter.

Decision:

That the minutes of the Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee held on 08th September 2020 be noted.

84. INCOME RECOVERY STRATEGY AND POLICY

The Housing and Communities Portfolio Holder introduced the income recovery strategy and policy report. The Income Recovery Strategy and Policy was required to give direction to the Income Recovery Service, conveying clear and consistent messages about the service ethos to staff, tenants and other stakeholders.

The Income Recovery Strategy and Policy drew upon the previous Strategy on Rent Arrears which was considered and endorsed by the Council's Housing Scrutiny Panel on 21st October 2014 and approved by the Housing Portfolio Holder in November 2014.

The overall aim of the Income Recovery Strategy and Income Recovery Policy was to focus on prevention, allowing the Council to maximise rent collection, minimise tenant debt and enable tenants to maintain their tenancy wherever possible.

This strategy exceeded the obligations under the pre-action protocol, as the Council was now taking a holistic view and focusing on a one to one approach. This had been piloted during the Covid 19 period, and had been very successful in identifying those people who needed help, whilst driving down rent arrears.

Councillor Wixley asked about the visits undertaken by council staff, were they still going on through the pandemic and were we still identifying safeguarding issues. He was told that visits were still being undertaken before this current lockdown happened. Visits have been stopped during this lockdown period but will restart again after. Officer also picked up on tenancy issues and safeguarding issues. Also the council will shortly be starting its own tenancy audit and would hopefully visit every tenant.

Decision:

The Cabinet agreed to the adoption and implementation of the updated Income Recovery Strategy and the Income Recovery Policy which set out Epping Forest District Council's approach to the maximisation of income and recovery of rent arrears ensuring compliance with current legislation and recognised best practice.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

The prevention and effective management of rent arrears is critical in terms of maximising the resources available to the Housing Revenue Account, so that the Council can maintain and continue to improve existing council stock, fund the development of new stock and continue to provide good quality service to customers. This Income Recovery Strategy had been formulated in consultation with representatives of the Epping Forest District Tenants and Leaseholders.

Other Options for Action:

Not to updated the Income Recovery Strategy and Policy.

85. THE MORE THAN BRICKS AND MORTAR ESTATE IMPROVEMENT SCHEME - EFDC CREATING GREAT PLACES WHERE PEOPLE WANT TO LIVE

The Housing and Community Services portfolio Holder introduced the report on the Estate Improvement Scheme. It was noted that the More than Bricks and Mortar Estate Improvement Scheme, signalled a new way of thinking about, talking about and making decisions about the Council's HRA housing estates.

The aim of the scheme was to work with residents on a range of estate projects aimed at improving their look, feel and lived experience, with focus on the communal living environment.

The report explained how the Council might work with residents to better understand specific estate needs and aspirations, thereafter, creating resident centred "wish lists" of estate improvements from which tailored estate improvement plans may be

agreed. Where funding was required to realise specific projects, the report set out the proposed mechanism for approval.

Whilst this scheme was about giving choice to residents, enabling them to shape their own communities, the Council had a duty to protect its assets and safeguard the health and safety of the residents; as such residents would be given guiding principles to work within when proposing any upgrades to their estates.

Councillor Neville welcomed this approach and asked if any areas in Buckhurst Hill had been identified as yet. He was told that they wanted to hear from all voices in all the estates. When they would be looking at the Buckhurst Hill area, they would speak to Councillor Neville.

Councillor Murray said that it was good to have joint consultations and asked for member involvement.

Councillor Chris Pond put in a special word for the Oakwood Hill estate and asked if the Council would adopt a holistic approach to the improvement plan. he was told that officers were looking to have a far reaching holistic approach.

Councillor Jon Whitehouse asked about timescales on reporting back on all six estates and where did sheltered housing estates fit in here, would they be included in the package or were they to be treated separately. He was told that the six estates mentioned would be looked at in the first year. As for sheltered housing, they would carry out a separate survey.

Councillor Wixley noted that there was one resident group missing from the list in the report and that was the Debden Tenants Panel; he was not aware that they had broken up. The Portfolio Holder said that they would check to see if they still existed and if so contact them.

Decision:

(1) The Cabinet agreed the principles of the More than Bricks and Mortar Estate Improvement Scheme ~ Creating Great Places where People want to Live.

(2) That in the first instance, the Cabinet agreed to pilot the scheme on Council Housing Revenue Account (HRA) housing estates who enjoyed fully constituted residents' groups.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To develop a scheme that delivers a programme of estate enhancements on HRA housing estates, in partnership with residents, and which supports the Council's ambition to create great estates where people want to live.

Other Options for Action:

(1) To agree a different set of principles.

(2) Not to restrict the pilot to only HRA housing estates with fully constituted residents' groups.

86. FITNESS FOR HUMAN HABITATION ACT 2018 - OBLIGATIONS

The Housing and Community Portfolio Holder introduced the report the Council's obligations under the Human Habitation Act 2018.

The Fitness for Human Habitation Act 2018 came into place in 2019. This resulted in a large change for Local Authorities with retained stock. Until the change, enforcement action around non-compliance with the Housing Health and Safety (England) Regulations 2005 (HSSR) was not applicable to Local Authorities, because the Local Authority would not serve Notices on itself.

The Act served to overcome this and enable Tenants to seek redress themselves for breach of contract through the court.

The paper set out the reasons and benefits for introducing a 5-year bin store replacement programme. Specifically, the details of the Act and the potential risks of not meeting the requirements of the legislation.

As well as the community health benefits of living in a clean, safe environment, the Council had signed up to the Climate Emergency. As such the Council needed to be working towards becoming carbon neutral. In addition, there was the environmental cost of not providing adequate facilities for disposing of rubbish. The costs for removing excess rubbish last year was £39K. In addition to this there was the cost for pest removal, and fly tipping. This also had an overall detrimental impact on local areas as individuals begin to lose the sense of being proud of the area they lived in.

Councillor Avey thought it was an excellent idea as there had been some issues of collections from estates. Councillor Philip was glad to it will be financed by the HRA and was within budget.

Councillor Bedford added that it would make sense to ensure the new bin stores were built from fire retardant materials.

Decision:

(1) The Cabinet adopted the 5-year bin store replacement programme, to meet the Council's requirements under the Fitness for Human Habitation Act 2018. Funded from the HRA

(2) The Cabinet noted the improvements to the Council's estates and the opportunity for increasing the Council's recycling, thus supporting the climate emergency.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

This report sets out our requirements under the Fitness for Human Habitation Act 2018 and recommendations to meet the requirements of the legislation.

Other Options for Action:

Not to adopt the 5-year improvement plan. This may leave the Council in breach of the legislation and subject to possible legal challenges from residents.

87. NEW POLICY - DISPOSAL OF HRA ASSETS

This report was withdrawn so that the Stronger Communities Select Committee could scrutinise and comment on it before it came back to the Cabinet for a decision

88. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND SCENE SETTING

The Finance and Economic Development Portfolio Holder introduced the report on the medium term financial plan.

The preparation of a Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) provided the cornerstone on which the Council could build and deliver services in accordance with their aims and objectives.

This was the first iteration of the MTFP within the 2021/22 budget cycle. It was a forward-looking document which provided a tentative look at the Council's financial picture over the next five years (2021/22 through to 2025/26) and set the scene by providing a framework for developing the 2021/22 General Fund budget. Through the early consideration of the core issues it allowed budget development activity to be focused over the next two months on refining assumptions and developing options.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Epping Forest District Council had a huge impact on both operations and finances, with major losses being experienced on a number of income streams ranging from core funding sources such as Council Tax and Business Rates through to fees and charges from Leisure Centres, Car Parking, Building Control, Planning and Licensing. The 2020/21 financial year had so far borne the brunt of the financial pressure, with the position being alleviated – to an extent – by emergency financial support from the Government. However, at the time of preparing this MTFP, it appears inevitable that the financial effects would continue well into 2021/22 and beyond and, in some cases, income streams may never recover to pre-pandemic levels. The Portfolio Holder noted that they were looking at a deficit of at least £2.1 million for next year, after the assumption of getting £1million from the Government and using £1million from our reserves.

Against this backdrop – where uncertainty reigns, and the country enters a second 'lockdown' – it was extremely challenging to prepare a robust budget for 2021/22.

Councillor Heap asked about various aspects of the report; he questioned the paragraph on miscellaneous income and the assumption of a stable income stream of £2.9 million assumed from 2021/22 from Qualis. Could this be fleshed out. He then questioned the assumed 3% pay award and asked what individual fees would have to go up. And finally, there was no mention of the need to repay £33 million to the public works loan board. The Portfolio Holder replied that the miscellaneous income would be picked up in the Qualis Business plan to go to the next cabinet meeting. As for the employees cost in terms of the annual pay award. The indications were that it would be at 3%, but we do not know this for sure as yet. There were no indications yet as to which fees were going up or which would be capped. And as for the repayments, he assumed these were the HRA ones, this report was looking at the general fund.

Councillor Bedford noted that if the NJC award came out at 3%, we would wholeheartedly support it as staff have worked very hard over the last few months. But this was only a guesstimate.

Councillor C Whitbread added that there were many unknowns and we have just gone through some very difficult months. But we were in a good position when we started. The Finance Portfolio Holder reminded the meeting that the accounts still

had to be signed off. The council had done its work on this and we were now waiting for the auditors to do their bit.

Decision:

(1) The Cabinet noted the contents of the report, including Appendix A (Medium-Term Financial Plan 2021/22 to 2025/26); and

(2) The Cabinet discussed and agreed any actions required, including the assumptions included in the MTFP and the potential options for addressing the underlying budget deficit in order to set a balanced budget for 2021/22.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To set a framework within which the Council can develop and set its Budget for 2021/22 and update its Medium-Term Financial Strategy through to 2025/26, ensuring that financial sustainability was maintained in the light of the shock caused by Covid-19.

Options for Action:

None at this time.

89. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was noted that there was no other urgent business for consideration by the Cabinet.

90. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

That, in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the items of business set out below as they would involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12(A) of the Act indicated, and the exemption was considered to outweigh the potential public interest in disclosing the information:

Agenda Item	Subject	Paragraph Number
16	Project Brief - Kickstart	3
17	Proposed Letting of Land at NWA to the HMRC	3

91. PROJECT BRIEF - KICKSTART

The Customer & Corporate Support Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor S Kane introduced the report on the Kickstart scheme.

The Cabinet noted that the Kickstart Scheme provided funding to employers to create job placements for 16 – 24-year olds on Universal Credit who were at risk of long-term unemployment. Employers of all sizes could apply for funding under the Scheme which covered:

- 100% of the National Minimum Wage (or the National Living Wage depending on the age of the participant) for 25 hours per week for a total of 6 months;
- associated employer National Insurance contributions;
- employer minimum automatic enrolment contributions;

Employers could spread the start date of the job placements up until the end of December 2021.

Each job placement needed to help the young person become more employable.

The scheme was supported by the Housing and Community Services Portfolio Holder who said that it was an exciting scheme with a really good website.

It was noted that the funding came from part of the Covid budget for use during the emergency and for development after, and there was also some government funding they could try to access.

Councillor Wixley asked about the difference between the national minimum wage and the national living wage. The officer said that she would find out.

Decision:

The Cabinet considered and agreed:

(a) That the Council provide 8 – 10 Kickstart placements as an employer;
(b) Officers continue to work towards a West Essex Partnership to deliver the Scheme and become a Kickstart Gateway; and
(c) To progress the purchase of a support platform to support the Kickstart Scheme and other initiatives.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To progress the work to implement the Kickstart Scheme for the District's young adults, preferably as a West Essex Partnership.

Other Options for Action:

Officers believe members would wish the Council to be involved in the Scheme either in Partnership or on its own merits and therefore there are no other options for consideration.

92. PROPOSED LETTING OF LAND AT NW AIRFIELD TO THE DEPT. OF HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Commercial and Regulatory Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor A Patel introduced the report on the proposed letting of land at North Weald Airfield.

The Council had been approached to extend the lease granted last year for the provision of an HMRC custom clearance facility for vehicle freight at North Weald Airfield for a further five years, i.e. until November 2025.

In granting any extension to the lease, due account needed to be taken of the impact of this facility on the airfield, North Weald Basset Village and the surrounding area,

including the trunk road and national road networks. The potential impact of the facility on the environment in general and Epping Forest in particular.

It also needed to be recognised the HMRC facility at North Weal Airfield forms part of the national infrastructure that would facilitate trade with the European Union post 1st January 2021 until custom clearance at source comes fully on-line.

It was noted that all upgrades would be paid for by the tenant and that it would be kept by us after their vacation of the premises.

Councillor Philip welcomed the work that had been put into this and he was keen to see that the proposals worked. If the monitoring proposals were kept, then it was something that we should welcome.

Councillor Bedford also welcomed the report and noted that the Council had liaised with the local council and HMRC. Councillor C Whitbread added that it was a way to look after the local residents as well as addressing their concerns. Councillor Murray agreed with the report but added that we must also listen carefully to the Parish Council. Councillor Patel replied that there would be monthly meetings of all the parties concerned as well as weekly local meetings with the Parish Council.

Councillor Jon Whitehouse noted that this was a less temporary arrangement than it was originally. There was the question of off-site issues such as porta-loos etc. for the drivers. Mr Pabani (Chief Estates Officer) said that officers had raised a number of issues with HMRC but they said that it was outside of their premises, but it was still an issue non-the-less. The best way to deal with this was by way of a legal side letter. This was being prepared to send to HMRC. Councillor C Whitbread added that the members of the Cabinet would like sight of this when it was available.

Asked if any SAC contributions would be going to the Council or Qualis it was noted that the Council would be getting this.

Concerns had been raised about site workers driving through the forest and this was being raised with the planning inspector. Lorries would come in via the motorways.

Councillor Baldwin wondered what implications there would be with the Local Plan; and, what facilities would be left by the HMRC. He was told that any upgrades made would be kept and would be of benefit to the airfield. Councillor Bedford added that the contract had been designed so that HMRC had to restore the site to original. There would only be temporary structures. They would widen the gates and restore some of the roads and put in high speed broadband. This was part of the Local Plan and also the Masterplanning area.

Councillor Kaufman was concerned about the number of lorry movements and wondered what would happen if we were swamped over time. Did we have a safety valve to stop lorries blocking the roads. Would it become an overnight parking area for lorries, and should we put in charges for these lorries? This needed some fine tuning.

Councillor Patel thanked the councillors for their input and would pass on their comments to the Council's solicitors. He added an extra sentence to recommendation 4 about a side letter and this was agreed by the Cabinet.

Decision:

1. The Cabinet recognised that the proposal to extend the provision of an HMRC facility for a further five years formed part of the national preparations for the full exit from the European Union;

2. The Cabinet noted the overall concerns raised by the Council in its planning response, following discussions with North Weald Basset Parish Council and issues raised by other individuals;

3. The Cabinet agreed to set up a monthly monitoring meeting between HMRC, the Council and the Parish, (in addition to the day to day operational meetings with the North Weald Airfield Management); and

4. As a consequence of the national interest, the formal raising of concerns and the suggestion of a close local monitoring of the facility and its operation, the Cabinet agreed to the approval of a new lease of land at North Weald Airfield (NWA) to the Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government for a Common Transit Convention System facility and to grant delegated authority for such lease and any required side letter to the Chief Executive of the Council in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

Officers had recommended that the Council extend the leasing this land to the HMRC as in the short term it would generate additional rental income and in the medium to long term would facilitate the future development of this section of NWA by setting a precedent and by providing the installation of facilities and infrastructure at zero cost to EFDC.

Other Options for Action:

Refuse to progress negotiations with HMRC and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

CHAIRMAN

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: ***C-051-2020/21***
Date of meeting: **22 December 2020**

Epping Forest District Council

Portfolio: **Finance and Economic Development – Cllr J. Philip**

Subject: **Draft Budget Proposals 2021/22**

Responsible Officer: **Andrew Small** **(07548 145665).**

Democratic Services: **Adrian Hendry** **(01992 564246).**

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) To consider the attached draft budget proposals and suggest amendments considered necessary; and

(2) To request the Stronger Council Select Committee to consider the draft budget proposals, and the emerging Medium-Term Financial Plan, and make comments to Cabinet for their consideration.

1. Executive Summary

1.1. The attached report sets out for Cabinet's consideration, draft Budget proposals for 2021/22, for the Council's General Fund. The proposals have been developed within the framework set by the Medium-Term Term Financial Plan (MTFP) adopted by Cabinet on 16th November 2020.

1.2. Emerging draft proposals for the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2021/22 are also presented for consideration, following the recent completion of a review of the latest HRA position against the Council's adopted 30-Year Business Plan.

1.3. If approved by Cabinet, subject to any proposed amendments, the report will proceed for consideration by the Stronger Council Select Committee on 19th January 2021, before returning to Cabinet. Once Cabinet has considered the views of the Stronger Council Select Committee, and the budget has been updated for the latest developments, the final Budget proposals and an updated MTFP will be submitted to Council in February.

1.4. The Budget development process is exceptional this year, in that Covid-19 is having, and will continue to have, a huge impact on many areas of the Council's income and expenditure. The impact, and continued uncertainty, is expected to continue into 2021/22 – at least during the early months – as the vaccine is rolled out, with the expected resumption of 'normality' later in 2021. This is making the preparation of robust budgets exceptionally challenging, which has meant many significant assumptions have had to be made at this stage.

1.5. As information continues to emerge, which helps to clarify these uncertainties, officers will continue to refine the base budget assumptions. However, this is not happening fast enough to resolve the budget in a manner consistent with the publication timetable for Epping Forest District Council's democratic meetings.

1.6. This means that the budget is less well developed than would normally be expected, and publication deadlines are being squeezed in order to get greater certainty, to ensure a reasonable trade-off between refinement and the need for meaningful scrutiny.

1.7. Like the environment in which it is being set, the budget development process also needs to be dynamic this year in order to produce the most robust result for 2021/22, and to provide the Council with a budget which it can safely operate within.

1.8. Consequentially, in order to provide a few more days to develop the draft budget, the draft budget paper will be issued as a Supplementary paper ahead of the Cabinet meeting. Even then, it is anticipated that higher number of amendments and refinements than usual are likely to be made in February 2021 when Cabinet reconsiders its draft proposals in the light of the views of the Stronger Council Select Committee.

1.9. To ensure that the Stronger Council Select Committee has the best available information, the Committee will be updated on national and local changes which are likely to affect the budget proposals at its meeting on 19th January 2021.

2. Resource Implications

2.1. A wide range of financial implications are covered in the report, with the emphasis on how the Council can continue to fund its current net expenditure commitments, and deliver on its corporate priorities, within the anticipated level of financial resources available in 2021/22, whilst maintaining financial sustainability over the longer term.

3. Legal and Governance Implications

3.1. The Council has a legal duty under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to set a balanced budget. This report highlights a potential budget deficit that needs to be eliminated prior to setting the 2021/22 budget in February 2021.

4. Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications

4.1. None.

5. Consultation Undertaken

5.1. None.

Draft Budget Proposals 2021/22 (General Fund)

1. Introduction and Background

1.1 The updated Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2021/22 to 2025/26 – which set the framework for developing draft 2021/22 budget proposals for the General Fund – was adopted by Cabinet on 16th November 2020.

1.2 The projection for 2021/22 in the MTFP revealed an underlying budget deficit of £4.1 million on the General Fund, which had emerged in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic. It would be an extremely challenging task to eliminate a budget deficit of that size at such short notice. The MTFP therefore included an assumption that Government support of £1.0 million would be received in 2021/22. In addition, it was also assumed that the Council would utilise £1.0 million of its contingency reserves. The target reduction in the base budget for 2021/22 was therefore £2.1 million.

1.3 Since the agreement of the MTFP, the following processes have been undertaken:

- The financial assumptions made in the MTFP have been reviewed to ensure that they remain relevant
- Subsequent developments – with financial consequences – that have emerged since the MTFP was prepared, have been incorporated; most notably the Government Spending Review 2020 announced by the Chancellor on 25th November 2020
- A detailed review of other income and expenditure pressures and priorities has been undertaken to ensure that service budget targets are achievable and in accordance with the MTFP; and
- Initial draft budgets have been prepared.

1.4 The purpose of this report is to present to Cabinet, an initial draft budget for the 2021/22 General Fund, for consideration, prior to scrutiny by the Stronger Council Select Committee on 19th January 2021.

1.5 Members are reminded that the budget presented is very much an early draft given the exceptional circumstances and uncertainty currently faced due to the pandemic, which means that information is constantly emerging and frequently changing. Therefore, adjustments can be expected as further information becomes available in the coming weeks. In particular, the Local Government Settlement for 2021/22 – which follows on from the Spending Review – is expected to be announced during the week commencing 14th December 2020, which misses the deadline for preparing this report.

