



## **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

### **Tuesday 18th July 2023**

You are invited to attend the next meeting of **Overview & Scrutiny Committee**, which will be held at:

**Council Chamber - Civic Offices**  
on **Tuesday 18th July 2023 at 7.00 pm**

**Georgina Blakemore**  
**Chief Executive**

**Democratic Services Officer:** Laura Kirman Tel: (01992) 564243  
Email: [democraticservices@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

**Members:** Councillors D Wixley (Chairman), J McIvor (Vice-Chairman), R Baldwin, R Bassett, S Heap, S Heather, H Kane, J Lucas, M Markham, C McCann, C McCredie, S Murray, C Nweke, J Parsons, A Patel, R Pugsley and J H Whitehouse

### **SUBSTITUTE NOMINATION DEADLINE: 6.00PM**

**This meeting will be broadcast live and recorded for repeated viewing.**

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#### **1. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION**

This meeting is to be webcast and the Chairman will read the following announcement:

“I would like to remind everyone present that this meeting will be broadcast live to the internet and will be capable of subsequent repeated viewing, with copies of the recording being made available for those that request it.

By being present at this meeting, it is likely that the recording cameras will capture your image and this will result in your image becoming part of the broadcast.

You should be aware that this may infringe your human and data protection rights, and if you have any concerns then please speak to the Webcasting Officer.

Please could I also remind Members and Officers to activate their microphones before speaking.”

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

To be announced at the meeting.

To report non-attendance before the meeting, please use the Members Portal webpage [https://eppingforestdc-self.achieveservice.com/service/Member\\_Contact](https://eppingforestdc-self.achieveservice.com/service/Member_Contact) to ensure your query is properly logged.

Alternatively, you can access the Members portal from the front page of the Council's website, at the bottom under 'Contact Us'  
<https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/your-council/members-portal/>

**3. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

To report the appointment of any substitute members for the meeting.

**4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To declare interests in any item on the agenda.

In considering whether to declare a pecuniary or a non-pecuniary interest under the Council's Code of Conduct, Members are requested to pay particular attention to paragraph (11) of the Code in addition to the more familiar requirements.

This requires the declaration of a non-pecuniary interest in any matter before Overview & Scrutiny which relates to a decision of or action by another Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council, a Joint Committee or Joint Sub-Committee in which the Council is involved and of which the Councillor is also a Member.

Paragraph (11) of the Code of Conduct does not refer to Cabinet decisions or attendance at an Overview & Scrutiny meeting purely for the purpose of answering questions or providing information on such a matter.

**5. MINUTES (Pages 7 - 10)**

To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 April 2023.

**6. MATTERS ARISING AND OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

To consider any matters arising and outstanding actions from the minutes of the previous meeting(s) that are not covered elsewhere in this agenda.

**7. PUBLIC QUESTIONS & REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

To receive questions submitted by members of the public and any requests to address the Committee, in accordance with Article 6 (Overview and Scrutiny) of the Council's Constitution.

**(a) Public Questions**

Members of the public may ask questions of the Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee at ordinary meetings of the Committee, in accordance with the procedure set out in the Constitution.

**(b) Requests to address the Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Any member of the public or a representative of another organisation may address the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on any agenda item (except those dealt with in private session as exempt or confidential business), due to be considered at the meeting.

**8. EXECUTIVE DECISIONS - CALL-IN**

To consider any matter referred to the Committee for decision in relation to a call-in, in accordance with Article 6 (Overview and Scrutiny) of the Council's Constitution.

**9. COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

(The Leader of Council) To verbally present the Council's corporate priorities for 2023 – 24.

**10. CORPORATE PLAN 2023/27 YEAR 1 - QUARTER 1 CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT**

To consider the FY 2023/24 Quarter 1 Corporate Performance Report – report to follow.

**11. QUARTER 4 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2022/23 (PROVISIONAL OUTTURN) (Pages 11 - 30)**

To consider the Quarter 4 BMR 2022/23 (Provisional Outturn) attached.

**12. QUARTER 1 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2023/24**

To consider the Quarter 1 BMR 2023/24 – report to follow.