2. General Fund Budget Preparation 2021/22

2.1 The MTFP adopted by the Cabinet in November 2020 has been followed, with detailed preparatory work now nearing completion. It is now possible to report that an early draft balanced budget has been achieved. The table below provides a high-level corporate summary of how the General Fund base budget has transitioned from 2020/21 through to a balanced position for 2021/22, following the identification of the deficit in November.

2021/22 General Fund Budget Evolution				
Description	**2020/21 Budget**	**2021/22 MTFP (Nov 20)**	**2021/22 Draft Budget (Dec 20)**	**Variance (to MTFS)**
	£000's	**£000's**	**£000's**	**£000's**
Employees	21,853	22,787	23,019	232
Premises	3,589	3,471	2,879	(592)
Transport	575	460	362	(98)
Supplies & Services	8,587	9,213	9,781	568
Support Services	38	38	51	13
Contracted Services	6,415	6,431	6,384	(47)
Transfer Payments (H Bens)	29,532	27,170	25,405	(1,765)
Financing Costs	1,858	2,405	2,480	75
Gross Expenditure	**72,447**	**71,975**	**70,361**	**(1,614)**
Fees and Charges	(14,808)	(13,766)	(15,561)	(1,795)
Government Contributions	(31,985)	(29,599)	(27,974)	1,625
Misc. Income (inc. Qualis)	(3,964)	(3,488)	(3,358)	130
Other Contributions	(3,078)	(3,078)	(2,974)	104
HRA Recharges	(2,642)	(2,700)	(3,155)	(455)
Net Expenditure	**15,970**	**19,344**	**17,339**	**(2,005)**
Council Tax	(8,344)	(8,568)	(8,506)	62
Business Rates	(5,255)	(5,470)	(5,535)	(65)
Collection Fund Adjustments	(896)	377	424	47
Council Tax Sharing Agreement (CTSA)	(670)	(500)	(450)	50
New Homes Bonus	(1,077)	(1,061)	(1,061)	0
Other Grants (Non-Specific)	(12)	(12)	(12)	0
Gov Support for Covid-19	0	(1,000)	(1,200)	(200)
Contribution to/(from) Reserves	284	(1,000)	(999)	1
Total Funding	**(15,970)**	**(17,234)**	**(17,339)**	**(105)**
(Surplus)/Deficit	**0**	**2,110**	**0**	**(2,110)**

2.2 In preparing the detailed budget – as is normal – a range of variances compared to the MTFP have been identified. The following discussion picks out the highlights for Expenditure, Income and Funding:

EXPENDITURE HIGLIGHTS

- **Employees (£23.019 million)** – the increased cost of Employees compared to the 2020/21 budget and the November MTFP is the most significant variance. The MTFP was modelled based on the assumption of a 3% pay award. However, the Spending Review 2020 included a Public Sector Pay Freeze. In the circumstances, a revised assumption of a 1.5% pay award has been assumed.at this stage. This had the effect of reducing anticipated budget demand by over £300,000. However, the subsequent work on the budget since the November Cabinet has entailed a 'deep dive' into the Council's Establishment List and further analysis on budget coding in the Financial Management System. This work identified several anomalies, most of which were of relatively small value and have been addressed in the budget presented. However, the most significant item identified was the Council's obligation to make a Pension Fund Deficit Reduction Payment (DRP) of £601,691 in 2021/22. The payment was known about and the marginal impact included in the MTFP. But complex local accounting arrangements for Pensions (under "IAS19") includes – in budgetary terms – the separation of 'routine' (monthly) Pension contributions and DRPs. In substance, the budget for the DRP payment has not previously been included in the main General Fund budget for Management Accounts purposes, with payments being absorbed within year-end notional accounting adjustments. The inclusion of the DRP payment in Employee costs above introduces greater transparency and draws a clear distinction between genuine cash transactions and notional accounting adjustments. It should be noted that the HRA will meet an estimated £109,933 of the overall DRP payment (therefore net cost to General Fund is £491,758).

- **Premises (£2.879 million)** – the MTFP included a broad assumption that Premises costs could be reduced by at least 10% in the light of new working arrangements (escalated by the pandemic) and the reopening of the refurbished Civic Offices. However, detailed work on the budget has identified opportunities to exceed the 10% assumption across a range of costs including utilities and Business Rates. New ways of working have also enabled a significant reduction in Transport costs.

- **Supplies & Services (£9.781 million)** – the Council has been consistently underspending on Supplies and Services in recent years, which at first sight seemed to indicate a relatively easy opportunity to secure savings. However, the most significant underspending has occurred on ring-fenced budgets (e.g. on the Local Plan), which have been rolled forward. As noted in the November MTFP, a limited number of growth items have been included, such as the increased cost pressures on IT budgets as the Council moves its IT systems onto "the Cloud", additional contributions towards Neighbourhood Police and additional commitments to Environmental Projects. However, the largest single variance relates to Insurance costs. The budget coding analysis in the Financial Management System referred to above, also identified the need to bring the Council's insurance premium within the main General Fund budget; it has previously been accounted for in a separate holding account and does not appear in the Budget Book. The inclusion of the insurance premium in Supplies and Services will reduce accounting complexity and improve transparency in 2021/22. A total of £826,330 has been included in the General Fund budget for the insurance premium (although it should be noted that the Housing Revenue Account is expected to meet approximately £355,000 of the cost i.e. net cost to General Fund circa £471,000).

- **Transfer Payments (£25.405 million)** – Housing Benefit related budgets have now been reviewed in detail by the Housing Benefits Team based on latest 'industry intelligence'. This has resulted in a significant reduction in the estimated value of Benefits to be paid in 2021/22. However, it should be noted that this is offset by a reduction in the amount Subsidy re-claimed from the DWP (under "Government Contributions").

- **Financing Costs (£2.480 million)** – a further review of financing costs has not identified any need to significantly change the assumptions made in the MTFP at this stage, with the only difference being the inclusion of the estimated borrowing costs of a £10 million Development Loan to Qualis (assumed to occur midway through the financial year). Further work on financing costs – including the 2021/22 impacts of the joint Museum and Library project at Waltham Abbey – will be undertaken in January 2021 with the assistance of the Council's Treasury Management advisors, Arlingclose.

INCOME HIGHLIGHTS

- **Fees and Charges (£15.561 million)** – detailed work on the income assumptions from Fees and Charges has been completed. No increases in Car Parking charges are assumed, with other assumed inflationary increases relatively modest (many are constrained by statute). However, there have been a range of significant positive developments to report on Fees and Charges. Most notably:

  - North Weald Rental Income (impact £694,000) – updated leasing arrangements recently agreed with HMRC at North Weald Airfield have been assumed to yield an additional £694,000 in 2021/22

  - Leisure Management Fee (impact £500,000) – the MTFP had assumed that the Council would lose 100% of the Leisure Management Fee (£1,471,420) for 2021/22. However, that was an assumption made before the announcement of the vaccine for Covid-19. It is now possible to make a slightly more optimistic assumption; accordingly, a Management Fee of £500,000 has been assumed (compared to the full Fee of £1,471,420)

  - Planning Fees (impact £361,924) – a detailed review of anticipated income from Planning Fees in 2021/22 (taking account of the vaccine, the lifting of the current restrictions by Natural England and the expected adoption of the Local Plan by Summer 2021) has now concluded that income assumptions compared to the MTFP can be increased; and

  - Civic Offices Sub-Let (impact £250,000) – net income of £250,000 is assumed from the letting of spare capacity within the newly refurbished Civic Offices. The Second Floor is actively being marketed with strong interest being shown from potentially suitable tenants.

- **HRA Recharges (£3.155 million)** – the budget assumption for HRA Recharges has risen by £455,000 compared to the MTFP, mainly driven by the technical adjustments for Pensions (impact £109,933) and Insurance (impact £355,000) noted above.

FUNDING HIGHLIGHTS

- **Council Tax (£8.506 million)** – the Council Tax Base for 2021/22 has now been determined and the preceptors have been notified. Whilst the MTFP did anticipate a reduction in the Tax Base due to Covid-19, the eventual impact – due in part to the second lockdown – was slightly greater than expected. There were a larger number of Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) cases than previously forecast and the anticipated collection rate was further reduced from 98.0% to 97.5%. The assumed Council Tax increase of £5 for a Band D property currently remains unchanged from the MTFP.

- **Business Rates (£5.535 million)** – the Business Rates calculation has been updated to reflect the "Academy" (Revenues) system figures at 30th November 2020, which yields a marginal improvement, although this budget will not be fixed until the Council has prepared its detailed Business Rates forecast (the "NNDR1" return) for 2021/22 (due 31st January 2021). It should be noted that, at the time of preparing this report, there is still significant uncertainty surrounding Business Rates for 2021/22, including the Government's plans for Reliefs.

- **Council Tax Sharing Agreement (CTSA) (£0.450 million)** – there is still great uncertainty as to how much the Council might receive from the CTSA in 2021/22. However, emerging intelligence suggests that it would be prudent to further reduce the expectation (of £500,000) included in the MTFP (which itself was a reduction of £169,780 from the budgeted payments for 2020/21).

- **New Homes Bonus (NHB) (£1.061 million)** – the Spending Review 2020 confirmed that the NHB would continue in 2021/22. However, it also confirmed that there will be no further legacy payments. This means that the Council will not be receiving the £609,000 payment that it received in 2020/21 as originally assumed in the MTFP. However, it was also confirmed that councils will receive a new award for 2021/22; this was not assumed in the MTFP. Further information is awaited at the time of preparing this report. In the circumstances the MTFP estimate remains unaltered, although Members should note that this is a key risk area; the actual 2021/22 award could go up or down.

- **Government Support for Covid-19 (£1.200 million)** – the assumption regarding the level of Government support in 2021/22 has been raised by £200,000 compared to the MTFP. Although further details are awaited, the Spending Review announcement did contain some encouraging messages, including:

  - £1.55 billion nationally to cover Covid-19 related expenditure costs for Quarter 1 in 2021/22

  - The extension of the Sales, Fees and Charges (SFC) scheme for Quarter 1 of 2021/22 (75% reimbursement with a 5% disregard)

  - £670 million nationally to support LCTS (this is for extra costs from increased take-up referred to above regarding the Council Tax Base); and

  - Additional support for Collection Fund losses (75% of irrecoverable losses).

- **Contribution from Reserves (£0.999 million)** – the combined impacted of the initial draft budget for 2021/22, would result in a contribution of £0.999 from General Fund unallocated reserves; this is just within the parameter of £1.0 million set by Cabinet on 16th November 2020.

3. General Fund Budget Setting 2021/22: The Way Forward

3.1. The draft budget will now be presented to the Stronger Council Select Committee on 19th January 2021/22 for their consideration and comment ahead of the February Cabinet meeting.

3.2. Alongside the scrutiny process, officers will further refine the assumptions and projections in the budget accordance with the direction provided by Cabinet and emerging intelligence, including the imminent Local Government Settlement for 2021/22.

Appendix A (ANNEX 1)

ANNEX 1

General Fund Budget Summary 2021/22 (DRAFT)

	Chief Executive	Community & Wellbeing	Contracts & Technical	Corporate Services	Customer Services	Economic Projects	Finance & Audit	Housing & Property	Planning Development	Strategy, Delivery & Performance	Unallocated Adjustments	General fund Total
	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s
Employee Expenses	519,280	1,285,025	3,735,319	4,352,415	3,739,004	1,280,370	1,119,640	867,260	4,551,943	967,010	601,692	23,018,958
Premises Related Expenses	510	446,460	1,016,220	3,770	0	18,220	290	1,211,120	182,550			2,879,140
Transport Related Expenses	6,240	20,250	254,860	12,420	12,310	17,460	7,110	11,850	15,280	3,740		361,520
Supplies and Services	289,280	590,850	1,177,200	3,447,880	314,270	227,510	419,570	52,620	2,504,350	757,210		9,780,740
Support Services		4,350	7,130	19,200	4,510	3,250	120	1,890	10,800			51,250
Contracted Services			6,341,070			1,020		6,030	36,040			6,384,160
Transfer Payments					25,405,300							25,405,300
Financing Costs							2,480,000					2,480,000
Total Expenditure	**815,310**	**2,346,935**	**12,531,799**	**7,835,685**	**29,475,394**	**1,547,830**	**4,026,730**	**2,150,770**	**7,300,963**	**1,727,960**	**601,692**	**70,361,068**
Fees & Charges		-394,680	-11,910,780	-227,200		-5,780	-35,870	-275,000	-2,708,940	-2,660		-15,560,910
Government Contributions		-472,200			-26,633,780	-10,270			-858,410			-27,974,660
Misc Income		-260	-2,060	-67,160	-212,100		-3,058,990		-17,250			-3,357,820
Other Contributions		-255,840	-2,142,800	-4,000	-128,510	-131,000	-1,530	-2,300	-307,820			-2,973,800
HRA Recharges											-3,155,133	-3,155,133
Total Income	**0**	**-1,122,980**	**-14,055,640**	**-298,360**	**-26,974,390**	**-147,050**	**-3,096,390**	**-277,300**	**-3,892,420**	**-2,660**	**-3,155,133**	**-53,022,323**
Net Expenditure	**815,310**	**1,223,955**	**-1,523,841**	**7,537,325**	**2,501,004**	**1,400,780**	**930,340**	**1,873,470**	**3,408,543**	**1,725,300**	**-2,553,441**	**17,338,745**

Christopher Hartgrove: Pension Deficit Adjustment

Christopher Hartgrove: HRA Recharges (including Pension Deficit Adjustment £109,933)

Draft Budget Proposals 2021/22 (Housing Revenue Account)

1. Introduction and Background

1.1 The Council has a statutory duty to maintain a ring-fenced Housing Revenue Account (HRA). This includes a duty to maintain the financial sustainability of the HRA. To this end, in accordance with the HRA Subsidy Determination 2011/12, the Council maintains a 30-Year Business Plan, which sets the framework for the annual budget setting process.

1.2 The Council agreed it's Housing Revenue Account budget for 2020/21 in February 2020 and is summarised below.

Housing Revenue Account Budget 2020/21 (*adopted by Council 25/02/20*)	
Description	**Amount £000's**
EXPENDITURE	
Supervision & Management (General)	7,023
Supervision & Management (Special)	3,665
Rents, Rates Taxes and Insurances	520
Contributions to Repairs Fund	6,000
Management & Maintenance	**17,208**
Capital Charges	8,078
Major Repairs on Leasehold Properties	306
Treasury Management Expenses	57
Provision for Bad/Doubtful Debts	70
Total Expenditure	**25,719**
INCOME	
Gross Rent from Dwellings	(31,997)
Non-Dwellings Rents	(831)
Charges for Services & Facilities	(1,834)
Contributions from General Fund	(350)
Total Income	**(35,012)**
Net Cost of Services	**(9,293)**
Interest on Receipts and Balances	(378)
Interest Payable on Loans	5,668
Transfer from Major Repairs Reserve	0
Reversal of Repairs Service Depreciation	(66)
Pensions Interest Payable/Return on Assets	640
Net Operating Income	**(3,430)**
Appropriations:	
Direct Revenue Contributions to Capital	4,430
IAS19 Adjustment	(1,160)
Transfer to Self-Financing Reserve	130
(Surplus)/Deficit for Year	**(30)**

1.3 The table shows that the strategy embedded within the 2020/21 HRA budget was to achieve a small *surplus* of £30,000 and add this to an anticipated HRA contingency balance of £2.321 million assumed as at 31st March 2020. This would comfortably meet the commitment within the 30-Year Business Plan to maintain a minimum contingency balance of £2.0 million. However, the eventual outturn for 2019/20 resulted in an HRA loss, which reduced the contingency reserve to £2.030 million. This means that any significant loss in 2020/21 could potentially breach the minimum contingency balance.

1.4 An updated forecast was completed at the end of November, which indicated that the Council is broadly on course with the 2020/21 budget, with just a very small *deficit* of £30,000 expected. There are two major variances that effectively cancel each other out:

- Gross Rent from Dwellings (£610,000) – based on the latest available information from the Housing Rents system, a surplus of £610,000 is forecast on income from Dwellings compared to budget; however

- Capital Charges (£599,000) – based on a review of the Fixed Asset Register, an overspend of £599,000 is expected on Capital Charges. This is due to a deficient Depreciation budget and is the same problem encountered in 2019/20 (the 2020/21 was already set by the time the issue had been identified).

1.5 In preparing a draft framework for the 2021/22 HRA budget within the parameters set by the 30-Year Business Plan, the following factors have been considered:

- The HRA forecast outturn for 2020/21 (as highlighted above)
- An assumed increase in Rent of 1.5% (September 2020 CPI + 1%; in accordance with the Rent Standard 2020)
- An assumed increase in Fees and Charges of 2.5%
- Other inflationary assumptions consistent with those used in preparing the 2021/22 draft General Fund budget
- The emerging Capital Programme for 2021/22; and
- Any other local intelligence (e.g. consequent to the transfer of the Housing Repairs service with effect from 1st October 2020).

1.6 The detailed budget preparation phase for the HRA will conclude in early January 2021 with the results immediately progressing through the scrutiny process and then back to Cabinet in February 2021. However, the framework within which the budget will be prepared is presented in the table below for Members attention. There are no major changes expected at this stage compared to 2020/21, although – in the light of recent experience (presented above) – Income from Dwellings has been raised, which helps to fund the additional Capital Charges expected. It should also be noted that the annual Contribution to the Repairs Fund is assumed to increase from £6.0 million to £6.5 million as expenditure from the Fund has consistently outstripped contributions in recent years. Finally, a small projected HRA surplus of £62,000 would ensure that the Council retains the minimum contingency balance in accordance with the 30-Year Business Plan.

Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/22 *(outline framework)*	
Description	**Amount**
	£000's
EXPENDITURE	
Supervision & Management (General)	7,203
Supervision & Management (Special)	3,738
Rents, Rates Taxes and Insurances	533
Contributions to Repairs Fund	6,500
Management & Maintenance	**17,974**
Capital Charges	8,850
Major Repairs on Leasehold Properties	300
Treasury Management Expenses	58
Provision for Bad/Doubtful Debts	91
Total Expenditure	**27,274**
INCOME	
Gross Rent from Dwellings	(33,346)
Non-Dwellings Rents	(810)
Charges for Services & Facilities	(2,492)
Contributions from General Fund	(357)
Total Income	**(37,005)**
Net Cost of Services	**(9,731)**
Interest on Receipts and Balances	(23)
Interest Payable on Loans	5,638
Transfer from Major Repairs Reserve	0
Reversal of Repairs Service Depreciation	(68)
Pensions Interest Payable/Return on Assets	652
Net Operating Income	**(3,531)**
Appropriations:	
Direct Revenue Contributions to Capital	4,652
IAS19 Adjustment	(1,183)
Transfer to Self-Financing Reserve	0
(Surplus)/Deficit for Year	**(62)**

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: ***C-053-2020-21***
Date of meeting: ***22 December 2020***

Epping Forest District Council

Portfolio: **Housing and Community – Cllr. H Whitbread**

Subject: **Telecare Provision**

Responsible Officer: **Jennifer Gould** **(01992 564073).**

Democratic Services: **Adrian Hendry** **(01992 564246).**

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) To note the update in relation to Essex County Council's procurement of a new care technology service for adult social care and the subsequent impact on EFDC's telecare provision.
(2) To agree to the continuation of EFDC's own telecare service until June 2021 in light of Essex County Council's postponed procurement activity.

Executive Summary:

On 11th June 2020 Cabinet considered the recommendations in the Telecare Provision paper (C-005-2020-21) and agreed to the cessation of EFDC's delivery of telecare to private residents in light of Essex County Council's procurement of a county-wide service and the subsequent significant impact it posed for EFDC's own future telecare delivery.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on Essex County Council's procurement activity in respect of this service and the subsequent impact on EFDC's telecare provision.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To ensure residents in the District receive continuity of telecare service.

Other Options:

Not to agree the continuation of EFDC's telecare provision until June 2021 which would mean a potential gap in service provision for District residents who rely on a telecare service to enable them to safely live independently for longer.

Report:

1. In October 2019 Essex County Council's Cabinet (FP/494/08/19) agreed to invite tenders for the delivery of a county-wide care technology service.

2. This affected EFDC's provision of a telecare service to private residents within the District and a paper was brought to Cabinet in June 2020 (C-005-2020/21) which recommended the cessation of EFDC's own telecare service to private residents subsequent to the mobilisation of a new county-wide provision.

3. The recommendation to cease EFDC's own telecare provision subsequent to the mobilisation of a new county-wide provision was agreed.

4. Since the onset of the current Covid-19 pandemic, the procurement of Essex County Council's new care technology service has experienced delays and has also forced reconsideration of the requirements a new care technology service originally set out.

5. Consequently, a paper was taken to Essex County Council's Cabinet in August with the following recommendations which were latterly agreed:
   - To agree to not award pursuant to the current Care Technology procurement and notify all bidders and interested parties.
   - To agree to commence a procurement process for a four-year framework for care technology using CPN and to award a call-off contract for a period of three years for Care Technology Services with mobilisation commencing on 1st March 2021 and full services commencing 1st June 2021.
   - To agree that the tender evaluation criteria for award of the Framework will be based on fixed price and a weighting of 100% quality, of which 20% will be allocated specifically to social value for both Lots 1 and 2 with the agreement to the evaluation criteria subject to the approval of the s151 Officer to ensure value for money is demonstrated.
   - To delegate to the Executive Director for Adult Social Care to award the Framework and Call-off contract following the successful
   - completion of the CPN.
   - To agree to fund the contracts from the adult social care budget already set up for care technology with any additional costs (e.g. through additional volume) funded through cost avoidance and benefits realisation.

6. This development does not change the impact of a county-wide provision on EFDC's own telecare service nor the decision to cease EFDC's own service once it is mobilised.

7. However, this development does impact on the original timescales for the cessation of EFDC's own provision which was originally anticipated to have been by the end of the fiscal year 2020-21.

8. EFDC's own provision is now unlikely to cease before the end of Q1 2021-22 to allow for mobilisation of the full county-wide service by June 2021 and the subsequent work transitioning customers from EFDC's own provision to a different provider to ensure that Epping Forest residents are not left for any period without any telecare provision.

Resource Implications:

While the decision to cease EFDC's telecare provision will limit the Council's exposure to loss of income and increased overheads, by continuing this service until June 2021 there will be a net impact on the general fund for the cost of the service for at least a 3 month period while no new telecare clients are taken on.

The cost is likely to be c£7,500 (cost of 1 FTE Telecare Officer for 3 months)

Legal and Governance Implications:

Legal and HR have been consulted in relation to the staffing implications.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

While there is a risk of some disruption to service users which could impact on their safety at home as the new contracts commence this can be minimised through planning and on-going effective partnership working with Essex County Council throughout the period of service transition.

Consultation Undertaken:

Previous consultation has been undertaken with Cabinet.

Background Papers:

Essex County Council Cabinet Papers FP/494/09/19 October 2019 and August 2020
EFDC Cabinet paper C-005-2020/21

Risk Management:

There is a risk to service users' health, safety and wellbeing if there is insufficient transition phase of the service moving to ECC's county wide provider. This can be mitigated as far as possible with the suggested additional 3 month transition after full service mobilisation in June 2021 and with robust partnership working.

Equality Analysis:

The Equality Act 2010 requires that the Public Sector Equality Duty is actively applied in decision-making. This means that the equality information provided to accompany this report is essential reading for all members involved in the consideration of this report. The equality information is provided as an Appendix to this report.

Equality Impact Assessment

1. Under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010, when making decisions, Epping District Council must have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty, ie have due regard to:

    - eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act,
    - advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not,
    - fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

2. The characteristics protected by the Equality Act are:

    - age
    - disability
    - gender
    - gender reassignment
    - marriage/civil partnership
    - pregnancy/maternity
    - race
    - religion/belief
    - sexual orientation.

3. In addition to the above protected characteristics you should consider the cross-cutting elements of the proposed policy, namely the social, economic and environmental impact (including rurality) as part of this assessment. These cross-cutting elements are not a characteristic protected by law but are regarded as good practice to include.

4. The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) document should be used as a tool to test and analyse the nature and impact of either what we do or are planning to do in the future. It can be used flexibly for reviewing existing arrangements but in particular should enable identification where further consultation, engagement and data is required.

5. Use the questions in this document to record your findings. This should include the nature and extent of the impact on those likely to be affected by the proposed policy or change.

6. Where this EqIA relates to a continuing project, it must be reviewed and updated at each stage of the decision.

7. All **Cabinet, Council, and Portfolio Holder reports must be accompanied by an** EqIA. An EqIA should also be completed/reviewed at key stages of projects.

8. To assist you in completing this report, please ensure you read the guidance notes in the Equality Analysis Toolkit and refer to the following Factsheets:

- Factsheet 1: Equality Profile of the Epping Forest District
- Factsheet 2: Sources of information about equality protected characteristics
- Factsheet 3: Glossary of equality related terms
- Factsheet 4: Common misunderstandings about the Equality Duty
- Factsheet 5: Frequently asked questions
- Factsheet 6: Reporting equality analysis to a committee or other decision making body

Section 1: Identifying details
Your function, service area and team: **Older People's Services**
If you are submitting this EqIA on behalf of another function, service area or team, specify the originating function, service area or team: **N/A**
Title of policy or decision: **Telecare Provision**
Officer completing the EqIA: **Jennifer Gould** Tel: **01992 564073** Email: **jgould@eppingforestdc.gov.uk**
Date of completing the assessment: **13th May 2020**

Section 2: Policy to be analysed	
2.1	Is this a new policy (or decision) or a change to an existing policy, practice or project? **Yes**
2.2	Describe the main aims, objectives and purpose of the policy (or decision): **To mitigate the financial and operational risk posed to EFDC as a result of Essex County Council's commissioning of a County-wide telehealth service.** What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve (ie decommissioning or commissioning a service)? **To cease EFDC's delivery of a telecare service to private residents in the District.**
2.3	Does or will the policy or decision affect: • service users • employees • the wider community or groups of people, particularly where there are areas of known inequalities? Will the policy or decision influence how organisations operate? **The decision affects 2.7 FTE members of the Older People's Team and c1,300 telecare users living in private dwellings across the District.**
2.4	Will the policy or decision involve substantial changes in resources? **No**
2.5	Is this policy or decision associated with any of the Council's other policies and how, if applicable, does the proposed policy support corporate outcomes?

	EFDC works in partnership with Essex County Council to ensure a joined up, comprehensive telehealth offer with the aim of being best in class. EFDC's decision not to compete with the more technologically advanced and comprehensive offer afforded by ECC's County-wide tender works towards getting the best outcomes for District residents.

Section 3: Evidence/data about the user population and consultation[1]

As a minimum you must consider what is known about the population likely to be affected which will support your understanding of the impact of the policy, eg service uptake/usage, customer satisfaction surveys, staffing data, performance data, research information (national, regional and local data sources).

3.1 What does the information tell you about those groups identified?

The group impacted are c1,300 older people living in private dwellings in the District with a degree of a social care need.

Age	No.	%
40-49	16	0.7%
50-59	47	2%
60-69	209	8.9%
70-79	507	21.6%
80-89	783	33.3%
90-99	447	19%
100+	9	0.4%

Gender	%
Male	39%
Female	61%

66.4% users have a medical condition/disability

3.2 Have you consulted or involved those groups that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision you want to implement? If so, what were their views and how have their views influenced your decision?

Consultation has been undertaken with the Portfolio Holder.

3.3 If you have not consulted or engaged with communities that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision, give details about when you intend to carry out consultation or provide reasons for why you feel this is not necessary:

EFDC are currently supported by ECC to provide telecare across the District. This support will cease following the implementation of a new County-wide contract. EFDC is not in a position to compete with ECC's offer which is likely

	to use smarter technology and provide better value for money for residents. Current EFDC telecare users will be supported through a transition and there will be tapering of EFDC's service to ensure that users do not experience a gap in provision which could affect their safety, health and wellbeing and their ability to live independently.

Section 4: Impact of policy or decision		
Use this section to assess any potential impact on equality groups based on what you now know.		
Description of impact	**Nature of impact** Positive, neutral, adverse (explain why)	**Extent of impact** Low, medium, high (use L, M or H)
Age	Neutral – groups affected will be supported to ensure there is no gap in service provision that could have a detrimental impact.	L
Disability	Neutral – groups affected will be supported to ensure there is no gap in service provision that could have a detrimental impact.	L
Gender	Neutral – groups affected will be supported to ensure there is no gap in service provision that could have a detrimental impact.	L
Gender reassignment	N/A	
Marriage/civil partnership	N/A	
Pregnancy/maternity	N/A	
Race	N/A	
Religion/belief	N/A	
Sexual orientation	N/A	

Section 5: Conclusion			
		Tick Yes/No as appropriate	
5.1	Does the EqIA in Section 4 indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more equality groups?	No X	
		Yes	If '**YES**', use the action plan at **Section 6** to describe the adverse impacts and what mitigating actions you could put in place.

Section 6: Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts		
What are the potential adverse impacts?	**What are the mitigating actions?**	**Date they will be achieved.**

Section 7: Sign off **I confirm that this initial analysis has been completed appropriately.** **(A typed signature is sufficient.)**	
Signature of Head of Service: Jennifer Gould	Date: 22nd May 2020
Signature of person completing the EqIA: Jennifer Gould	Date: 22md May 2020

Advice

Keep your director informed of all equality & diversity issues. We recommend that you forward a copy of every EqIA you undertake to the director responsible for the service area. Retain a copy of this EqIA for your records. If this EqIA relates to a continuing project, ensure this document is kept under review and updated, eg after a consultation has been undertaken.

Report to the Cabinet

Epping Forest District Council

Report reference: **C-052a-2020-21**

Date of meeting: ***22 December 2020***

Portfolio: **Leader**

Subject: Post Covid 19 Projects, Waltham Abbey Town Centre, Waltham Abbey Town Centre Hub

Responsible Officer: **Nick Dawe (07939449512)**

Democratic Services: **Adrian Hendry (01992 564246).**

Decisions / Recommendations

In respect of the Town Centre Regeneration General Report (C052b):

1. **To note progress and issues that will arise in current and subsequent individual town centre reports.**

In respect of the Waltham Abbey Town Centre Project (C052c):

2. **That Cabinet considers the attached report produced by independent business consultants, Studio 3, on the economic viability of Waltham Abbey Town Centre, which includes recommendations to improve short and medium -term sustainability of businesses in Sun Street;**

3. **That Cabinet agrees to proceed with the recommended actions contained within the report, including the proposal to introduce a Town Centres Project Manager, (Waltham Abbey and Ongar), on a fixed term basis for a period of 3 years at a cost of c £50k per annum. This postholder will organise and deliver on the specific project targets to lead and implement a phased programme of work in each of the Town Centre's across the district in conjunction with town and parish councils, businesses and other interested policies; and,**

4. **That £150,000 is earmarked from the unallocated General Fund balance, to the District Development Fund Reserve, to fund the initiative – at £50,000 per annum – for three-years commencing 2021/22".**

In respect of the Waltham Abby Community Hub Paper:

5. **In line with proposals outlined in the 2020/21 Budget, that Cabinet agrees to support the creation of a Community and Cultural Hub in Waltham Abbey as part of phase 1 of the regeneration of the Town Centre. This will be achieved by combining Epping Forest District Museum (39-41 Sun Street) with Waltham Abbey Library (37 Sun Street), subject to Essex County Council contributions and statutory agreements; that will strengthen the community hub approach to service delivery currently being created with the Civic Office at its heart, and**

6. **That officers are authorised to further explore the operational and management model for the hub with Essex County Council and associated service level agreement between EFDC and ECC for operation of the hub, and**

7. **That officers undertake further work as to the financing and completion of the project, noting that required resources are included in the current 2021/22 Budget Assumptions to meet any set-up costs and the borrowing costs that support the proposed capital expenditure.**

Executive Summary

Initially the concentration of the Cabinet has been to make all the town centres "safe places" through a series of projects and initiatives and through providing advice and support and rapid access to businesses of specific grants and locally prioritised grants.

In July Cabinet approved a series of projects to assist the District in its recovery from the Covid 19 and associated challenges as it appreciated the District's future role in both economic recovery and improving general well-being was significant.

Projects were identified in July that wherever possible, would build upon previous strategies and work, e.g. the provision of torn hubs, regenerating the high street, using digital investment to advantage.

These projects would also, whenever possible, correlate with the proposals that would arise from the Sustainable Transport and Climate Emergency / Environmental Sustainability Initiatives.

The projects therefore consisted of the following:

- Procurements and Contracts (to stimulate and reflect local contribution)
- Town Centre rejuvenation: Waltham Abbey
- Town Centre rejuvenation: Waltham Abbey Hub Project
- Town Centre rejuvenation: Ongar
- Town Centre rejuvenation: Loughton
- Town Centre rejuvenation: Buckhurst Hill
- Town Centre rejuvenation: Epping
- Digital Gateway (to promote local manufacturing, supply retail and food provision)
- North Weald Employment Land (post masterplan bringing forward a series of enterprise options).

Priority with projects would be given to the following with the aim of bringinging forward proposals before the end of December:

- Procurements and Contracts (the subject of a separate Cabinet paper and approval).

- Town Centre rejuvenation: Waltham Abbey
- Town Centre rejuvenation: Waltham Abbey Hub Project

The remainder of the projects are being worked on, but decision papers would be brought to Cabinet in February and March. It should be noted that:

- The Ongar Town Centre Report is at final drafting stage and can be brought forward in January. This will include overlapping concerns and issues raised recently by the Ongar Town Council.
- The Digital Gateway Report is also in final drafting stage and can be brought forward in January.
- The associated Climate Emergency / Sustainable Growth paper concentrating on tree planting will also be available in January.
- The review of Loughton Town Centre has also commenced.

It should be noted that all projects include, economic, well-being and sustainable growth issues and cross working with various teams across the Council and engaging with statutory and voluntary and other representatives of the business and non-business communities

Details of each project currently being considered are shown in the following papers.

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Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: ***C-052b-2020/21***
Date of meeting: ***22 December '20***

Epping Forest District Council

Portfolio: Leader

Subject: **Town Centre Regeneration General Report**

Responsible Officer: Houston **John Houston** **(01992 564094).**

Democratic Services: **Adrian Hendry** **(01992 564246).**

Executive Summary:

As highlighted in the Cabinet report on Waltham Abbey Town Centre, a range of work has also commenced in other areas of the district as part of the Covid Economic Recovery programme and this followed on from initial work undertaken by Directors as part of Safer Spaces delivery.

Initial results have now become available from the Districts annual High Street Vacancy Survey (see Appendix 1) This shows a mixed picture across the districts towns but doesn't record large scale closures as have been apparent in other areas.

This report therefore provides an overview and update for Cabinet on work carried out to date.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

This report does not require a decision or recommendation.

Other Options for Action:

N/a

Report:

1. In September, Studio 3 Business Consultants were engaged by the Council to undertake a range of economic appraisal work relating to the five Town Centres in the District. Waltham Abbey (Sun Street) was identified as the first priority for this work and a separate report and detailed options appraisal for interventions in Waltham Abbey, is included within the agenda for this meeting of Cabinet.

<u>Ongar Town Centre</u>

2. The second highest priority area for focus was agreed as Ongar Town Centre and Studio 3 have undertaken a range of initial work on this area. This includes visits to the town on various days of the week and production of an initial survey of the current retail offer, noting vacancy levels and range of retail provision available.

3. In addition, following on from work undertaken by Directors, Studio 3 have attended an Ongar Town Council meeting and have liaised with the Town Council on their 'Smarten Up Ongar' campaign, with a view to helping this gain momentum going forward.

4. Further meetings have been arranged with key stakeholders in Ongar, including Epping, Ongar Railway and a follow -up meeting with the Town Clerk. However, Covid restrictions

have significantly hampered progress with this work, but it is hoped that if lockdown is lifted in early December, work can continue with vigour then.

Remaining Town Centres

5. As part of the Safer Spaces programme, Directors undertook a range of work with Towns and Parish Councils in Epping, Loughton and Buckhurst Hill. This included implementing safer distancing measures in conjunction with local shops and working with Environmental Health Officers and hospitality businesses to support expansion of services onto pavements and in outdoor spaces. In addition, details were collated of improvements that could be made to each of these High Streets, to improve the aesthetics and attraction of local residents to shop locally.

6. Follow -up visits were made in all areas to assess how these measures were helping sustainability and it was found that some businesses had been able to build their service delivery almost back to normal, but, had then been seriously affected by the first wave of new Covid restrictions. This was undoubtedly worsened by the introduction of the second lockdown and it has not been possible to follow up with businesses since then.

7. During this period, Studio 3 additionally carried out visits to town centres/High Streets in Loughton, Epping and Buckhurst Hill to gain an overview of the vibrancy of each of these and to gauge the level of retail vacancy rates.

8. They have also attended a Loughton Town Partnership meeting involving local retailers, which focusses particularly on Debden Broadway and have raised their concerns about the planned pedestrianisation of Debden Broadway by EFDC at weekends. Their initial thoughts are that this is unnecessary and contrary to the views of local retailers and public who benefit from being able to 'stop and shop' by parking in the Broadway itself. It was also suggested that the funding potentially required for this could be better used.

9. In terms of all the reviews, due account will be taken of the operation buildings in the area as well as any investment properties held, especially the recent purchases in Loughto.

North Weald Airfield

10. As Members are aware, the NWA Masterplanning exercise is still in progress and therefore there is limited work that can be done to progress action on establishing an area for a mini Business Enterprise Zone.

11. However, work has been undertaken to identify suitable sites for this new initiative and to map and locate contacts for all areas around the borders of the Airfield, with a view to seeking opportunities for the creation of a new Business Zone.

12. In addition, meetings have taken place with the National Special Forces Museum and an Airfield tenant, to consider the potential of developing a unique heritage Museum on NWA, that would accommodate a display of artefacts and active aircraft of National importance, utilising historic features already in place, as well as a fully functioning conference centre.

13. Further updates will be provided on all of this work.

Resource Implications:

None related to local Town Centre work at present, although it is anticipated that recommendations for action will be forthcoming that will require financial support.

Legal and Governance Implications:

None at present.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

None at present.

Consultation Undertaken:

Consultation has and continues to be undertaken with stakeholders across the District.

Background Papers:

Waltham Abbey Town Centre Regeneration Study.

Risk Management:

N/a

Equality Impact Assessment

1. Under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010, when making decisions, Epping District Council must have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty, ie have due regard to:

    - eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act,
    - advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not,
    - fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

2. The characteristics protected by the Equality Act are:

    - age
    - disability
    - gender
    - gender reassignment
    - marriage/civil partnership
    - pregnancy/maternity
    - race
    - religion/belief
    - sexual orientation.

3. In addition to the above protected characteristics you should consider the cross-cutting elements of the proposed policy, namely the social, economic and environmental impact (including rurality) as part of this assessment. These cross-cutting elements are not a characteristic protected by law but are regarded as good practice to include.

4. The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) document should be used as a tool to test and analyse the nature and impact of either what we do or are planning to do in the future. It can be used flexibly for reviewing existing arrangements but in particular should enable identification where further consultation, engagement and data is required.

5. Use the questions in this document to record your findings. This should include the nature and extent of the impact on those likely to be affected by the proposed policy or change.

6. Where this EqIA relates to a continuing project, it must be reviewed and updated at each stage of the decision.

7. All **Cabinet, Council, and Portfolio Holder reports must be accompanied by an** EqIA. An EqIA should also be completed/reviewed at key stages of projects.

8. To assist you in completing this report, please ensure you read the guidance notes in the Equality Analysis Toolkit and refer to the following Factsheets:

- Factsheet 1: Equality Profile of the Epping Forest District
- Factsheet 2: Sources of information about equality protected characteristics
- Factsheet 3: Glossary of equality related terms
- Factsheet 4: Common misunderstandings about the Equality Duty
- Factsheet 5: Frequently asked questions
- Factsheet 6: Reporting equality analysis to a committee or other decision making body

Section 1: Identifying details
Your function, service area and team: Economic Development
If you are submitting this EqIA on behalf of another function, service area or team, specify the originating function, service area or team: N/A
Title of policy or decision: Town Centre Regeneration
Officer completing the EqIA: John Houston Tel: 01992 564 Email: jhouston@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Date of completing the assessment: 20/11/20

Section 2: Policy to be analysed	
2.1	Is this a new policy (or decision) or a change to an existing policy, practice or project? This is an information item only.
2.2	Describe the main aims, objectives and purpose of the policy (or decision): This report provides an update on work undertaken to support Town Centres across the district. What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve (ie decommissioning or commissioning a service)? It is anticipated that detailed reports will be produced for ach of the Town Centres that will set out a set of recommendations for action by the Council.
2.3	Does or will the policy or decision affect: • service users • employees • the wider community or groups of people, particularly where there are areas of known inequalities? None at present Will the policy or decision influence how organisations operate? Not at present
2.4	Will the policy or decision involve substantial changes in resources? Not at present
2.5	Is this policy or decision associated with any of the Council's other policies and how, if applicable, does the proposed policy support corporate outcomes? The work referred to in this report substantially contributes to Corporate Objectives.