**13. QUALIS MONITORING REPORT QUARTER 2 (YEAR 4) (Pages 31 - 40)**

To discuss the Quarter 2 report and agree any actions required.

**14. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 2022-23 ANNUAL REPORT (Pages 41 - 62)**

To agree the final draft of the Overview and Scrutiny 2022-23 Annual Report and recommend to Council for approval on 25 July 2023.

**15. CHAIRMEN TO REPORT ON THEIR SCRUTINY COMMITTEE BUSINESS, TERMS OF REFERENCE AND WORK PROGRAMMES (Pages 63 - 70)**

(1) (Chairmen of the Scrutiny Committees) To report to the meeting on progress against achievement of the current work programme, as required under Article 6 (Overview and Scrutiny) of the Constitution, and for any recommendations for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

(2) (Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee) Following the restructure of the scrutiny committees by Council on 4 April 2023, the Committee is asked to consider and agree the draft Terms of Reference and draft work programmes below for:

(a) Communities Scrutiny Committee

- (b) Place Scrutiny Committee

**16. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 71 - 72)**

Progress towards the achievement of the work programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is reviewed at each meeting.

**(a) Current Work Programme**

The current draft work programme for the Committee is attached as an appendix to this agenda, to agree.

**(b) Reserve Programme**

A reserve list of scrutiny topics is developed as required, to ensure that the workflow of overview and scrutiny is continuous. When necessary, the Committee will allocate items from the list appropriately, once resources become available in the work programme, following the completion of any ongoing scrutiny activity.

Members can put forward suggestions for inclusion in the work programme or reserve list through the adopted PICK process. Existing review items will be dealt with first, after which time will be allocated to the items contained in the reserve work plan.

**17. CABINET BUSINESS (Pages 73 - 88)**

**Recommendation:**

**That the Committee review the Executive's current programme of Key Decisions to enable the identification of appropriate matters for the overview and scrutiny work programme and the overview of specific decisions proposed to be taken over the period of the plan.**

Article 6 (Overview and Scrutiny) of the Constitution requires that the Committee review the Executive's programme of Key Decisions (the Cabinet Forward Plan) at each meeting, to enable the identification of appropriate matters for the overview and scrutiny work programme and to provide an opportunity for the overview of specific decisions proposed to be taken over the period of the plan.

The Constitution (Article 14 (Decision Making)) defines a Key Decision as an executive decision which:

- (a) involves expenditure or savings of £250,000 or above which are currently within budget and policy;
- (b) involves expenditure or savings of £100,000 or above which are NOT currently within budget and policy;
- (c) is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards;
- (d) raises new issues of policy;
- (e) increases financial commitments (i.e. revenue and/or capital) in future years over and above existing budgetary approval;

- (f) comprises and includes the publication of draft or final schemes which may require, either directly or in relation to objections to, the approval of a Government Minister; or
- (g) involves the promotion of local legislation.

Wherever possible, Portfolio Holders will attend the Committee to present forthcoming key decisions, to answer questions on the forward plan and to indicate where appropriate work could be carried out by overview and scrutiny on behalf of the Cabinet.

The Executive's current programme of Key Decisions is attached as an Appendix to this report.

**18. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Exclusion

(Democratic & Electoral Services Team Manager) 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
19	Epping Forest District Museum	3

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

(Democratic & Electoral Services Team Manager) Article 17 - Access to Information, Procedure Rules of the Constitution 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 for four years after the date of the meeting one copy of each of the documents on the list of background papers.

**19. EPPING FOREST DISTRICT MUSEUM (Pages 89 - 96)**

To consider and make recommendations on the Epping Forest District Museum report attached.

## EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, 20 April 2023, 7.00 - 9.17 pm

### Council Chamber - Civic Offices

<b>Members Present:</b>	Councillor H Kane (Chairman), D Wixley (Vice-Chairman), R Balcombe, R Baldwin, R Bassett, R Brookes, S Heather, J Lea, J Mclvor, S Murray and S Patel
<b>Other Councillors:</b>	Councillors N Bedford, S Kane, J Parsons, A Patel, J Philip, C Whitbread, H Whitbread and K Williamson
<b>Apologies:</b>	Councillors I Hadley, R Jennings and J H Whitehouse
<b>Officers In Attendance:</b>	Georgina Blakemore, Jennifer Gould, Andrew Small, Sally Dignan, Vanessa Gayton, Diane Gilson-Butler, Charlotte Graham, Vivienne Messenger, Rebecca Moreton, Gill Wallis and Gary Woodhall
<b>Officers In Attendance (Virtually):</b>	Laura Kirman, Paula Maginnis, Rob Pavey, Mandy Thompson, James Warwick and Pam Wharfe
<b>Also in Attendance:</b>	Members of the Epping Forest Youth Council