Section 3: Evidence/data about the user population and consultation[1]	
As a minimum you must consider what is known about the population likely to be affected which will support your understanding of the impact of the policy, eg service uptake/usage, customer satisfaction surveys, staffing data, performance data, research information (national, regional and local data sources).	
3.1	What does the information tell you about those groups identified? N/a
3.2	Have you consulted or involved those groups that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision you want to implement? If so, what were their views and how have their views influenced your decision? N/a
3.3	If you have not consulted or engaged with communities that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision, give details about when you intend to carry out consultation or provide reasons for why you feel this is not necessary: N/a

Section 4: Impact of policy or decision		
Use this section to assess any potential impact on equality groups based on what you now know.		
Description of impact	**Nature of impact** Positive, neutral, adverse (explain why)	**Extent of impact** Low, medium, high (use L, M or H)
Age	N/A	
Disability	N/A	
Gender	N/A	
Gender reassignment	N/A	
Marriage/civil partnership	N/A	
Pregnancy/maternity	N/A	
Race	N/A	
Religion/belief	N/A	
Sexual orientation	N/A	

Section 5: Conclusion			
		Tick Yes/No as appropriate	
5.1	Does the EqIA in Section 4 indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more equality groups?	No	
		Yes	If '**YES**', use the action plan at **Section 6** to describe the adverse impacts and what mitigating actions you could put in place.

Section 6: Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts		
What are the potential adverse impacts?	**What are the mitigating actions?**	**Date they will be achieved.**

Section 7: Sign off **I confirm that this initial analysis has been completed appropriately.** **(A typed signature is sufficient.)**	
Signature of Head of Service: Julie Chandler	Date: 20/11/20
Signature of person completing the EqIA: John Houston	Date: 21/11/20

Advice

Keep your director informed of all equality & diversity issues. We recommend that you forward a copy of every EqIA you undertake to the director responsible for the service area. Retain a copy of this EqIA for your records. If this EqIA relates to a continuing project, ensure this document is kept under review and updated, eg after a consultation has been undertaken.

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-052c-2020-21

Date of meeting: 22nd December 2020

Epping Forest District Council

Portfolio: Leader

Subject: Waltham Abbey Town Centre

Responsible Officer: John Houston (01992 564094).

Democratic Services: Adrian Hendry (01992 564246).

Executive Summary:

As part of the Council's work to assist the economic recovery and sustainability of local High Streets across the district, Studio 3 Business Consultants were appointed in September, to undertake a series of independent economic reviews. The purpose of these being to identify quick wins and to consider longer -term recommendations to increase footfall to town centres; support local businesses and identify opportunities for attracting new business to the area.

The first of the studies focussed on Sun Street in Waltham Abbey, deemed as one of the most deprived locations in the district and the detailed report produced by Studio 3 is attached to this covering report, which sets out a range of recommendations for action, including quick wins.

Cabinet is asked to consider the findings of the report and approve delivery of suggested recommendations.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

This report forms part of the Council's Covid Economic Recovery Programme, which has been designed to help support and improve economic viability of Town Centre's across the district. The study conducted by Studio 3, is a completely independent view of the status of the economy in Sun Street, Waltham Abbey and identifies what is necessary to increase footfall; support local businesses and help sustain high street viability in the medium term.

Other Options for Action:

Cabinet could decide not to proceed with the recommendations, or, to agree to some and not others.

Report:

1. The Council's Covid Economic Recovery Programme agreed by Cabinet in July, includes a wide range of work to help support local business recovery and the future sustainability of local Town Centres. These include; Waltham Abbey, Ongar, Loughton, Buckhurst Hill and Epping. Officers have already made good progress on this work and across a number of associated projects and now seek cabinet approval to implement a range of initiatives directly related to Waltham Abbey Town centre.

2. As part of the Council's Safer Spaces initiative, work was undertaken by Directors within the designated High Streets and Waltham Abbey and Ongar were assessed as requiring priority intervention. This work was followed up by the appointment of Studio 3 Business Consultants

in mid- September who were commissioned to undertake work initially in Waltham Abbey, including a swift assessment of retail and business status and footfall within Sun Street, which was followed by a more detailed assessment and production of a Regeneration Study and Proposals, for Sun Street and the surrounding town centre.

3. The final study contains details of the efficacy of current town management; the retail and business 'offer' and viability; appearance of the town; access and transport and the consultation undertaken with local residents and businesses. It additionally provides a list of recommended actions to help economic sustainability of the town centre and to improve and enhance resident and general visitor satisfaction.

4. Within the initial assessments undertaken, there were a number of quick wins identified and these are currently being actioned through the Council's Street Rangers and include; re-levelling of pavement slabs, clearance of rubbish, repair and renovation of street benches and replacement of Market Square gates, to prevent vehicles from driving into the square. This work is being funded through the Local High Streets DDF fund agreed by Cabinet in April (post Covid list) and existing street management budgets.

5. As can be seen in the report, many of the recommended actions require officer time to liaise and work with Waltham Abbey Town Council and other local stakeholders, including residents and businesses. As such, one of the key recommendations included is for the Council to appoint a fixed term Towns Centre Manager post, to initially lead discussions and interventions in Waltham Abbey and then subsequently Ongar with a second post joining so work across all the town centres in the District in conjunction with local town and parish councils.

6. The other more significant recommendation in the report, suggests the benefits of establishing a Community Hub in Waltham Abbey, by bringing together the District Museum and Waltham Abbey Library and redesigning the space available to accommodate a community space for training, skills, drop-in workspace and general activities and events. Discussions with Essex County Council have already taken place on this and a feasibility and costed appraisal has already been undertaken for this. A separate report is being presented to Cabinet on this.

7. Work has also commenced on a similar appraisal and study for Ongar Town Centre by Studio 3 and the remaining town centres will be addressed over the next few months.

8. This report therefore seeks Cabinet approval to proceed with the recommended actions relating to Waltham Abbey and particularly, agreement on the proposal to appoint a Town Centre Manager who will commence work in Waltham Abbey and then follow this with work across the other town centres.

Resource Implications:

The bulk of the recommendations included in the report are to be funded from within existing resources, but the Town Centre Manager post is pivotal to the success of interventions and effective dialogue with local Town and Parish Councils and this cost will need to be met by EFDC. A DDF sum of £65k was agreed by Cabinet for Local high Streets Regeneration work over 2020/21 and recurrent in following years but was deferred in the Post Covid exercise. As stated in the report, therefore Cabinet approval is required to earmark £150,000 from the unallocated General Fund balance, to the District Development Fund Reserve, to fund the initiative – at £50,000 per annum – for three-years commencing 2021/22".

Legal and Governance Implications:

All work undertaken in town centres will be coordinated and approved with respective Town and Parish Clerks and Councils and reported to FDC's Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet Committees.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

It is anticipated that work proposed for Waltham Abbey Town Centre, will improve public safety and security during evenings, through initiatives such as replacement of defective lamp posts in and around the town centre and will improve cleanliness, with the installation of replacement waste bins and effective rubbish clearance.

Consultation Undertaken:

Ongoing consultation has taken place with EFDC Officers and local stakeholders, including Waltham Abbey Town Council, Ward Members, Businesses and retailers and residents. Further consultation is ongoing with local residents via survey monkey.

Background Papers:

Initial study produced by Studio 3 Business Consultants and subsequent detailed Regeneration Study & Proposals as included with this report.

Risk Management:

None identified.

Equality Impact Assessment

1. Under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010, when making decisions, Epping District Council must have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty, ie have due regard to:

    - eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act,
    - advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not,
    - fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

2. The characteristics protected by the Equality Act are:

    - age
    - disability
    - gender
    - gender reassignment
    - marriage/civil partnership
    - pregnancy/maternity
    - race
    - religion/belief
    - sexual orientation.

3. In addition to the above protected characteristics you should consider the cross-cutting elements of the proposed policy, namely the social, economic and environmental impact (including rurality) as part of this assessment. These cross-cutting elements are not a characteristic protected by law but are regarded as good practice to include.

4. The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) document should be used as a tool to test and analyse the nature and impact of either what we do or are planning to do in the future. It can be used flexibly for reviewing existing arrangements but in particular should enable identification where further consultation, engagement and data is required.

5. Use the questions in this document to record your findings. This should include the nature and extent of the impact on those likely to be affected by the proposed policy or change.

6. Where this EqIA relates to a continuing project, it must be reviewed and updated at each stage of the decision.

7. All **Cabinet, Council, and Portfolio Holder reports must be accompanied by an** EqIA. An EqIA should also be completed/reviewed at key stages of projects.

8. To assist you in completing this report, please ensure you read the guidance notes in the Equality Analysis Toolkit and refer to the following Factsheets:

- Factsheet 1: Equality Profile of the Epping Forest District
- Factsheet 2: Sources of information about equality protected characteristics
- Factsheet 3: Glossary of equality related terms
- Factsheet 4: Common misunderstandings about the Equality Duty
- Factsheet 5: Frequently asked questions
- Factsheet 6: Reporting equality analysis to a committee or other decision making body

Section 1: Identifying details
Your function, service area and team: Economic Development
If you are submitting this EqIA on behalf of another function, service area or team, specify the originating function, service area or team: N/A
Title of policy or decision: Economic Regeneration of Waltham Abbey Town Centre
Officer completing the EqIA: John Houston Tel: Ext 4094 Email: jhouston@eppingforestdc.gov.uk
Date of completing the assessment: 19/11/20

Section 2: Policy to be analysed	
2.1	Is this a new policy (or decision) or a change to an existing policy, practice or project? New
2.2	Describe the main aims, objectives and purpose of the policy (or decision): The main aims of the decision and recommendations is to enable action to be taken to improve the viability and long -term sustainability of Sun Street in Waltham Abbey. What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve (ie decommissioning or commissioning a service)? To increase residents' footfall and visitors to Sun Street, to create a vibrant and successful town centre
2.3	Does or will the policy or decision affect: • service users • employees • the wider community or groups of people, particularly where there are areas of known inequalities? The decision affects members of the public, local businesses and retailers, in an area that is identified as being disadvantaged and with families living in poverty. Will the policy or decision influence how organisations operate? The decision will help to encourage businesses to operate in new and different ways, I order to attract new customers and improve the aesthetics of Sun Street and the surrounding area.
2.4	Will the policy or decision involve substantial changes in resources? Funding required to progress proposals is already earmarked within the Economic Development budget as a DDF item for Local high Streets Regeneration.

2.5	Is this policy or decision associated with any of the Council's other policies and how, if applicable, does the proposed policy support corporate outcomes?

Section 3: Evidence/data about the user population and consultation[1]	
As a minimum you must consider what is known about the population likely to be affected which will support your understanding of the impact of the policy, eg service uptake/usage, customer satisfaction surveys, staffing data, performance data, research information (national, regional and local data sources).	
3.1	What does the information tell you about those groups identified? Data tells us that health inequalities and low income are issues affecting residents living in Waltham Abbey and that education achievement is lower than other places in the district and Essex. There are also considerable numbers of key workers living in Waltham Abbey , who have limited income and access to local services.
3.2	Have you consulted or involved those groups that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision you want to implement? If so, what were their views and how have their views influenced your decision? Open consultation has been undertaken with people shopping in Waltham Abbey and with local businesses and retailers and an online consultation is in place until end of December.
3.3	If you have not consulted or engaged with communities that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision, give details about when you intend to carry out consultation or provide reasons for why you feel this is not necessary: As above

Section 4: Impact of policy or decision		
Use this section to assess any potential impact on equality groups based on what you now know.		
Description of impact	**Nature of impact** Positive, neutral, adverse (explain why)	**Extent of impact** Low, medium, high (use L, M or H)
Age	Positive – As the decision will help to improve local amenities and develop a better sense of place for the community.	med
Disability	Positive – Works to improve the walkway through Sun Street, will reduce potential for trip hazards and better signage and lighting will help people with poor eyesight feel safer.	med
Gender	Neutral	
Gender reassignment	Neutral	
Marriage/civil partnership	Neutral	
Pregnancy/maternity	Positive – for reasons above	med
Race	Neutral	
Religion/belief	Neutral -Although more people may be encouraged to visit Waltham Abbey Church	
Sexual orientation	Neutral	

Section 5: Conclusion			
		Tick Yes/No as appropriate	
5.1	Does the EqIA in Section 4 indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more equality groups?	**No**	
		Yes	If '**YES**', use the action plan at **Section 6** to describe the adverse impacts and what mitigating actions you could put in place.

Section 6: Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts		
What are the potential adverse impacts?	**What are the mitigating actions?**	**Date they will be achieved.**

Section 7: Sign off **I confirm that this initial analysis has been completed appropriately.** **(A typed signature is sufficient.)**	
Signature of Head of Service: Julie Chandler	Date: 19/11/20
Signature of person completing the EqIA: John Houston	Date: 19/11/20

Advice

Keep your director informed of all equality & diversity issues. We recommend that you forward a copy of every EqIA you undertake to the director responsible for the service area. Retain a copy of this EqIA for your records. If this EqIA relates to a continuing project, ensure this document is kept under review and updated, eg after a consultation has been undertaken.

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The vacancy rates table for the Town Centre Surveys

Most of the Town Centres have stayed the same with the exception of Ongar and Loughton High Road which have an increase in no. of vacant units. The data for Ongar reported a 20% vacancy rate.

Town/District Centre	Number of Vacant Units 2019	Proportion of overall units	Number of Vacant Units 2020	Proportion of overall units	% Change	Continuous Vacancies (2019-2020)
Buckhurst Hill	6	6%	7	6%	0%	Of the 7 units recorded as vacant in 2020, 2 were recorded as vacant in the 2019 survey
Ongar	12	15%	16	20%	5%	Of the 16 units recorded as vacant in 2020, 9 were recorded as vacant in the 2019 survey
Epping	16	10%	17	10%	0%	Of the 17 units recorded as vacant in 2020, 7 were recorded as vacant in the 2019 survey
Loughton High Road	12	6%	21	10%	4%	Of the 21 units recorded as vacant in 2020, 7 were recorded as vacant in the 2019 survey
Loughton Broadway	5	8%	5	8%	0%	Of the 5 units recorded as vacant in 2020, 2 were recorded as vacant in the 2019 survey
Waltham Abbey	14	11%	13	10%	-1%	Of the 13 units recorded as vacant in 2020, 8 were recorded as vacant in the 2019 survey

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Waltham Abbey
Regeneration Study and Proposals

"The most successful high streets and town centres will need to change to reflect the communities they serve by transforming themselves into community hubs, playing to their strengths of offering human interaction and a unique sense of place and community"

HM Government response to an enquiry into High Streets and Town Centres in 2030 (presented to Parliament in 2019)

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Date: **26 October 2020**

Epping Forest District Council

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Foreword

Epping Forest District Council are reviewing a number of their town centres with the objective of regenerating them and making them a better and more attractive place to live, work, visit and play. There have been numerous projects over the years to generally improve the amenities, however the UK as a whole is now in the midst of a new era which will undoubtably change high streets up and down the country. Covid 19 has unexpectedly changed the way we live and also as a result, our relationship with our local high street and/or town centre. More people are now shopping locally and more people are working from home, which in turn is encouraging them to use their local amenities on a more regular basis. The Grimsey Review advises that high streets need to be re-invented as unique community hubs, designed around health, education, culture, housing, leisure and arts and crafts, along with retail shops. If towns can get it right, consumers should emerge from the pandemic with a stronger sense of community and a desire to support their local town centre. Strong high streets can build communities, keep crime at bay and foster civic pride and togetherness.

A YouGov poll revealed that only 9% of Britons want life to return to "normal" after the coronavirus outbreak is over. The positive from the above is that this is a great time to engage with our local communities and reinvent our town centres while the focus is on them and before things automatically revert to the "old" normal.

The Grimsey Review goes on to advise that for town centres and high streets to thrive and rediscover their community purpose we need to see:

1) Localism - A massive shift in power to local communities and a renewed focus on localism. Local people must be empowered to redesign their own high streets and have a say on the businesses, services and amenities that occupy it.

2) Leadership - Local leaders should be valued and recognised. Candidates for leadership roles should be selected for having a broad range of dynamic and collaborative skills in order to get the best out of communities. Local leaders who embrace change and are brave enough to imagine a new world have a better chance of succeeding.

3) Fewer cars, more green spaces - fewer streets and a huge expansion of green space, parks and town squares. Our towns must no longer be designed around the car as people learn to appreciate the benefit of open spaces.

Other important takeaways from the Grimsey Review that should be considered is the fact that there is a growing view among young adults that businesses need to be accountable to more than their bottom line and for the wellbeing of people and communities. It goes on to confirm that 72% of millennials (aged 24 to 38) would rather spend their money on an experience or an event than buying things and that this is reflected in the shift towards leisure, arts, culture and dining on the high streets. Deloitte's 2019 Millennial Survey showed that millennials will patronise and support companies that align with their values and make a positive impact on society. Generation Z's (aged 5 to 23) are also socially focussed with their opinions on companies formed by their ethics, practices and social impact.

The Grimsey Review confirms that town and high street plans should put sustainability and the environment at the heart of everything; should base their development on quality of life and experiences and not blind mass consumerism; should recognise and reward great local leadership; and allow local communities to develop their places to compete for people to live, work, visit and play.

Introduction

Waltham Abbey is a great town to develop for the future and adapt to the changing needs mentioned above. It already has a superb town centre and market square and an abundance of green spaces. The town just needs to be remodelled around the community to make a more vibrant and relative space and its residents and businesses encouraged and empowered to make the transformation into a town they can be proud of. Success is about breathing life back into Sun Street and Market Square, about giving consumers other reasons to visit the town centre other than just the shops and making the experience enriching and the town centre a place to be seen in.

Waltham Abbey has the second largest population of any of the towns governed by Epping Forest District Council and as such deserves due recognition and attention. Waltham Abbey isn't a town that you would visit or pass through unless you were going to a specific destination within it. Although it is accepted that Waltham Abbey is seen as a tourist destination which undoubtably adds to the local economy, there is little within the town which would encourage people to stay there and more importantly, spend money, beyond seeing specific attractions.

As a result, it is felt that the emphasis should be very much on developing a town in the first instance for residents and businesses. This regeneration and renewed enthusiasm in the town will result in a town centre that local people can be proud of with a brighter more buoyant market, new shops and a range of interesting activities and events. This in turn will provide for a more interesting place for visitors and tourists and a place where they will be happy to dwell and frequent more of the town's shops, businesses and attractions. The other benefit is that the town will also become more attractive for people looking to move to the area, which in turn will increase the local economy.

So, how do we go about it?

1. Town Management

1.1 Town Centre Leadership

Town centre regeneration is about localism and local leadership and the way to make this work is to provide local leadership with its finger on the pulse and with a connection to the local community. Therefore, and accepting that this project is being driven by Epping Forest District Council, it is suggested that buy in, action and leadership should be provided by Waltham Abbey Town Council, with the support of a Town(s) Centre Manager appointed by the District Council.

All Town Councillors live in Waltham Abbey and as a result should be able to bring the local community and businesses together and develop a strong visionary plan to reinforce the distinctive heritage of the town and assist in making the town centre a real community hub. However, the role of an independent Town Centre Manager will be critical to provide professional expertise and an unbiased view on what is needed locally.

Recommendations:

1) ***Engage with Waltham Abbey Town Council (WATC)***
2) ***Obtain WATC commitment to the scheme and to providing leadership and support***
3) ***Work with WATC to establish and action a realistic plan***

1.2 Town(s) Centre Manager

It is suggested that the Council commits to the appointment of a Town Centre Manager initially on a two -year fixed term basis., initially to be based in Waltham Abbey. The manager would act as a single point of contact to receive ideas, thoughts and views from local stakeholders and as such, would be known and trusted by businesses, retailers and residents. They would work with the Town Council to ensure that standards are adhered to and that the town is as vibrant and attractive to local people and visitors as possible. A review of the post would be undertaken after 12 months to assess progress against the Town Centre action plan and the success of interventions and extended if necessary.
NB. As a part of their regeneration, Stockton-on-Tees council has pulled together a multi-disciplinary team of market management, street licensing, civil enforcement and business support to manage their town centre. Stockton is a much larger town than Waltham Abbey, however the principles of hands on organisation and management are much the same.

Recommendations:

4) ***Write Job profile and agree responsibilities for Town Centre Manager post***
5) ***Post to be part of EFDC Economic team within Strategic Planning Directorate***
6) ***Town Team establishment to be priority***

1.3 Establishment of a Town Team

To achieve the required changes, considerable two-way dialogue needs to be sought from the towns' residents and businesses. Buy-in from the community is important to ensure that there is a need or requirement for any proposed changes and that as a result these are carried out with the support of the town. Waltham Abbey already has a Town Partnership and it is thought that this could be used as a catalyst for pulling together a formal Town Team.

It is important that the Town Team is made up of a cross section of the community including residents, businesses and retailers. A fair representation of age, sex and race should be included and input should

be encouraged from organisations such as educational establishments, religious groups, social groups (e.g. Scouts etc) together with members of the town council and tourism & visitor groups.

The library/museum could be used to establish a community hub base and a place where public opinions could be shared and discussed and a centre of community well-being for the town.