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### [A RECORDING OF THIS MEETING IS AVAILABLE FOR REPEATED VIEWING](#)

#### 67 WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Democratic and Electoral Services Team Manager reminded everyone present that the meeting would be broadcast live to the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

#### 68 SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Committee noted that Councillor R Brookes had been appointed as substitute for Councillor R Jennings.

#### 69 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- (a) Pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor R Bassett declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue of being a non-Executive Director of the Qualis Group Board, as Qualis was mentioned in the Overview and Scrutiny 2022-23 Annual Report and quarter 4 Corporate Performance Report.
- (b) Pursuant to the Council's Members' Code of Conduct, Councillor J Mclvor declared a non-pecuniary interest by virtue of being a former member of the Youth Council.

#### 70 MINUTES

##### **Resolved:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2023 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**71 MATTERS ARISING AND OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

It was noted that there were no outstanding actions from the minutes of the previous meeting.

Subsequent to the committee meeting of 31 January 2023 in respect of the Qualis – Overview item (Minute no 62), Councillor S Murray reported he had attended a meeting with two directors of a local housing company and had advised them that any concerns must be made in writing.

**72 PUBLIC QUESTIONS & REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Committee noted that no public questions or requests to address the meeting had been received.

**73 EXECUTIVE DECISIONS - CALL-IN**

The Committee noted that no executive decisions had been called-in for consideration since the previous meeting.

**74 ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE WORK UNDERTAKEN BY EPPING FOREST YOUTH COUNCIL**

Youth Councillors Olu Ayandare and Paarth Patel (Davenant Foundation), Sarah Chufoon (King Harold Business Academy) and William Ayrton (Chigwell School) presented the Committee with an overview of the Youth Council's activities and achievements for 2022/23, which were highlighted in the agenda report.

Members admired the presentation and were full of support of the excellent work accomplished by the Youth Council. Full details of the members questions to the youth councillors can be viewed through the recording of the meeting.

**75 CORPORATE PLAN KEY ACTION PLAN YEAR 5 2022/23 - QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE REPORTING**

The Committee reviewed the quarter 4 Corporate Performance Report and noted that:

- the Project Management Office was working on a new report format and that greater use of the column headings would be more user friendly to help understand the performance data being presented.
- it would be useful if the types of Customer Services complaints were detailed in scrutiny reports and for the relevant scrutiny committee to know if there were generic complaints.

**Resolved:**

That the committee reviewed the FY22-23 quarter 4 Performance report.

**Actions:**

- (1) Community Health and Wellbeing: Number of homelessness approaches – that the figures for prevention relief and main duty owed, be provided by the Interim Strategic Director, J Gould;
- (2) Contracts Waste: Reduction in household waste – that the formula used for household waste KPI figures be provided by the Contracts Interim Service Director, J Warwick;



- (3) Leisure Contract – that the Contracts Interim Service Director would raise with Places Leisure that there was concern some of the centres' usage figures were not being recorded accurately; and
- (4) Housing Management – that the number of adaptations undertaken by the Council be provided by the Interim Housing Director.

**(Post meeting updates:**

*Action (1) – Number of homelessness approaches:*

- Homelessness approaches for the month of April = 76
- Homelessness prevented = 40%
- Homelessness relieved = 26%
- Main Duty acceptances = 23%

*Action (2) – The waste KPI for household waste is calculated by volume of waste collected divided by number of households which gave an average kg per households, which was then reduced to create a target. We will be revisiting this to see if it is still relevant and accurate, we will also ask other local authorities what KPI's they use.*

## **76 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY 2022-23 ANNUAL REPORT**

**Resolved:**

That the Committee approved the draft annual report, subject to any further comments being received and included in the final version, which was to be agreed at the next meeting on 18 July, and then submitted to Council for approval on 25 July 2023.