Recommendations:

7) ***Decide with WATC the make up of a Town Team and what it will be called.***
8) ***If utilising current Town Partnership, engage with and obtain commitment and support from Chairman and current Town Partnership.***
9) ***Arrange initial meeting to establish parameters and put in place plan for town team development and action.***

1.4 High Street Chamber of Commerce

To develop the town centre retail offer and motivate and drive retailers, I would recommend the formation of a Chamber of Commerce. This would provide support to retailers, agree and advise on events and town centre services and pull together some enthusiasm for retailers to build and grow their businesses and make a constructive change to the retail environment.

Recommendations:

10) ***Test retailer appetite for town centre Chamber of Commerce – if positive response, arrange first meeting and agree perimeters.***

1.5 Attracting New Businesses and Brands

In conjunction with the Town Team, work could be done to identify key brands, businesses and/or other organisations to attract to the town and then steps taken to secure them.

Recommendations:

11) ***Put in place programme to encourage new businesses.***
12) ***Target prospective businesses.***
13) ***Communicate requirements to commercial agents.***

2. Town Offer

2.1 The High Street: Sun Street and Market Square

The interesting thing in Waltham Abbey is that unlike many other high streets up and down the country the retail units in Sun Street and Market Square are well occupied and have a vacancy rate of circa 5%, which is well under half of the national average. Further, having spoken to a local commercial agent, it is understood that the currently empty units have new tenants lined up and will be occupied shortly.

With the general opinion being that town centres should move away from being mainly retail and be made up with a larger combination of other components such as health, education, culture, housing, leisure, arts and crafts, this may be a worthwhile consideration in high streets where retail is dying but a little more difficult in high streets such as Waltham Abbey. Having said that, it is felt that Waltham Abbey lends itself nicely to becoming more of a community hub. Its layout provides an ideal spread of venues for a range of events and activities and there are properties available which could be used for a range of community activities including start-ups, pop ups, demonstrations, arts & crafts, shows etc.

2.2 Market Square

This is a large open space which other than on market days does no more than provide a free car park, mainly I understand, for retailers. In the short term at least, the gate should be fixed/replaced in order that the square is clear (this item is being attended to as a part of the "quick wins" mentioned above).

My suggestion in this space to add interest and take away from an empty square would be to erect covered structure in the middle. I have been informed by EFDC Museum Officers of the former existence of a medieval moot hall, which became a market hall and painted by Rowlandson in the early 1800s. This historic reference could form the basis of a new structure to be used as an exhibition/performance space and utilised by the market as a feeder into shop trading to diversify the offer. It would provide a focal point for the square providing some interest and would also provide a further venue to put on events and assist in achieving the towns objective of becoming a Community Hub.

Recommendations:

1) ***Decide on viability of adding some form of covered structure to Market Square.***
2) ***Instruct architect/designer and look at options and costings.***
3) ***Build suitable choice.***

2.3 Shops

Waltham Abbey is a good high street from the point of view that it has a low retailer vacancy rate. It is considered that there is an issue however in respect of the type of shops available and their attractiveness from a visitor perspective. In general terms, 25% of the town centre is general retail, 24% are food and beverage and 19% hair and beauty. There is little in the way of branded shops from the larger chains, which in the current environment is why the town centre is generally buoyant.

My observation is that the general retail is more day to day and resident focussed, as is the hair and beauty offer. It would be nice if the general retail sector could attract more in the way of antique and curiosity shops, gift shops, art gallery's and perhaps boutiques and home interior type shops which would encourage more in the way of general interest and in turn browsing.
The food and beverage offer is limited in its range and attractiveness to visitors and there is little in the way of premium coffee shops, bars and restaurants which would prove attractive to both the local community and the visitor and tourist market.

Although it is hard to shape the type of tenants within the high street, perhaps through consultation and ongoing contact with the retailers, the existing businesses could be developed to offer innovative and distinctive food and also experiential and community-based services.

The good news is that at the current time people are tending to shop nearer to home and using their local town centres as opposed to going to the larger out of town shopping centres. Retailers should take advantage of this and go that extra mile to ensure a clean, safe and welcoming environment offering a comprehensive range of products and services. If customers can see the benefit of shopping local and enjoy it, they are less likely to change their habits when the pandemic is brought under control.

2.4 Waltham Abbey Market

The Grimsey Review highlighted the importance of markets and their positive effect on residents. In a report by the Institute of Place Management (2015) it explained why markets are economically,

socially and politically critical for town centres. The report also confirmed that markets can generate footfall increases of circa 25% and have been shown to increase retail sales with market visitors spending money in other shops. The report then goes on to explain that markets provide low barriers to entry and as result can encourage new businesses and nurture retail innovation.

Waltham Abbey has a great market history and still supports two markets per week – on Tuesday's and Saturday's. Although it's promoted through the Tourist Information as the "Historic Waltham Abbey Market", it is in fact disappointing and badly supported. On most days, it has less than ten stalls and is rather untidy with traders vans parked all around market square.
Talking to the Town Council and the Market Manager, it would appear that very little is done to develop the market and that little effort is made to attract and encourage new and more frequent traders. We know, from the success of North Weald market that, particularly in the current climate, markets are generally successful, well supported and attended. Waltham Abbey has an ideal market location in and around an accessible, spacious and attractive market square.

A busy and successful market will add to the attraction of Waltham Abbey as a destination, whilst at the same time providing additional footfall for other town retailers, attractions, services and facilities.

In addition to the general markets on Tuesdays and Saturdays, there's the opportunity to bring in speciality markets such as a farmers, french, italian, arts & crafts, antique markets etc.

Recommendations:
4) WATC to review town markets and make proposals for their development.
5) Review market layout, pitches and parking arrangements for traders.
6) Put in place a calendar of feature markets i.e. Farmers, antiques, French, Italian etc.

2.5 The Library, Museum and Old Police Station

I have seen the plans for the Museum and Library and am fully on board with the idea behind it and the proposals being made. Although, from what I understand, the proposal for the purchase of the old police station have been discounted. I really think that this decision should be reviewed.

The purchase of the old police station would be a worthwhile community and council asset. It would ensure that the site be used for the benefit of the community whilst at the same time providing for an element of residential accommodation and an extension of the museum and library site. This unit could bring an additional area for regular town-based activities and community events and could also provide space for adhoc events, such as pop up food stalls, shops and businesses, art exhibitions, workshops etc – activities which support meaningful work, local trade, well-being and belonging.

Recommendations:
7) EFDC to purchase Waltham Abbey Police Station
8) Develop police station site as a community asset and combine with museum/library proposals.
9) Plan and execute various community events, including pop up shops, markets, arts & crafts, community business events etc.

2.6 Tourist Destination

Waltham Abbey is promoted quite heavily as a tourist destination. Although it has a beautiful church and gardens, the Epping Forest Museum and is within easy reach of Lee Valley Regional Park, I feel that the towns position as a tourist destination is very much secondary to Waltham Abbey being a town for its residents and businesses. Having said this, tourism and visitors to the town are clearly an

important element of the town's economy. Increasing the towns viability for residents, will also have the knock-on effect of making it a more attractive town for visitors.

With the general shift away from consumerism, more people working from home and the requirement for increased experiences, local tourism will become even more important. As a result, work should be done to develop close partnerships between the town centre and the tourism sector with a view to reducing the reliance on retail shops, whilst at the same time increasing the generally footfall around the town. It is understood that work has been done to develop a town trail and to tie this in with a number of promotions and discounts from town centre retailers – this is exactly the sort of thing which should be developed and extended.

Recommendations:
10) Town Team and Chamber of Commerce to liaise with the tourism team and pull together joint ventures and program of events.

2.7 Waltham Abbey Community Hub

The key to a community hub, much the same as in the "20-minute neighbourhood" is to have a full range of services and facilities within easy reach of each other. This comprises of homes, shops, businesses, green spaces, schools, medical centres, play areas etc together with function space within which community events can take place. To my mind, Waltham Abbey has three clear spaces for community and town events; the Town Hall at one end of the town centre, Market Square in the middle and the Museum and Library at the other end, all interspersed with shops, pubs and restaurants.

The nice thing about this is that events and therefore the people can be spread out across the town utilising a combination of indoor hall, outdoor Market Square and the museum and library depending on the events being put on. This in turn will encourage people to move around the town and in doing so visit a wider range of shops and facilities.

Although Waltham Abbey town centre is to the west of the town and not terribly central, it is fairly accessible within a relatively short time for all. The plan would be to develop this accessibility and then to arrange for a continual series of events, markets, demonstrations and attractions to draw people into the town centre and for the local community to gel, bond and become a community as a whole.

Recommendations:
11) Set up community hub base within museum/library and man it on agreed days/times.
12) Publicise Community Hub.
13) Pull together program of events and activities for the year.

2.8 Love Waltham Abbey Residents Card

As a way of communicating with and building relationships with local residents, perhaps a Love Waltham Abbey card scheme could be developed. The facility would offer residents discounts, offers and preferential rates on various products, services and facilities throughout Waltham Abbey on production of the card – which would in turn encourage residents to use their local area and town centre.

The card could also be used as a library card, to allow resident discounts at the local leisure centre and used in the towns car parks to obtain the aforementioned free parking rates.

Shop local campaigns and marketing could also be formulated around the Love Waltham Abbey residents card – Love Waltham Abbey, Shop Waltham Abbey!
This idea could also be rolled out on a larger scale – i.e. Epping Forest Resident Discount Card – offering a range of discounts, special offers and promotion across the Epping Forest district.

Recommendations:
14) Agree that Love Waltham Abbey Resident Card is viable proposition.
15) Design programme, implement and process.

2.9 Public Facilities

If the town centre is going to meet people's needs both Sun Street and Market Square should be reviewed to ensure that there are the required public facilities. These facilities would include adequate seating for all sections of the community in all areas, open, clean & functional public toilets, adequate lighting at all times across all areas of the town centre, bike racks/hoops in easily accessible places including Market Square and Sun Street and dog poo bins.

Recommendations:
16) Add benches and seating within town centre and ensure adequate for needs of town.
17) Add bike racks/hoops within Sun Street and Market Square and at other destinations.
18) Repair faulty street lighting in Sun Street and ensure adequate lighting across all areas.
19) Add dog poo bins in Sun Street and Market Square and other areas as appropriate.
20) Service public toilets and ensure clean and functional at all times.

3. Appearance

My overall feeling about Waltham Abbey town centre is that it looks sad and unloved. Elements of it desperately require attention and I think these are key to making the town a better place to live and work and also to make the town a community hub which residents, businesses and retailers can be proud of. Some of these matters have already been identified as "quick wins" (see appendices 1 & 2) which can be attended to quickly and at relatively low cost.

"Quick Wins" already underway and to be carried out by Highway Rangers:

- ***Repainting railings***
- ***Replanting trees***
- ***Replacing waste bins***
- ***Repainting Quaker Lane bike racks***
- ***Refurbishing benches***
- ***Attendance to uneven paving***
- ***Replacement of Market Square gates***
- ***The enforcement team are also reviewing the recent dumping of rubbish in Sun Street***

3.1 Shop Fronts

Some consideration should be given to standardising the shop fronts and making them appropriate in colour and design to the town centre. The town centre falls within the Waltham Abbey conservation area and as such therefore should require local authority consent to any change in shop front.

There is of course no obligation for landlords or retailers to renew their shopfronts, however perhaps a scheme could be developed where the local authority does some sort of match funding to assist in the renewal and updating of shop fronts.

Recommendations:

1) ***Consult with retailers and consider options in respect of Town Centre shop fronts and making them more in keeping with the town centre.***
2) ***Consider match funding or other scheme to assist in and encourage updating of town centre shop fronts.***

3.2 Trees and Planters

The whole of Market Place and Sun Street are calling out for trees and planters to make the space softer, more appealing and bring some of the areas open spaces into the town centre. Proposals in this respect have been made and are currently under consideration.

Tree line pedestrian routes and landscaped areas all contribute to civic pride and generally make them more attractive.

Recommendations:

3) ***Review current townscape and carry out recommended planting.***

3.3 A Boards

Looking down the length of Sun Street, you see a messy array of A boards – some in the middle of the street. The importance of these boards is understood, however I feel that some form of regulation should be imposed to ensure their positioning and maintain the overall appearance of the town.

Considerations should be given to some form of demarcation outside each store which seating, A boards and other retail paraphernalia cannot overstep. This would ensure that the centre of the street is kept clear for pedestrians.

Recommendations:

4) ***Put in place demarcation markings for shop A boards, seating and retail paraphernalia.***

4. Access

Town centres need to recognise that Co2 emissions have to be reduced and as a result there is much more emphasis on ensuring a reduced reliance on cars. To this end, town centres need to ensure their accessibility via other methods of transport and provide for these methods accordingly. In addition to reducing carbon emissions this will also encourage the use of the town centre by a wider range of the community via numerous methods of transport.

Simply stopping car access and reducing or taking away parking spaces, doesn't resolve this problem. Undoubtably people will still want to access the town centre by car however there is a balance to be had between encouraging pedestrian and cycling access to a town centre and then gradually reducing provision for motor vehicles as other methods of travel develop and gain traction.

For generations urban areas have been designed exclusively around the car. This now has to change and town centres developed to provide attractive, walkable and cyclable physical space

4.1 Pedestrianisation

Pedestrianisation isn't always considered to be the most suitable adjustment to a high street. Waltham Abbey however lends itself nicely to it particularly as Sun Street is fairly narrow and even with one-way traffic would leave very little in the way of pavement space – which obviously is of the utmost importance in view of the current pandemic. The other obvious benefit of pedestrianisation is the ability for pubs and restaurants to lay table and chairs out onto the pavement. This encourages a busier and buzzier environment and overall a much more continental feel.

What lets Sun Street and Market Square down is the use of clay pavers used to pedestrianize it. They are badly laid, uneven and are also in numerous places have weeds and grass growing out of them. In an ideal world these pavers need to be replaced with a paving more sympathetic to the age, environment and layout of the town. The ground also needs to be relevelled to ensure a safe walking environment and accessibility for all, whilst at the same time ensuring adequate drainage in all weathers.

Recommendations:

1) ***Remove clay pavers in Market Square and Sun Street and re-lay in paving more sympathetic to the age, environment and layout of the town.***

4.2 Cycling

In a town the size of Waltham Abbey, all residents should be able to access the town centre, the towns various green and public spaces, leisure centre and attractions such as The Royal Gun Powder Mills, White Water Centre and Lea Valley Regional Park via a network of secure, safe and clearly marked cycle paths and routes.

In addition, the town should also provide for cycle racks/hoops at the various destinations to enable the bikes to be safely secured. Unlike the current provision at the end of Sun Street and in Quaker Lane car park, these racks/hoops should be made available at various points along Sun Street, in Market Square and at other appropriate locations in and around the various attractions and destinations.

Although it is accepted that cycling down Sun Street isn't appropriate it is felt cycles should be welcome within the down centre and actively encouraged.

Recommendations:

2) ***Review cycling accessibility to Waltham Abbey town centre, attractions and green spaces and make arrangements to provide a network of secure, safe and clearly marked cycle paths and routes.***

4.3 Buses

Bus routes should also be reviewed to ensure all residents have easy access to buses to bring them into and take them out of the town centre. It is suggested that residents should be within a 400 to 500 metre walking distance of a bus stop. Services should also be reliable and punctual. It is understood that the buses used to commute to the stations in Loughton and Waltham Cross are unreliable and also few and far between. If the town wants to promote itself to new residents it is essential that the town is commutable into and out of London.

Recommendations:

3) ***Review/discuss bus routes with Arriva/TfL and amend accordingly***

4.4 Parking

Although use of other methods of transport into the town centre is important, as previously mentioned, it is inevitable that a section of the community will continue to use a car for a variety of reasons. To encourage car drivers into the town centre, it is recommended that the first period of parking (1 hour) be allowed free of charge with normal charges applying thereafter.

It is understood that parking for town centre businesses is also difficult. With this in mind, perhaps one car park could be allocated for business parking with business parking permits being provided to businesses by the town council.

Recommendations:
4) Reduce resident parking charge to first hour free.
5) Consider business parking car park and permits.

4.5 Town Curfew

It is understood that some form of curfew has been put in place within the town centre. Further details should be sought in this respect and the terms of the curfew reviewed.
To my mind, a curfew discourages people, particularly young people, from using the town centre. Although crime, anti-social behaviour, vandalism and general rowdiness cannot be tolerated, it doesn't seem fair or reasonable that the majority of people are penalised for the actions of the few. If we want Waltham Abbey to become a community hub it has to be attractive to all sections of the community at all times.

Recommendations:
6) Review town curfew consult stakeholders and amend appropriately.

4.6 Wi-fi and Digital Presence

The digital age and the need for connectivity is increasingly important for numerous sections of the community and as a result I would suggest a free wi-fi availability within Waltham Abbey town centre.

It should be acknowledged that people are now shopping differently and that circa 30% of retail sales are being done online (Office of National Statistics, Aug 2020). This figure is up from 21.9% at the beginning of March 2020 and the beginning of the Covid 19 lock down. Regardless of the pandemic, online sales will continue to grow, and retail experts KPMG predict the figure rising to 50% by 2025. As a result, retail businesses need to adjust their business models accordingly and develop their offer for both markets.

As a part of adding a wi-fi option to the town centre a social media presence should be developed enabling Waltham Abbey retailers and businesses to market their products and services to town centre visitors and build a link between their online and offline businesses. Mobile technologies and virtual shopping should be used to enhance the consumer town centre experience and in turn increase footfall.

Consideration should be given to bringing in a third party contractor such as Maybe (www.maybetech.com) to develop social media/town centre/retailer collaboration.

Recommendations:

7) Put in place free WIFI within Waltham Abbey town centre & publicise.
8) Agree way forward in respect of Social Media strategy/presence and execute accordingly.
9) Arrange for assistance and support for retailers in establishing an online presence.

5. Consultation

5.1 Market Research

Market research is underway to ascertain the general feelings of residents, retailers and businesses. Surveys have been put onto Survey Monkey aimed at residents and visitors and a separate one for the town's businesses.

Recommendations:
1) Review feedback and incorporate where appropriate.

5.2 Discounted ideas and thoughts

As a result of discussions with stake holders, there are a number of ideas and considerations which I don't feel require further consideration. Some of these are:

- The idea of developing a new town within Waltham Abbey in addition to the current "old town". It is considered that the town isn't big enough to support this and that this would result in two areas of the town being poorly supported and tenanted.

- Development of the Quaker Lane Car Park to provide for car parking at the ground floor level and further retail space on the first-floor level. This may be something for future consideration, however the current town centre requires regeneration before adding further/additional retail options outside of Sun Street and Market Square.

- Development of some of the Town Mead site to provide further housing and/or commercial space.

5.3 Sources of Additional Support

Sustrans (www.sustrans.org.uk) – charity making it easier to walk and cycle

High Streets Task Force (www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk) – supporting communities and local government to transform their high streets.

Maybe (www.maybetech.com) – A smarter approach to social media

Action List	Priority
Highway Rangers to complete "quick wins"	*1*
Discuss with and establish Town Leadership Team	*1*
Form Town Team / refocus Town Partnership	*1*
Appoint Town Centre Manager	*2*
Form Community Hub in Library	*1*
Re-pave Sun Street and Market Square	*2*
Clear town centre of all rubbish and weeds in Sun Street & Market Square	*1*
Provide for additional seating, bike racks/hoops, dog poo bins as appropriate	*2*
Ensure public toilets are clean and functional	*1*
Consult on and plan structure for Market Square	*2*
Plan and implement tree and planter program for Sun Street & Market Square	*2*
Establish retail Chamber of Commerce	*1*
Talk to retailers re shop fronts, A boards, demarcation lines etc	*1*
Review town markets and put in place plans to re-establish and grow them	*1*
Put in place plans to review town cycle paths and implement findings	*2*
Review bus routes and timetables	*3*
Review parking charges and reduce to first hour free	*1*
Review parking arrangements for businesses	*3*
Review town tourism and pull a plan together encompassing town businesses	*3*
Review town WIFI proposal and put in place findings	*2*
Develop town centre social media presence	*2*
Consider Love Waltham Abbey Residents Card – implement and publicise	*2*
Complete research on thoughts and considerations of residents and businesses – incorporate and implement where appropriate	*1*
Review new businesses required in Waltham Abbey and take steps to attract	*3*

Appendix 1 – Bronze, Silver and Gold action list proposed by Paul Maginnis
Waltham Abbey – Items for Consideration/Funding

BRONZE	Comments
1. Improve signage ▪ NO CYCLING ▪ NO PARKING in Market Square 2. Replace/Repair Gates – Sun St, Market Square, Entrance to Square off Church Road ▪ Keys to be held only by WATC 3. Street furniture ▪ Ornate Victorian lampposts, some repairs and a lick of paint ▪ And lightbulbs!! ▪ Replace/Repair/Paint rubbish bins ▪ Replace/Repair/Paint benches 4. Paint Railings Black ▪ Sun St ▪ Market Square ▪ Foxes Parade ▪ Highbridge Street 5. Plant trees in Market Square (mindful of market stall locations) 6. On Market Days (Tues & Sat) ▪ Ban vans from the square – provide free alternate locations ▪ Banners advertising Market • Top of Sun St • Top of Church road	
SILVER	**Comments**
1. Ban A-Boards 2. Bunting in Sun St – Red/White/Blue 3. Flags for Christmas Tree holders down Sun St (Union Jack, English St George, Essex)	
GOLD	**Comments**
1. Set a standard for acceptable colour schemes and size/scale of Fascia Advertising (it is a conversation area). Non-compliant businesses to be offered financial assistant to comply 2. Add benches in Market Square 3. Replace market stalls with new modern frames and table. Have a standard colour scheme for stall covers and tarpaulins 4. Replace Cycle Rack at top of Sun St with modern alternative (with CCTV coverage) 5. Provide Cycle Rack in Quaker Lane car park	

Appendix 2 – Waltham Abbey Town Appraisal
Prepared by Paul Messenger, Studio 3 Ltd, 15/09/2020

Initial review and town appraisal for

Waltham Abbey

Carried out by Paul Messenger
Studio 3 Ltd
Tel: 07973 418 001
Email: pm@studio-3.co.uk

Date: 16 September 2020

Introduction

Studio 3 Ltd have been invited by Epping Forest District Council to carry out a feasibility study and make recommendations for a number of towns within their catchment area. The first of these is Waltham Abbey. This document details our initial findings and makes recommendations for some immediate "quick wins".

Our approach to this project is to understand, engage and create; understanding the objectives of Epping Forest District Council, engaging with local residents, businesses, retailers and other key stakeholders to form a consensus of opinion and then to make recommendations and work with the Council to create a vibrant mixed use town centre pulling together a range of commercial, leisure, cultural/heritage and community businesses, services and activities. The objective behind this is to not only make Waltham Abbey a more attractive town for its existing residents and businesses, but also to be attractive to new residents and businesses and also to tourists and visitors. This in turn will have the effect of increasing the commercial viability of the town, providing more employment opportunities and generally making Waltham Abbey a more attractive and better place to live and work.

There have been a number of studies on the future of the high street, including the Portas Review (2011) and The High Street Report (2018) and we also now have the benefit of the ongoing findings and recommendations of the High Street Task Force as a result of the High Street Report. Although the Covid 19 pandemic now overshadows everything and contributes greatly to the way we live our lives, it is clear from these aforementioned reports that the high street as we have always known it has gone and is now making way for new mixed use town centres incorporating commercial, retail, residential and leisure uses and also both day and night time economies.

Initial Findings

Waltham Abbey is a suburban market town in the Epping Forest District of Essex. The town is 14 miles from central London and lies on the outskirts of North East London. It has a population of circa 22,500 from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds and an average house price of circa £404,000.

Waltham Abbey stands very much on its own and although there are various bus connections, the nearest railway links are in Waltham Cross (7 Minutes by bus), Theobalds Grove (11 minutes by bus) and Loughton (27 minutes by bus). Although the town is within the commuter belt to central London, its transport links make it less attractive with public transport commutes being fiddly and taking over an hour. The town is well situated for road users with easy access to 2 junctions of the M25 and "A" roads into and out of London.

The shopping centre in Market Square and Sun Street is surprisingly buoyant and only has a shop vacancy rate of circa 6% (National Average – circa 11%). I would suggest that it caters primarily for local trade and is predominantly made up of general retail – 25%, food and beverage – 24% and hair & Beauty – 19%. Unlike other high streets, less than 1% of shops here are charity shops. Out of the town centre, there is a large Tesco and a Lidl and on the other side of the town a retail park consisting of Costa, McDonalds, Poundland, Home Bargains, Pets at Home and TK Maxx. Within the town centre itself the only brands are Greggs, Lloyds Pharmacy and Ladbrokes.

Waltham Abbey is promoted as having a "historic" market on Tuesday's and Saturday's. This I found however a little disappointing, particularly as it only had a handful of market stalls with a minimal range of products available. I'm not clear on what the situation is with Market Square outside of market days; it appears to be available for general parking – which I think is a bit of a shame.

On the edge of town, running alongside the M25 there is an industrial estate offering a range of products and services, together with 2 large serviced/virtual office providers for smaller businesses. With the exception of one unit which had obviously suffered a fire, the whole estate appeared to be occupied, busy and bustling.

Beyond the business park is a recreation area offering a golf driving range, multiple football, rugby and cricket pitches, a skate park and numerous other sporting opportunities. There is also the Town Mead Sports and Social Club which is open to all.

Waltham Abbey is promoted as a visitor/tourist destination, but with little attention being paid to what is actually on offer. I found the town centre to be unloved and a little bit scruffy, was disappointed at the "historic" Waltham Abbey Market and although Waltham Abbey Church is quite magnificent, I found its grounds, again lacking some love and attention.

Overall, Waltham Abbey has a nice feel to it and for locals, is fairly self-sufficient in respect of the range of shops, products and services available.

Waltham Abbey has the potential to be a great town and has the infrastructure and potential to grow. For a town so close to London, it has relatively low property prices, has the country feel that people are looking for following the pandemic and is a great place for families and businesses to grow and develop. To do this however some work needs to be done and some attention to detail needs to be applied.

There are a number of "quick wins" which would quickly and cheaply lift the town and put some life back into it:

- ***Undertake regular/daily sweep of Market Square, Sun Street and the town centre car parks utilising an automated/sit on sweeping machine. The council road sweeper is doing a good job but needs support to keep the town looking good.***

- ***Ensure that all rubbish around the town is cleared regularly. There is a growing number of rubbish bags collecting along the railing opposite the Town Hall, there was dumped rubbish outside the Police Station in Sun Street with "Council Aware" labels on them for the best part of a week, there are sacks of rubbish in the walkway running from the car park to Sun Street, next to the Co-Op. There is also accumulated rubbish that needs to be cleared from the rear of the Police Station.***

  I would also suggest that traders are checked to ensure that they have up to date waste clearing licences and that their rubbish is being regularly cleared from their premises – this would particularly apply to the businesses who back onto Darby Drive.

- ***The street furniture, lamp posts, bollards and gates in Market Square and Sun Street need to be repaired and/or repainted.***

- ***Consideration should be given to the addition of further seating, particularly around Market Square***

- ***On Friday night (approx. 20:30) one third of the lamp posts in Sun Street weren't working. This needs to be addressed and fixed.***

- ***Sun Street and Market Square are soulless. There are no planters or hanging baskets. At numerous places there are circles in the paving which I think would have once had trees growing out of them. These have been left to weed over and should either be planted or paved – planting would be my preference.***

- ***There does not appear to be any provision within Sun Street or Market Square for bikes and/or dogs – i.e bike racks to lock your bike to, dog bowls, dog poo bins etc.***

- ***The council should talk to the owner of the old Police Station to see what can be done about making the frontage tidier/more presentable.***

- ***Parking in the town centre car parks should be changed to first hour free, thus enticing people into the town centre without having the need to pay and display – particularly when they only want to be there for a short period of time. I note that for Covid 19, the parking charge has been reduced to 20p for the first 2.5 hours – why have a charge at all??***

- ***The whole of Sun Street and Market Square need weed killing to get rid of the weeds growing out of the paving slabs.***

- ***Retailers should be spoken to to encourage the upkeep of their premises fronting Market Square and Sun Street. The Sun Inn for example has an old chair and a broken sign in Sun Street. It could also probably consider clearing up the cigarette butts in Sun Street left immediately outside the pub by their customers.***

- ***Some of the grounds of Abbey Gardens, particularly those behind metal fencing are littered with plastic bottles, cans, crates etc. These should be cleared.***

Although the items listed above are fairly superficial these are important steps to encourage the people who work and live in the area to have pride in it and also to make the town more attractive for visitors and also for potential business occupiers and their staff.

Commercial Agents

I have spoken to some commercial agent contacts and am awaiting calls back from some others. The general feeling so far is that the demand for retail units is high – mainly from smaller independents who aren't saddled with the responsibilities of the larger chains and are also wanting to take advantage of the relatively lower rents. This is also aided by the relaxation in planning laws relating to restaurants, surgeries etc.

There is an ongoing demand for office space mainly for smaller units, but also for larger businesses which are looking to downside their office space. There is also a demand for businesses which wish to convert office space into service businesses such as doctors, dentist, vets, physio's etc.

This I feel is good news for Waltham Abbey as it provides opportunities to make good use of empty space and attract new businesses to the area.

Moving forward

Moving forward and with a view to obtaining a full and complete appraisal of the area, I would propose in the first instance consulting with the following people/stakeholders:

- Paula Maginnis, Director, Epping DC
- Carly Hammond & Tony O'Connor – Museum, Heritage and Culture, Epping DC
- Paul Violet, Town Team, Waltham Abbey
- Members of Waltham Abbey Town Council
- Shopkeepers/Retailers
- Local Estate Agents
- Local residents & visitors to Waltham Cross
- Managers of Pixel Business Centre and Biz Space
- Bryn Elliott, Market Manager, Waltham Abbey TC

I will be reaching out to the above over the next week or so.

Having pulled together current knowledge, insight, and intelligence we can then start to look at the bigger picture and think a little more "out of the box" about what can be done and what targets should be set.

Local surveys

Appendices 1 & 2 below are proposed survey questions for use with residents/visitors and businesses.

Appendix 1: Proposed High Street Survey Questions

We would now like to ask you about your experiences of using this high street/town centre.

Q1. Thinking about the high street or town/city centre you visit the most, on average, how often do you visit?

1. Daily
2. 2-3 times a week
3. Once a week
4. 2-3 times a month
5. Once a month
6. Less often than monthly
7. Never
8. Don't know

ASK ALL WHO CODE 4, 5,6,7 AT Q1

Q2. What prevents you from visiting your high street or town/city centre more often? Please list up to three factors.
1
2
3

ASK ALL WHO CODE 1, 2, 3 at Q1

Q3. What encourages you to visit your high street or town centre regularly? Please list up to three factors
1
2
3

ASK ALL EXCEPT THOSE THAT CODE 7 IN Q1

Q4. How satisfied or dissatisfied, if at all, are you with the high street or town/city centre you visit the most?

1. Very dissatisfied
2. Quite dissatisfied
3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
4. Quite satisfied
5. Very satisfied
6. Don't know

ASK ALL EXCEPT CODE 6 AT Q4

Q4a. You said that you are {insert answer from Q4}. Why do you say that?

ASK ALL EXCEPT THOSE THAT CODE 7 IN Q1

Q5. Please rank the three most important things to you from the list below for your high street or town/city centre to have.

1. The shops and services are open when I need them
2. It is clean and attractive
3. A good variety of shops
4. The public services I need are there
5. The shops sell the products I need
6. Sufficient car parking
7. Sufficient facilities such as toilets, benches etc.
8. Everything I need is within walking distance of each other
9. Accessible for those with impaired mobility or with a pram/pushchair
10. Good variety of leisure and entertainment facilities
11. Attractive to visitors as well as locals
12. The shop fronts are well-maintained
13. Range of events to attend such as markets, festivals, carnivals etc.
14. Good recreational space
15. Feeling of safety
16. A good place to live
17. People from different backgrounds can meet and mix
18. None of the above
19. Don’t know

ASK ALL EXCEPT CODE 7 AT Q1

Q6. From the list below, please rank the top three things that you feel could be improved for your high street or town/city centre?

a) Better community spaces for people to mix/meet
b) Better green spaces
c) A greater variety of shops
d) More restaurants
e) Fewer empty/boarded up shops
f) Public services hubs, e.g. council services
g) More GP services/Health care services
h) Free from cars
i) Better transport links
j) Regular bus services
k) Better parking facilities
l) More residential areas (e.g houses and flats to live in)
m) Other (please specify)
n) Nothing
o) Don’t know

Q7. We'd now like you to imagine that you are a town planner, involved in planning the facilities and services for a new high street/town centre. Which of the following would be most important to you to include in the plans? Please rank your top 5.

a) GP surgery
b) Library
c) Dentist
d) Health care centre
e) Post office
f) Leisure facilities (e.g gym, swimming pools)
g) Grocery store/ supermarket
h) Bars/pubs
i) Restaurants/cafes
j) Cinema
k) Bank
l) Pharmacy
m) Clothes shops
n) Newsagent
o) Barbers/hairdressers/ beauty salon
p) Book store
q) Coffee shop
r) Department store
s) Electronic goods store
t) Food takeaways
u) Music/movies/video games store
v) Charity shops
w) Travel agent
x) Off licence
y) Launderette/dry cleaners
z) Estate agent
aa) Petrol station
bb) Bookmakers
cc) Community centre
dd) Council services
ee) Housing
ff) Green space
gg) Public toilets
hh) Parking
ii) Excellent phone signal and wifi hotspot availability
jj) Free from cars
kk) Other (please specify)
ll) Don't know

Q8. How important is it to you that a high street or town/city centre has residential areas within walking distance?

1. Not at all important
2. Not very important
3. Quite important
4. Very important
5. Don't know

Q9. Please rate to what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements?

1. The community and voluntary sector should play an active role in the design and delivery of the high street.

• Strongly agree
• Tend to agree
• Neither agree nor disagree
• Tend to disagree
• Strongly disagree
• Don't know

2. Young people should have a greater say on the future of their high street and town centre

• Strongly agree
• Tend to agree
• Neither agree nor disagree
• Tend to disagree
• Strongly disagree
• Don't know

3. A safe and welcoming high street and town centre will enable and empower children and young people to use it more

• Strongly agree
• Tend to agree
• Neither agree nor disagree
• Tend to disagree
• Strongly disagree
• Don't know

Q10. Do you live or work in Waltham Abbey

Live
Work
Both
No

If no, where/how far away do you live and why are you here today?

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED (included as standard, except for disability)

SD1 - Gender: Are you?

Male
Female
Other
Prefer not to say?

SD2 - Please indicate your age…

16-24
25-34
35-44
45-54
65-75
75 and over

SD3 - What is your ethnic group?

White
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups
Asian/Asian British
Black African/Caribbean/Black British
Other ethnic group

Appendix 2: Proposed Business Survey Questions

Q1. What is your line of business?

Q2. How many people do you employ?

Q3. How long have you been based in Waltham Abbey?

Q4. Do you have business premises elsewhere?

Q5. Why is Waltham Abbey attractive to your business?

Q6. Do you/your employees use Waltham Abbey Town Centre?

Q7. Are your employees from Waltham Abbey?

Yes, mainly
No
Don't know

Q8. What could Waltham Abbey do to assist you in growing your business?

Q9. What facilities/services would make Waltham Abbey more attractive to your business?

Appendix 3: Waltham Abbey - Retailer views/opinions

20 retailers were consulted within Sun Street and provided the following comments and all of these would consider being involved in a town centre/retailer Chamber of Commerce – but it would need to be worthwhile.

Market

- Town needs an improved/larger market – more stalls
- Town could do with a food market and/or more food stalls on the current market
- Market should not be allowed to set up directly outside shopfronts
- More speciality markets – food, farmers, antiques etc
- Market should run down Sun Street
- More unique stalls

Age Groups

- Waltham Abbey has a lot of old people in it
- Need to attract more younger people
- Town needs to attract younger people
- There are alot of young people in Waltham Abbey – need to meet their expectations

Pubs

- Pubs can be rowdy (especially Fridays)
- Pubs rowdy on Friday nights

Council Related

- Towns bodies, such as Town Partnership, Council etc is made up of older generations
- No communication from or with Town Council
- Council not focussed on residents
- Council is wasting money on tourism and not on residents
- Business rates are high
- Rubbish collection needs to be addressed – particularly opposite Town Hall where residents have nowhere to dump their rubbish other than along the railings
- Council should monitor shops to ensure not too much repetition
- During recent filming – no courtesy of comms with retailers, no consideration for shops – car parked closed without any notice
- Issue with fly tipping in town centre which needs to be resolved
- Sun Street street lights out of action – making the town centre dark and uncomfortable when leaving in the evening
- Some sort of mouthpiece is required to keep shops informed of what's going on
- More No Cycling signs are needed
- Want to paint shop front to match brands colours, but told they can't by Council

Parking

- Parking situation needs to be resolved – free to park at Tesco, Lidl or retail park but costs in town centre.
- Market Square should be opened up to free short-term parking – to enable people to nip into the shops to pick things up
- Parking area and/or business permits for retailer parking

- Keep Market Square as general parking
- Short term free parking
- 20 minutes free parking in Market Square
- Market vans should be parked away from Market Square
- Market square should allow access for deliveries

General

- Town needs to be more vibrant to draw in residents
- Town needs an uplift - it's been left to decay
- Town centre could do with some brand names/ retail anchors to draw people in
- Town needs more attractions and also things that are attractive to children – as they bring their parents, who spend money
- Town could do with and Outreach centre / fight academy/gym for younger people to take them off of the streets
- Town centre needs more life in it
- Nothing in the town to pull people in
- Encourage different shops so there is a wider variety
- Town needs to be livelier
- Increase awareness of Waltham Abbey shops
- Town could be made more attractive
- More shops of interest
- More variety of shops
- Too many hair and beauty shops and similar type restaurants
- Town has a nice community – just need to work out how to bring them into the town
- Too many cafes and hair & beauty
- Sun Street should be opened up to one-way traffic on certain days of the week
- Town centre could do with a greater Police presence
- Town could do with more offices for local businesses
- Not a lot of my business is from Waltham Abbey – I use social media and attract business from a variety of sources as a result
- I'd like more business from Waltham Abbey
- Police station needs buying and developing
- Mainly Waltham Abbey customers – recommendations

Town Appearance

- Town could be made to look prettier/more inviting
- Sun Street and Market Square needs investment in trees and planters
- More benches needed around the town
- Make the town look pretty – more trees and plants

Attracting New Businesses

- Deals on rents
- Work out how to encourage new and different businesses
- Incentives to attract start up businesses
- Incentives for new businesses to come to town

Tourism

- Tie tourism events up with shops
- Make more of tourism

Banks

- With the banks going, shops now need to go to Waltham Cross to bank – Post Office has a limit of £2k
- Now banks have gone – nothing to bring people in to town
- Last bank is going in 2021 – where do shops bank?

Buses

- Buses after 7pm go quiet
- Shuttle bus needed from Waltham Cross to Tesco's Waltham Abbey

Christmas

- Festival of light has deteriorated over the years
- Town needs a Christmas Market

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Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-052d-2020-21

Date of meeting: 22 December 2020

Epping Forest District Council

Portfolio: Leader

Subject: Waltham Abbey Community and Cultural Hub

Responsible Officer: Jennifer Gould (01992 564073).

Democratic Services: Adrian Hendry (01992 564246).

Executive Summary:

A feasibility study has been undertaken in line with the 2020/21 Budget, by officers for the creation of a Community and Cultural Hub in Waltham Abbey 'the hub,' which will see the District Museum combine with Waltham Abbey Library, owned and managed by Essex County Council.

This proposal is seen as a key opportunity to provide improved Council services to local residents in the area and at the same time, provide a mechanism for supporting economic and community regeneration of the town centre through new and additional footfall to Sun Street and provision of a multi-purpose community learning and skills space.

This report seeks Cabinet approval to continue dialogue with Essex County Council in respect of a potential Service Level Agreement (SLA) and to enable officers to progress discussions with appropriate parties (including Qualis) in respect of funding capital works.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

The Council has a unique opportunity to improve local services to its residents in Waltham Abbey through the establishment of a Community and Cultural Hub that will extend the community hub model currently being built with the Civic Office at its heart. The Waltham Abbey hub will incorporate Essex County Council Library Services, EFDC Customer Services as well as space for partners (e.g. VAEF and EFCA) and the wider community which can be used for learning and skills, drop-in workspace, activities and events.

This hub will be a catalyst for increasing footfall to the Town Centre and supporting the long-term sustainability of retail and local business.

This proposal therefore brings together the benefits of; strengthening the community, assisting regeneration of the high-street and the approach to using the District's buildings as community hubs wherever practical.

Other Options for Action:

Not to proceed with the proposal. However, this will prevent the opportunity for the Council to provide much needed Customer Services and learning opportunities in a disadvantaged area of the district, which is significantly limited by public transport services.

Report:

1. The Council's Museum has operated from Sun Street, Waltham Abbey since 1981 and over the years has attracted significant funding for development from the heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council England, which in the last four years has seen a 61% increase in visitors to the service.

2. It is envisaged that the new facilities and community offer provided through creation of a Community and Cultural Hub in Sun Street, will help to sustain and increase this trajectory through generating new footfall by the local population, and wider catchment area who are attracted to new services and available opportunities.