## **77 CHAIRMEN TO REPORT ON THEIR SELECT COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

The select committee chairmen reported they had progressed their respective work programmes at their last meetings and throughout the year, but any outstanding items would be reviewed next year. It was felt the level of scrutiny had improved this year. The scrutiny training by an external trainer had helped members understand what scrutiny was about, and it was recommended that all scrutiny members should attend this training in future.

**Resolved:**

That the select committee Chairmen reported on business undertaken.

## **78 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME**

- (a) Current work programme

The Chairman, Councillor H Kane, thanked her Vice-Chairman, Councillor D Wixley, members and officers for their work throughout the year, as a lot of changes had been made, but the work programme had been completed.

- (b) Reserve work programme

There were no reserve work programme items.

**Resolved:**

That the Committee reviewed its current and reserve work programmes.

**79 CABINET BUSINESS**

**Resolved:**

That the Committee reviewed the Executive's current programme of Key Decisions of 5 April 2023.

**CHAIRMAN**

## **Report to Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

**Date of meeting: 18th July 2023**



**Subject: Quarter 4 Budget Monitoring Report 2022/23 (Provisional Outturn)**

**Portfolio Holder: Finance & Economic Development – Cllr. John Philip**

**Officer contact for further information: Chris Hartgrove 01992 564000 (Ext. 2532)**

**Democratic Services Officer: Laura Kirman 01992 564243**

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

- 1. The General Fund revenue position at the end of Quarter 4 (Provisional Outturn) for 2022/23 be noted (*Appendix A*).**
- 2. The General Fund capital position at the end of Quarter 4 (Provisional Outturn) for 2022/23 be noted (*Appendix B*).**
- 3. The Housing Revenue Account revenue position at the end of Quarter 4 (Provisional Outturn) for 2022/23 be noted.**
- 4. The Housing Revenue Account capital position at the end of Quarter 4 (Provisional Outturn) for 2022/23 be noted (*Appendix C*); and**
- 5. To note and approve the Movements on Earmarked Reserves presented in Paragraphs 3.3 to 3.5, including the proposal (approved by Cabinet 30th May 2023) to fund one-off severance costs of £260,025 from available resources within the District Development Fund (DDF).**

### **Executive Summary:**

This report sets out the 2022/23 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account positions for both revenue and capital, as at 31st March 2023, which represents the Quarter 4 (Provisional Outturn) for the 2022/23 financial year.

It should be noted that, at the time of preparing this report (for presentation to Cabinet on 30th May 2023), the Finance team were in the final stages of compiling the Council's annual Statement of Accounts (SOA) for 2022/23. Consequently, it was possible – at that stage – that the figures presented could have been subject to change as final adjustments were made to the draft SOA prior to publication. However, it can now be confirmed that the draft SOA were subsequently published on 2nd June 2023, without the need for any further adjustment to the figures; this report therefore now reflects the draft Outturn for 2022/23 (as opposed to "Provisional" Outturn). The draft Statement of Accounts 2022/23 are themselves subject to external audit in due course.

In terms of General Fund revenue expenditure – at the Quarter 4 (Provisional Outturn) stage – the adopted budget was exceeded by £1.286 million, with net expenditure of £16.917 million recorded against an overall budget provision of £15.631 million.

As with Quarters 1, 2 and 3, the Quarter 4 (provisional outturn) position is dominated by a range of substantial spending pressures, most notably:

- Inflation/Staff Budgets – a sharp increase in UK inflation following the setting of the budget continues to drive higher pay demands across both the public and private sectors. The Pay Settlement for 2022/23 was finalised in November 2022 with staff receiving an uplift of £1,925 at all pay grades, which equated to an average pay award in the region of 5.0% rather than the 2.0% award assumed in the budget. However, this was offset – to a large extent – by salary savings due to vacant posts; and
- Local Plan – the delayed Local Plan also caused a major shortfall in income received from Planning Applications. It is also a major factor in the delayed drawdown of Qualis loans due to planning delays on key development sites in the district; this led to a shortfall in income that the Council assumed from loan margins in the budget.