3. The potential for collaboration and increased partnership working with the library was highlighted in the Local Government Association Peer Review of the Service in 2018 (Appendix 4) and now, with the Council's drive to support regeneration of local town centres, the opportunity has arisen to establish an anchor, community facility in Waltham Abbey.

4. As such, Architects Hawkins\Brown, who led on the museum's redevelopment in 2016, have recently been commissioned to develop an initial options appraisal for the scheme (Appendix 1) which sets out three possibilities, ranging from 'basic' to 'best, and includes Waltham Abbey Police Station, but this has since been ruled out due to cost and availability of the site. Also, due to the significant pressures currently on Council budgets this report seeks Cabinet approval to progress with Option 1 presented in the report, confident that a step change is still possible with this option.

5. The following information highlights the key opportunities arising from provision of a hub in Waltham Abbey.

<u>Economic Contribution</u>

6. During 2019-20, the combined visitor numbers for Epping Forest District Museum Service and Waltham Abbey Library was 105,722 with 46% of visitors being local residents. Additionally, remote digital usage of 507,249 online visits in the same year clearly demonstrates a strong following for the service. Investment at this site would build on this success, providing a catalyst for the regeneration of the town centre and reinforcing a sense of place for local people, increasing footfall to Sun Street and dwell time.

7. In 2018, the population in the Epping Forest District numbered 131,137 and rising. The population across the authority areas surrounding EFDC within Essex, Herts and Greater London is around 1.9million. The site is currently attracting around 7% of the potential market population, therefore investment has great potential to attract new visitors, by providing an anchor point for the Town Centre.

8. A cost study analysis has been undertaken to determine the potential income for the hub. See Appendix 3. The proposal provides the opportunity to create a cohesive, physical and conceptual engine for enterprise, learning, leisure, cultural and community engagement via a range of income initiatives including events, early years play resources, external hire, exhibitions, refreshments, retail and training initiatives. These interventions will help to reinvigorate Waltham Abbey's high street through introducing new facilities alternative to retail.

9. Prior to Covid a number of reports into the future of our high streets highlighted that in a declining retail environment, culture, community and leisure provision are key elements in creating a successful high street offer and this has been stressed as of greater importance in the emerging post Covid-19 environment.

'We firmly believe that our high streets and town centres can have a better and more balanced future ahead of them if our recommendations are followed. This will require a shift from the retail focused activities of high streets and town centres today to new uses and purposes which foster greater social interaction, community spirit and local identity and characteristics. With a properly planned strategic intervention led by the local authority, with the backing of local stakeholders and the wider community, we can redefine our high streets and town centres and ensure their long-term sustainability for future generations to come.'

Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, 2019. Report on High streets and town centres in 2030

Contribution to Health & Wellbeing

10. Combined museum and library venues have the ability to create centres of excellence for community engagement and research, reinforcing a sense of place and belonging. A good example of the potential of this approach is the Beaney House of Art and Knowledge in Canterbury which is operated in partnership by Kent County Council and Canterbury Town Council.

11. The proposal for an integrated Community and Cultural Hub in Waltham Abbey will provide a unique offer in the Eastern Region, which could act as a model for other authorities. More importantly, its position in Waltham Abbey will provide a range of enhanced services for the public, in an area where it is most needed.

12. Our local health statistics show that in the worst-case scenario a male from Paternoster in Waltham Abbey can expect to live 13 years less than a male in Loughton Forest, and 11 years less for a female.

13. Some of the wards in Waltham Abbey also have some of the highest rates of child poverty in our district. This impacts on a child's educational development as those on free school meals are more at risk of falling behind. This is also evidenced by GCSE attainment levels throughout the district, with Waltham Abbey having some of the lowest attainment of 5 GCSEs at grade A*- C across all our wards. Whilst the Council has a strong programme to support our children and young people, the hub will enable a strong base in which to increase and enhance our offer, particularly for those that need it most.

14. Culture and heritage can have significant impact on health and wellbeing, and can be accessed at any stage of life, offering opportunity for people to connect with each other and supporting lifelong learning. Participation and volunteering in culture and community initiatives support individual wellbeing by broadening the horizons of participants, providing opportunities for the vulnerable thus helping to reduce social isolation. Waltham Abbey records some of our highest preventable death rates within our district along with high rates of older people living in deprivation. Investment in the creation of a community and cultural hub within this area, can significantly support the wellbeing of residents leading to improved health.

15. Whilst much of our data is pre-pandemic, the trends will be similar if not reinforced because of COVID-19.

Resource Implications:

16. The estimated costs for this scheme have been provided by Stockdales Quantity Surveyors and as stated, it is proposed to undertake the light refurbishment specification, Option A. See Appendix 2. The figure of £1,540,000 allows for a 10% contingency for any unexpected costs which may arise.

17. A number of income opportunities have been investigated. See Appendix 3. Depending on capital works start and finish time, the likely first financial year reporting on increased income will be 2022/23. We propose that the scheme has the potential to bring in an annual gross income of £212,300.00. It should be noted that these implications have been subject to robust review and are based on prudential estimates.

18. Any additional operational and maintenance costings for the scheme will be investigated in the development of a Service Level Agreement for EFDC to manage the library provision in partnership with Essex. We propose all additional operational costs to be covered under this Service Level Agreement or offset via the additional income received. Officers are preparing a briefing paper on this, to follow, in order to scope out the parameters of the SLA.

19. The scheme also will bring savings to EFDC, which are estimated to the value of £23,280 per annum through collections storage and workshop facilities being brought on to the site.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The transfer of the freehold ownership of 37 Sun Street from Essex County Council to EFDC is being reviewed as ECC's capital contribution to the project. A Service Level Agreement between EFDC and ECC for the management of the building is being investigated; with the ongoing library provision remaining the responsibility of ECC.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

The creation of a community and cultural hub fits within a strategy for the economic regeneration and sustainability of Waltham Abbey Town Centre, which has a range of benefits for people of all ages and abilities living in Waltham Abbey, including opportunities to utilise the community space to train and enhance skills of local young people, including those at risk of entering the criminal justice system.

Consultation Undertaken:

An initial stakeholder review was undertaken in 2018 as part of the Local Government Association Peer Challenge Review (See Appendix 4). Since then, consultation has been undertaken with Essex County Council Senior Library staff and Estates team, as well as Essex County Councillors. A briefing meeting was held with Epping Forest District Councillors in the development of this scheme. Representatives from both Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund have also welcomed the concept.

Background Papers:

- Appendix 1: Hawkins\Brown Feasibility Study, July 2020
- Appendix 2: Stockdale Order of Cost Estimate, July 2020
- Appendix 3: Income Projections for Waltham Abbey Hub
- Appendix 4: LGA Peer Challenge Review April 2018

Risk Management:

- Potential footfall and demand impact if resurgence of Covid 19 (Low risk), learn from actions undertaken to offset lost operating income during the current crisis from various sources of support. We do not anticipate the site to be open to the public until 2022 at the earliest.

- ECC decide not to transfer the capital asset (Medium risk) and prefer to act as capital partners for development cost. Potential reduction in revenue for EFDC off set by reduction in capital outlay.

- Legal delay in the transfer of Freehold of 37 Sun Street (Medium risk), result in delay of project start and finish, impact on project timetable and revenue stream

- Annual Revenue costs exceed budget (Low risk) Well costed proposals, build in efficiencies.

Equality Impact Assessment

1. Under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010, when making decisions, Epping District Council must have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty, ie have due regard to:

    - eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act,
    - advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not,
    - fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

2. The characteristics protected by the Equality Act are:

    - age
    - disability
    - gender
    - gender reassignment
    - marriage/civil partnership
    - pregnancy/maternity
    - race
    - religion/belief
    - sexual orientation.

3. In addition to the above protected characteristics you should consider the cross-cutting elements of the proposed policy, namely the social, economic and environmental impact (including rurality) as part of this assessment. These cross-cutting elements are not a characteristic protected by law but are regarded as good practice to include.

4. The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) document should be used as a tool to test and analyse the nature and impact of either what we do or are planning to do in the future. It can be used flexibly for reviewing existing arrangements but in particular should enable identification where further consultation, engagement and data is required.

5. Use the questions in this document to record your findings. This should include the nature and extent of the impact on those likely to be affected by the proposed policy or change.

6. Where this EqIA relates to a continuing project, it must be reviewed and updated at each stage of the decision.

7. All **Cabinet, Council, and Portfolio Holder reports must be accompanied by an** EqIA. An EqIA should also be completed/reviewed at key stages of projects.

8. To assist you in completing this report, please ensure you read the guidance notes in the Equality Analysis Toolkit and refer to the following Factsheets:

- Factsheet 1: Equality Profile of the Epping Forest District
- Factsheet 2: Sources of information about equality protected characteristics
- Factsheet 3: Glossary of equality related terms
- Factsheet 4: Common misunderstandings about the Equality Duty
- Factsheet 5: Frequently asked questions
- Factsheet 6: Reporting equality analysis to a committee or other decision making body

Section 1: Identifying details
Your function, service area and team:
If you are submitting this EqIA on behalf of another function, service area or team, specify the originating function, service area or team:
Title of policy or decision:
Officer completing the EqIA: Tel: Email:
Date of completing the assessment:

Section 2: Policy to be analysed	
2.1	Is this a new policy (or decision) or a change to an existing policy, practice or project?
2.2	Describe the main aims, objectives and purpose of the policy (or decision): What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve (ie decommissioning or commissioning a service)?
2.3	Does or will the policy or decision affect: • service users • employees • the wider community or groups of people, particularly where there are areas of known inequalities? Will the policy or decision influence how organisations operate?
2.4	Will the policy or decision involve substantial changes in resources?
2.5	Is this policy or decision associated with any of the Council's other policies and how, if applicable, does the proposed policy support corporate outcomes?

Section 3: Evidence/data about the user population and consultation[1]	
As a minimum you must consider what is known about the population likely to be affected which will support your understanding of the impact of the policy, eg service uptake/usage, customer satisfaction surveys, staffing data, performance data, research information (national, regional and local data sources).	
3.1	What does the information tell you about those groups identified?
3.2	Have you consulted or involved those groups that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision you want to implement? If so, what were their views and how have their views influenced your decision?
3.3	If you have not consulted or engaged with communities that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision, give details about when you intend to carry out consultation or provide reasons for why you feel this is not necessary:

Section 4: Impact of policy or decision		
Use this section to assess any potential impact on equality groups based on what you now know.		
Description of impact	**Nature of impact** Positive, neutral, adverse (explain why)	**Extent of impact** Low, medium, high (use L, M or H)
Age		
Disability		
Gender		
Gender reassignment		
Marriage/civil partnership		
Pregnancy/maternity		
Race		
Religion/belief		
Sexual orientation		

Section 5: Conclusion			
		Tick Yes/No as appropriate	
5.1	Does the EqIA in Section 4 indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more equality groups?	No	
		Yes	If '**YES**', use the action plan at **Section 6** to describe the adverse impacts and what mitigating actions you could put in place.

Section 6: Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts		
What are the potential adverse impacts?	**What are the mitigating actions?**	**Date they will be achieved.**

Section 7: Sign off **I confirm that this initial analysis has been completed appropriately.** **(A typed signature is sufficient.)**	
Signature of Head of Service:	Date:
Signature of person completing the EqIA:	Date:

Advice

Keep your director informed of all equality & diversity issues. We recommend that you forward a copy of every EqIA you undertake to the director responsible for the service area. Retain a copy of this EqIA for your records. If this EqIA relates to a continuing project, ensure this document is kept under review and updated, eg after a consultation has been undertaken.

STOCKDALE

Order of Cost Estimate

Library Refurbishment and Fit-Out

Residential Development

for

Epping Forest District Museum and Waltham Abbey Library

Version 1.0
27th July 2020

In association with:

Hawkins\Brown

Stockdale LLP Partnership no: OC421354 Reg. office: As below Regulated by RICS

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Introduction

Basis of Order of Cost

This Order of Cost estimate has been prepared to assist in establishing a realistic target budget for the proposed refurbishment and extension to the library and adjacent buildings, together with the potential residential development to the rear of the site.

The purpose of this Order of Cost is to assist in determining a realistic cost target for the proposed construction works. All costs are an approximation and cannot at this early stage of the design process process be expected to represent the precise final cost of the Works. The figures should be viewed as a guide for the development of the design.

Stockdale has analysed similar projects, using both internal and external data sources, in order to arrive at a benchmark (cost-per-square-metre) rate . These rates are subsequently applied to arrive at a benchmarked construction cost, with adjustments made to reflect the particulars of this project.

The costs in this budget estimate have been adjusted for inflation up to 4Q 2021, a date we have chosen as a potential mid-point for construction.

Information Used in the preparation of Cost Plan

Hawkins Brown Client Presentation, 10th July 2020
Hawkins Brown Costing Feasibility, 14th July 2020
Hawkins Brown Accommodation Schedules, 14th July 2020
Hawkins Brown Accommodation Schedules - Residential Options,14th July 2020
Hawkins Brown Residential Capacity Study, 28th July 2020

Exclusions

VAT - determination of the VAT status of the project will be required.
Exhibits
Mounting exhibits
Interactive displays
Site acquisition and associated costs
Professional fees other than those stated
Inflation in tender prices (beyond date stated above)
Tax fluctuations
Insurance premiums
Community Infrastructure Levy, costs associated with Section 106 type agreements
Legal fees/costs
Any compensation payments which may be payable to others for rights to light
Toxic / hazardous / contaminated material removal e.g. asbestos removal, invasive weeds
Effects of party wall agreements, Building Regulations and planning consent / conditions
Resultant effects on design following site investigations and surveys / design development
Costs associated with delays or phasing
Specialist groundworks
Site infrastructure works (incoming road & services, SUDS, associated landscaping, site preparation)
Extraordinary site investigation work

Temporary or permanent services diversions
Relocation expenses and storage costs
Costs associated with finance / lending
Costs associated with the use of Performance Bonds
Works outside the site boundary
Costs associated with the contract amendments i.e. implementing the use of ESCROW accounts
All professional fees associated with the Exhibition design
Any adverse effects of Brexit
Any adverse effects of the Covid-19 crisis

This Cost Estimate has been prepared for the sole use of Epping Forest District Museum and Waltham Forest Library

Commentary

Library Options

All costs have been adjusted to account for predicted inflation to 4Q 2021, which we have assumed to be the mid-point of construction.

The 'light' refurbishment rate has been set with reference to the cost of the recent works at the museum, which when adjusted for inflation equates to £1,600 per m². The 'medium' and ' comprehensive' refurbishment rates have been set with reference to internal and external data sources, adjusted for location and inflation.

The refurbishment rates to the Police Station have been increased in order to reflect the number of internal partitions that will need to be removed and to allow for subsequent making good.

The fit out rates have been set with reference to the budget for the fit-out works to the museum, adjusted for inflation.

The construction rate for the extension detailed in Option C has been set at £4,000 per m² with reference to the benchmarks on the Extension Benchmark Data page.

Residential Options

The target costs for the residential options have been set after reference to a range of data sources, both internal and external. The costs have been rebased to account for inflation, and to reflect the location of the proposed works.

It should be noted that there may be an additional premium to option 2b due to the number of one bed apartments, which have a relatively high number of internal partitions, kitchen and sanitary installations in relation to the proposed occupancy levels, however this is difficult to quanitfy at this very early stage of the design.

COST SUMMARY - LIBRARY AND ASSOCIATED BUILDINGS

Option A Refurbishment only and first floor research room Area (m²) 580

Construction	**Area (m²)**	**Rate**	**Rounded Total**
Not applicable			

	Light Refurb			**Medium Refurb**			**Comprehensive Refurb**		
Refurbishment	**Area (m²)**	**Rate**	**Rounded Total**	**Area (m²)**	**Rate**	**Rounded Total**	**Area (m²)**	**Rate**	**Rounded Total**
Library refurbishment	580	£1,600	£930,000	580	£2,100	£1,220,000	580	£2,700	£1,570,000
Café / library exhibition fit-out	172	£900	£150,000	172	£900	£150,000	172	£900	£150,000
Goods lift to first floor	1	item	£105,000	1	item	£105,000	1	item	£105,000
			£1,185,000			£1,475,000			£1,825,000
Cost per m²			£2,043			£2,543			£3,147
Fees and VAT									
Professional fees @ 20%			£237,000			£295,000			£365,000
VAT @ 20%			Excluded			Excluded			Excluded
TARGET PROJECT COST (rounded)			£1,400,000			£1,800,000			£2,200,000

Option B Double-height entrance and retaining stables Area (m²) 905

Construction	Area (m²)	Rate	Rounded Total
Not applicable			

	Light Refurb			Medium Refurb			Comprehensive Refurb		
Refurbishment	**Area (m²)**	**Rate**	**Rounded Total**	**Area (m²)**	**Rate**	**Rounded Total**	**Area (m²)**	**Rate**	**Rounded Total**
Library refurbishment	530	£1,600	£850,000	530	£2,100	£1,110,000	530	£2,700	£1,430,000
Police Station refurbishment	305	£1,700	£520,000	305	£2,200	£670,000	305	£2,800	£850,000
Stables block refurbishment	70	£1,600	£110,000	70	£2,100	£150,000	70	£2,700	£190,000
Extra for café/library fitout	204	£900	£180,000	204	£900	£180,000	204	£900	£180,000
Extra for double-height entrance	deemed included			deemed included			deemed included		
Goods lift to first floor	1	item	£105,000	1	item	£105,000	1	item	£105,000
External works to courtyard	1	item	£50,000	1	item	£50,000	1	item	£50,000
			£1,815,000			£2,265,000			£2,805,000
Cost per m²			£2,006			£2,503			£3,099
Fees and VAT									
Professional fees @ 20%			£363,000			£453,000			£561,000
VAT @ 20%			Excluded			Excluded			Excluded
TARGET PROJECT COST (rounded)			£2,200,000			£2,700,000			£3,400,000

Option C Connection Link Area (m²) 974

Construction	**Area (m²)**	**Rate**	**Rounded Total**
Double-height glazed atrium link building	80	£4,000	£320,000
Infill extension to rear of Police Station	11	£4,000	£40,000
			£360,000

	Light Refurb			**Medium Refurb**			**Comprehensive Refurb**		
Refurbishment	**Area (m²)**	**Rate**	**Rounded Total**	**Area (m²)**	**Rate**	**Rounded Total**	**Area (m²)**	**Rate**	**Rounded Total**
Library refurbishment	594	£1,600	£950,000	580	£2,100	£1,220,000	580	£2,700	£1,570,000
Police Station refurbishment	289	£1,700	£490,000	305	£2,200	£670,000	305	£2,800	£850,000
Extra for café/library fitout	230	£900	£210,000	230	£900	£210,000	230	£900	£210,000
Goods lift to first floor	1	item	£105,000	1	item	£105,000	1	item	£105,000
External works to courtyard	1	item	£35,000	1	item	£35,000	1	item	£35,000
			£1,790,000			£2,240,000			£2,770,000
Cost per m²			£2,207			£2,669			£3,214
Fees and VAT									
Professional fees @ 20%			£430,000			£520,000			£626,000
VAT @ 20%			Excluded			Excluded			Excluded
TARGET PROJECT COST (rounded)			£2,600,000			3,100,000			£3,800,000

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT MUSEUM AND WALTHAM FOREST LIBRARY **ORDER OF COST (BENCHMARK STUDY)**

BENCHMARK PROJECTS - EXTENSIONS

BCIS Database

Exclusions - Demolition, facilitating works, ext works, contingency, design fees etc

				BASE DATA						REBASE ADJUSTMENTS						REBASED DATA		Pitch to mean ave. tender	TOTAL	MEAN
				Date		Location		Cost		Date			Location			Cost				
BCIS Ref	**Project**	**Work Nature**	**GIFA (m²)**	**Base Date**	**Base Date Index**	**Base Location**	**Base Location Index**	**Base Cost £**	**Base Rate (£/m²)**	**Rebased Date**	**Rebased Date Index**	**Date Index Change**	**Rebase Location**	**Rebase Location Index**	**Rebase Location Change**	**Re-based Cost £ (Incl Prelims)**	**Rebased Rate £/m²**	**5%**		
#32574	Glossop Library	Horizontal extension	306	1Q 2017	301	Derbyshire	105	£1,153,609	**£3,770**	4Q 2021	341	13%	Epping Forest	104	-1%	£1,295,820	**£4,235**	£4,446	**£4,450**	**£3,900**
#31633	Driffield Library Extension	Horizontal extension	112	1Q 2015	266	East Yorkshire	98	£395,736	**£3,533**	4Q 2021	341	28%	Epping Forest	104	6%	£530,147	**£4,733**	£4,970	**£4,980**	
#31544	Wombwell Library Extension	Horizontal extension	230	4Q 2013	239	West Yorkshire	92	£333,595	**£1,450**	4Q 2021	341	43%	Epping Forest	104	12%	£514,458	**£2,237**	£2,349	**£2,350**	

External Cost Precedents

Note: as this data is from external sources, we cannot verify the accuracy nor the items which may have been included / excluded

	The Beaney, Canterbury	Refurb to Grade II listed building	3,500	2Q 2012	230	Canterbury	111	£8,700,000	**£2,486**	4Q 2021	341	48%	Epping Forest	104	-7%	£12,313,119	**£3,518**	£3,694	**£3,700**	**£4,000**
	Maidstone Museum, East Wing	Refurb and Extension	1,100	1Q 2012	215	Maidstone	107	£3,200,000	**£2,909**	4Q 2021	341	59%	Epping Forest	104	-3%	£4,983,041	**£4,530**	£4,757	**£4,760**	
	Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester	Refurb and Extension	6,000	1Q 2015	266	Manchester	100	£15,000,000	**£2,500**	4Q 2021	341	28%	Epping Forest	104	4%	£19,806,246	**£3,301**	£3,466	**£3,470**	

COST SUMMARY - RESIDENTIAL OPTIONS

Construction	**Area (m²)**	**Rate**	**Estimated Construction Cost**	**Total Construction Cost (Rounded)**
Option 1 - town houses				
3 Nr 3 bed town houses	494	£2,800	£1,383,200	£1,380,000
Site specific costs:				
Provision of rear gardens				Included above
Construction cost estimate			£1,383,200	£1,380,000
Cost per m²			£2,800	£2,800
Fees and VAT				
Professional fees @ 20%			£276,640	£280,000
VAT @ 20%			Excluded	Excluded
TARGET PROJECT COST (rounded)				£1,700,000

Construction	Area (m²)	Rate	Estimated Construction Cost	Total Construction Cost (Rounded)
Option 2b - 3 storey apartment building				
2 Nr 1 bed, 2 Nr 2 bed, 4 Nr 3 bed	950	3,000	£2,850,000	£2,850,000
Site Specific Costs:				
Workshop space	82		Included	
Premium for 1 bed apartments	344		Excluded	
Construction cost estimate			£2,850,000	£2,850,000
Cost per m²			£3,000	£3,000
Fees and VAT				
Professional fees @ 20%			£570,000	£570,000
VAT @ 20%			Excluded	Excluded
TARGET PROJECT COST (rounded)				£3,400,000

Epping Forest District Community & Community Hub:
Bringing together Epping Forest District Museum and Waltham Abbey Library

Assessment of Opportunities for Income and Savings from Activities

NB: The following table provides an example charging model benchmarked against local comparable facilities, along with eastern region museums as supplied by an income assessment report undertaken in 2016 by Barker Langham. An assessment of different income option models is needed as the scheme develops.

Income is gross and so further assessment of each income opportunity is needed to calculate net profit. Depending on capital works start and finish time, the likely first financial year reporting on increased income will be 2022/23.

During 2019-20, the combined on-site visitor numbers for Epping Forest District Museum Service and Waltham Abbey Library was 105,722. To overcome double counting of visitors to both sites, a conservative projected Year 1 visitor number target is estimated at 70,000.

	Light Refurb Option
Project Expenditure	
Refurbishment (inc Professional Fees & VAT)	£1,400,000
10% Contingency on Capital Works	£140,000
Additional Annual Operational & Maintenance Costs	To be confirmed
Total Expenditure	**£1,540,000**
Income Return from Project via example chargeable activities	**Potential Annual Gross Income**
SLA Income from ECC	To be confirmed

Retail (0.70 ASV on 70,000 visitors)	£49,000
Catering (2.00 ASV on 70,000 visitors)	£140,000
Activity Room Hire (based on a range of charging models and bookings across the year)	£8,300
Early Years Play Space (£3 per/head on 100 children per week x 50 weeks)	£15,000
Total Gross Income **(NB. Figure does not account for additional operational & management revenue expenditure)**	£212,300.00
Savings from collections and workshop rental	£23,280
Total Gross Income + Annual Savings per annum	**£235,580.00**
Capital Asset from Essex County Council	To be confirmed

Cultural Services Peer Challenge
Epping Forest District Council

25 & 26 April 2018

Feedback Report

1. Executive Summary

Epping Forest District Council's (EFDC) Museums. Heritage and Culture Service (MHC) provides management services for Epping Forest District Museum in Waltham Abbey and Lowewood Museum in Hoddesdon for Broxbourne Borough Council under a Service Level Agreement (SLA). Both museums are Arts Council England (ACE) accredited and provide a range of cultural programmes across the Epping Forest district and Broxbourne borough.

The excellent service appears to have universal support amongst staff, politicians, stakeholders and partners. The council corporate plan makes reference to the value of cultural services and the draft business plan makes clear the linkages between MHC services and its contribution to the delivery of council priorities. To maintain this level of backing will require a programme of continuing advocacy and communication to maintain the high levels of buy in to the aspirations of the service. We noted that the council has a strong commitment to funding cultural and leisure services, with the proposal to build a new £9.5 million sports centre in Waltham Abbey bearing further testimony to this objective.

The MHC service has an enviable track record of securing inward investment. Most notably, £1.65 million of Heritage Lottery Funding (HLF) for the £2 million renovation and extension of the museum in Waltham Abbey and the £312,000 completion of the No Borders project. EFDC took the lead in delivering this project in partnership with Broxbourne and Chelmsford.

MHC is a very self-aware service and is making good progress in formulating its forward agenda. This will be set out in the service's business plan (2018 – 2023) which is currently in draft form and will be signed off in the near future. The plan has been informed through a series of staff and stakeholder forums. The business plan will set out an annual action plan that will be subject to scrutiny by the council. The business plan will address the need for a more robust performance management regime across the service. Monitoring and evaluation will be enhanced through the adoption of a bespoke toolkit co-designed with Red Quadrant, and funded by Arts Council England through its support for the No Borders project. The peer team noted that the business plan is based upon Arts Council England's model for arts and cultural organisations template.

The MHC service exemplifies good partnership working. The service has led on developing good working relationships with neighbouring Broxbourne and Chelmsford councils. It has been instrumental in support to the development of the new Culture without Borders Trust. MHC appears to have a real and tangible belief in the benefits of partnership working. It informs all of their actions and they do not develop projects/programmes in isolation. The emerging business plan will be a significant document because its formulation has involved a wide range of stakeholders (arts and cultural sectors, business interests, neighbouring district, borough and county councils, Epping Forest Town and parish councils and external funders).

MHC is aware that it needs to refocus its efforts on commercial activity. The rationale for this approach requires further consideration and some guiding principles need to be agreed. For example, income generation is important but not at the expense of access for all. The disparity of views about what commercialisation really means requires some

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consolidation of viewpoints. A renewed focus on financial monitoring and reporting is recommended. We think that is a legitimate area for the new development trust to become involved in.

The potential for delivering services on-line requires further consideration. The council website is being reviewed and MHC needs to decide what it wants as a digital presence. The alternative means of making the collections more accessible may improve both access and income generation opportunity.

We think that the coming together of the museum and arts services in the renovated museum building offers the potential to rebrand the building as a cultural hub. This idea may be further enhanced through collaboration with the adjacent Waltham Abbey library operated by Essex County Council. This will also provide a channel for renewed marketing activity.

We were pleased to meet a group of enthusiastic and capable stakeholders, from across a range of cultural interest groups. They are keen to be actively involved in the further development of culture and think that it may be useful for them to meet in a more formal setting to engage with MHC services and the wider cultural partnerships. This group also identified the potential of using the Epping Forest Tourism and Visitor Board to promote MHC activity.

2. Key recommendations

There are a range of suggestions and observations within the main section of the report that will inform some ‘quick wins’ and practical actions, in addition to the conversations onsite, many of which provided ideas and examples of practice from other organisations. The following are the peer team’s key recommendations to the Council:

Prioritise the completion of the business plan (2018 – 2023) and implementation of the new staffing structure

Both the business plan (2018 – 2023) and the impending staffing restructure require immediate management attention. The peer team viewed drafts for both of these items. The business plan will be an important document in terms of consolidating the focus for future service activity and development. It also provides the opportunity to consolidate in one document a number of previous papers that have considered fundraising/income generation/sponsorship, audience development, review of previous development plans, support for partnership working and for the relationship with the emerging trust.

The council is working through a transformation programme currently. The proposed MHC staffing restructure conforms to the corporate programme and is designed to enhance the capacity of the team to continue to deliver the best possible service. Some minor amendments are required and then the new structure can be fully implemented. It is important that this work is undertaken as a priority to ensure that new roles can be aligned with the roll out of the business plan. The capacity of MHC is greatly enhanced through the work of the cohort of volunteers. The peer team met with a group of these stakeholders, who are keen to further support the MHC, and expressed particular interest in helping promote cultural services and outreach work.

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Consider the value of a developing cultural forum

The peer team have suggested the potential of developing a cultural forum. It is open for discussion as to who the partners will be. The current partnership arrangements between Epping Forest, Broxbourne and Chelmsford would seem to be a sensible starting point. The emerging trust would be enabled in deciding its work programme by engaging with the cultural forum. This approach may also be attractive to funding partners, such as Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council England.

Review capacity when considering new projects

The MHC is very self-aware and is realigning its staff to better reflect the future work programme. Historically the service has stretched the boundaries, entering into an SLA with Broxbourne to manage and operate the Lowewood Museum and to partner with Chelmsford and to support the development of the new trust. The service has also been very successful in making bids for external funding and managing new projects. However with the scale of ambition exemplified in the new draft business plan, we think that the MHC team will be fully engaged in delivering the proposed work programme. Any significant new project/development should be subject to a resource assessment. An example is the support that EFDC may give to Broxbourne in relocating its Lowewood museum collection to the Spinning Wheel site in Hoddesdon. In our opinion this lies outside the current SLA arrangement, and will need alternative resourcing. Additional advice may be available from the LGA Productivity Experts Programme https://www.local.gov.uk/our-support/efficiency-and-income-generation/productivity-experts-programme/apply

Agree a coherent commercial approach

The peer team identified a range of differing views about what a commercial approach really means to a museum, heritage and culture service. This fragmentation is further compounded as the council has commissioned a number of external advisers to provide advice on the subject. This information is useful background material but the MHC should take time to determine how it will progress its efforts to become more commercial. There are a range of possible approaches and the situation will be alleviated as certain posts within the new structure have specific responsibility for commercial activities. The income targets could be more ambitious, and we understand that overachieved income can be carried forward or used to subsidise events/exhibitions. The emerging business plan will help unify and cohere the disparate views on this subject.

Take a strategic approach to outreach and embrace hard to reach groups

MHC is aware that certain groups are underrepresented in their use of the service. This constitutes a gap in the knowledge about these groups' requirements and a renewed focus on engagement with these groups is desirable. It may well be that the council corporately has ways of engaging with these groups and MHC could link into this data. The development trust will also have, as part of its remit, the objective of engaging with these groups and individuals.

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Establish a cultural strategy

The peer team suggest that you consider coordinating the development of a cultural strategy for the Epping Forest district, its partners and stakeholders. This will help to focus and promote the region's cultural offer, and advocate how culture can enrich and transform the lives of everyone in the district. It could demonstrate how culture can be used to strengthen the individual, collective and economic wellbeing of the region and set out shared intentions for the next 5 -10 years.

Agree the relationship with the development trust

The peer team applaud the support that MHC and the council has given to the formation of the Culture Without Borders Development Trust. It is early days and the trustees are just starting to explore how they can work together and how best to support the continuing development of culture. Terms of reference are still being agreed, but we anticipate that the Trust will provide oversight on:

- helping to develop and promote local arts and cultural provision across the Epping Forest and Broxbourne areas
- sharing information and good practice
- identifying areas for collaboration
- supporting advocacy work for local arts and culture services
- embedding a clear role for museum heritage and culture in a wider agenda**.**

The peer team noted that the trust has been successful in helping fundraise, £13,000 for the purchase of the Willingale Ring for the Epping Forest district museum collection.

Prioritise a dedicated website, building on the success of social media campaigns

We are aware that the council website is to be redesigned/upgraded. It is important that MHC either acquires its own area on the corporate website or sets up its own discrete web presence. The Trust has some expertise in this area and should be actively engaged in this development work. The Trust is likely to develop its own web presence that will promote culture widely across Epping Forest and Broxbourne. With suitable linkages this will benefit the promotion and presentation of the MHC services.

Explore the viability of digitalisation to bring greater access to collections and the potential of commercial opportunities

As the collections policy is under review, it is timely to consider how objects can be best presented in different ways. In addition the service is aiming to extend its reach and digitalisation of exhibitions, collections and records is one way in which to do this. The opportunity for this to improve the service's commercial activities will also be important to consider. The work of Walter Spradbery being a good example of the potential of providing greater access and improving the income stream, via digital access and merchandising. The Mendoza Review – (an independent review of museums in England November 2017) states that, "there is a need understanding of the wide potential of digital in museums. Examples include display and interpretation, collections, communications, data – and the

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need for a strategic approach to embedding tools and technologies into every aspect of museums' work"
See:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/673935/The_Mendoza_Review_an_independent_review_of_museums_in_England.pdf

Review the collections and disposal policy

MHC manages 100,000 objects in its Epping Forest collection and a further 50,000 in Lowewood, this figure includes bulk archaeological archives. Additional storage is urgently required and work is underway to identify alternative facilities for this purpose. There is a well-considered Collections Development Policy and this makes provision for both the acquisition of new items and the themes and priorities for rationalization and disposal. In the context of the new business plan we suggest that a further collections policy review is undertaken.

3. Summary of the Peer Challenge approach

The peer team

Peer challenges are delivered by experienced elected member and officer peers. The make-up of the peer team reflected your requirements and the focus of the peer challenge. Peers were selected on the basis of their relevant experience and expertise and agreed with you. The peers who delivered the peer challenge at Epping were:

- Councillor Nick Worth - Executive Member for Culture & Emergency Services Lincolnshire County Council and Deputy Leader South Holland Council
- Tony Witton - Cultural and Creative Economy Service Manager, Kent County Council
- Mark Harrison - LGA Peer Challenge Manager

Scope and focus

The peer team considered the following:

1. EFDC MHC capacity to deliver its ambition; is a small organisation being overstretched?

2. Are the key areas of focus the right ones?, with specific reference to:
   - engaging with harder to reach audiences to inform service planning
   - building sustainable fundraising support for MHC and the new development trust
   - providing off site services across Epping and Broxbourne
   - maximising the benefits of partnership working.

3. Provide members with an external perspective on current processes and emerging options?

4. Provide a view on whether local need is being met, programme mix and approach to income generation?

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5. Is there clarity in the strategic vision of the MHC service and have all service delivery and development options been fully considered?

The peer challenge process

It is important to stress that this was not an inspection. Peer challenges are improvement focussed and tailored to meet individual councils' needs. They are designed to complement and add value to a council's own performance and improvement. The process is not designed to provide an in-depth or technical assessment of plans and proposals. The peer team used their experience and knowledge of local government to reflect on the information presented to them by people they met, things they saw and material that they read.

The peer team prepared for the peer challenge by reviewing a range of documents and information in order to ensure they were familiar with the Council and the challenges it is facing. The team then spent two days onsite at Epping Museum, during which they:

- Spoke to more than 25 people including a range of council staff together with councillors and external partners and stakeholders.

- Gathered information and views from more than 12 meetings, visits to key sites in the area and additional research and reading.

- Collectively spent more than 75 hours to determine their findings – the equivalent of one person spending more than 2 weeks in Epping.

This report provides a summary of the peer team's findings. It builds on the feedback presentation provided by the peer team at the end of their on-site visit (25 – 26 April 2018). In presenting feedback to you, they have done so as fellow local government officers and members, not professional consultants or inspectors. By its nature, the peer challenge is a snapshot in time. We appreciate that some of the feedback may be about things you are already addressing and progressing.

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4. Feedback

The service is excellent with demonstrable passion and commitment from councillors, staff and volunteers, and this is clearly demonstrated at all levels

The peer team saw much evidence of an excellent well run service, supported by enthusiastic and professional staff. There appears to be a high level of political and stakeholder support for the service and this enthusiasm has helped in securing additional external funding. The newly refurbished museum in Waltham Abbey shows the benefit of this shared ambition. There is a very clear appreciation of the main purpose of service delivery, and that is to collect, preserve and promote the heritage of the Epping Forest district and to provide opportunities for people to engage in wider cultural opportunities. This energy should be nurtured through the positive engagement of volunteers, stakeholders, historical groups and partners through the development of a shared cultural strategy

The direction of travel is positive

The service continues to work on plans that aim to further enhance service provision and maximise the opportunities that partnership working with neighbouring councils may bring. Although a recent bid to the Arts Council for National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status did not receive funding, it was well received and scored strongly in the assessment. The workstreams set out in the NPO bid will be incorporated within the emerging business plan 2018 -2023. Councillors can be reassured that the the key areas of focus are the right ones, with specific reference to:

- engaging with harder to reach audiences to inform service planning
- building sustainable fundraising support for MHC and the new development trust
- providing off site services across Epping Forest and Broxbourne
- maximising the benefits of partnership working.

Capacity is currently being managed but is near a tipping point

The service is aware that its ambitious programme and development of new work strands is requiring much effort from the staff. A restructuring is close to implementation, and this aims to ensure that the necessary skills are in place to reflect the requirements of the business plan delivery. The peer team recommend that if any significant new projects are envisaged, such as the relocation of the Lowewood museum collection, then additional staffing resources will be necessary. It would be sensible to keep the new staff arrangements under review post restructure to ensure that the new roles align with the delivery requirements of the business plan.

Vision and ambition exist but need to be agreed by everyone

Much work has been done to identify future vision and ambition for the service. The peer team viewed a number of consultancy advisory papers. These are helpful but disparate in their advice, and we think that a coherent view could be set out in the new business plan and potentially supported by the development of a partnership cultural strategy. Once the “single” plan is agreed it would be useful to share its content with partners and the wider

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public. The peer team was pleased to see that the cultural offer is referenced a number of times in the Epping Forest DC corporate plan.

A risk the service is over reliant on external funding, and this needs to be considered alongside a coherent commercial approach

For a district council the service has been remarkably successful in securing external funding. This has resulted in inward investment, to renovate and expand the Epping museum (£1.65M HLF), two rounds of funding from the Arts Council Museum Resilience fund to explore a range of development initiatives (£270,000), around broadening fundraising, commercial activities and supporting audience development and diversity. The service is well funded to continue to maintain its core activities, but will continue to require a renewed focus on an enhanced commercial approach to maintain momentum and to ensure resilience in a changing political environment.

The peer team note that MHC continues to successfully apply for external grants, most recently:

- HLF funding for an exhibition by local artist Walter Spradbery (£40,000)
- HLF funding for the celebration of 100 years of St. Catherine's School (£10,000)
- Arts Mark from ACE (£5,000)
- Funding from various sources for the purchase and display of the Willingale Ring (£13,000)

A more strategic approach needs to be taken to audience development and programming

The peer team saw evidence of innovative programming and efforts to reach new audiences. It is not clear how the hard to reach groups are targeted and the location of the service in Waltham Abbey may mean that other parts of the district are not as well served. However, staff are aware of this and are working to support audience development and diversity. Some further work will be required in this area to ensure that all sectors of the Epping Forest District community are being served. It would be useful to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment to assess the effect of the service changes upon service delivery. The recently completed No Borders visitor survey (the audience agency March 2018) provides the profiles of current visitors and audience characteristics. There are opportunities to share learning between museums/cultural services, with a view to targeting under - represented visitor types to engage in cultural activity. The report further recommends that individual museums use the visitor data to produce their own audience development plans.

A shared cultural strategy may unlock additional resources and opportunities

The MHC service has a demonstrable and successful track record of working with neighbouring boroughs. The development of a cross district cultural strategy could be useful in raising public awareness of the culture, museum and arts across the sub region. A shadow independent trust Culture Without Borders Development Trust is registered as a company limited by guarantee and is awaiting final approval, for charitable status, from the Charity Commission. The trust has been established to raise funds and promote cultural services across Epping Forest and neighbouring Broxbourne. The development of a

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cultural strategy will help shape the work of the trust, its relationship with in house services and clarify pan border cultural objectives and responsibilities.

5. Next steps

Immediate next steps

We appreciate the senior managerial and political leadership will want to reflect on these findings and suggestions in order to determine how the organisation wishes to take things forward.

As part of the peer challenge process, there is an offer of further activity to support this (there would be a charge for this). The LGA is well placed to provide additional support, advice and guidance on a number of the areas for development and improvement and we would be happy to discuss this. Gary Hughes, Principal Adviser is the main contact between your authority and the Local Government Association (LGA). His contact details are: Email gary.hughes@local.gov.uk

In the meantime we are keen to continue the relationship we have formed with the Council throughout the peer challenge. We will endeavour to provide signposting to examples of practice and further information and guidance about the issues we have raised in this report to help inform ongoing consideration.

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