The economic difficulties experienced during the year also created a range of other problems with inflation impacting on energy and contract costs, with rising interest rates also working against the Council.

The major financial challenges encountered this year, served to underline the importance of the Qualis income stream, with the Council receiving a net revenue stream of £1.775 million, which included a net margin on loans of £2.057 million.

The eventual funding position on the General Fund was mixed. The emerging shortfall on funding from the Council Tax Sharing Agreement (CTSA) that was flagged in Quarter 3, ended up greater than originally envisaged due to depressed Local Tax collection rates (including Council Tax) in Quarter 4; this eventually resulted in a funding shortfall of £417,000 on the CTSA. But this was largely offset by a stronger outturn on Business Rates, with overall funding from this source exceeding the original budget assumption by £342,000.

With regard to Reserves, the General Fund Reserve ended the year at £3.219 million (below the adopted minimum contingency of £4.0 million), with Earmarked Reserves ending the year at £3.086 million. The overall position on Earmarked Reserves reflects the funding of Severance costs of £260,025 from the District Development Fund (DDF) (subject to approval in Recommendation 5 above).

Turning to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), despite facing the same challenges as the General Fund in many respects (especially the impact of inflation on staffing and energy costs), the HRA recorded a budget underspend of £4.065 million, primarily driven by slippage in the Housing Development Programme; this led to significantly reduced borrowing costs and revenue contributions to capital.

The HRA balance ended the year at £4.552 million (the adopted minimum contingency balance in the HRA Business Plan is £2.0 million).

Turning to capital spending:

- General Fund Capital Programme – overall spending for the year was £11.949 million, which led to an underspend of £106.207 million. The drawdown on Qualis loans was lower than the budget and was the most significant variance (£88.247 million); and
- Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme – overall spending for the year was £15.875 million, which led to an underspend of £36.624 million. Slippage on the Housing Development Programme is the most notable factor.

## 1) Background and Introduction

- 1.1 The Council's budget for 2022/23 (both General Fund and Housing Revenue Account) was approved by full Council on 24th February 2022. This report updates the Cabinet on how the Council's services have performed against their budgets in the financial year.
- 1.2 This is the fourth (and final) update for 2022/23 and includes the 2022/23 General Fund and Housing Revenue Account positions, for both revenue and capital, as at 31st March 2023 ("Quarter 4").

## 2) General Fund Revenue Budget

### Net Expenditure

- 2.1 The General Fund **net expenditure** position for 2022/23, at the Quarter 4 (Provisional Outturn) stage – summarised by service area – is presented in **Appendix A**. A budget overspend - of £1.286 million - has been recorded, with net expenditure of £16.917 million against an overall budget provision of £15.631 million. The table below summarises the position by service.

<b>GF Net Expenditure Budget 2022/23 (Quarter 4)</b>			
<b>Description</b>	<b>Budget 2022/23</b>	<b>Outturn (31/03/23)</b>	<b>Variance</b>
	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>
Chief Executive	658	659	1
Commercial & Technical	139	(125)	(264)
Community & Wellbeing	1,783	1,454	(329)
Corporate Services	9,763	8,741	(1,022)
Customer Services	2,255	3,032	777
Finance & Audit	2,411	2,974	563
Housing & Property	1,849	1,541	(308)
Place	375	297	(78)
Planning & Development	1,480	1,976	497
Strategy, Delivery & Performance	850	600	(250)
Qualis	(2,909)	(1,775)	1,135
HRA Recharges	(5,225)	(5,116)	108
Financing	2,202	2,657	455
<b>Totals (Net Expenditure)</b>	<b>15,631</b>	<b>16,917</b>	<b>1,286</b>

2.2 There are a range of notable (over £100,000) *negative* variances – at a service directorate level – to the budget in the table above as follows:

- **Qualis Income (£1,134,544 Overspend)** – the lengthy delay in finalising the Local Plan, as well as challenging economic conditions, have had a detrimental impact on anticipated income from the margins that the Council generates from Qualis loans, with the pace of drawdowns being dampened by planning delays and (updated) viability assessments on key development sites. Rising interest rates have also been driving up the cost of PWLB borrowing for the Council, which is putting a further squeeze on loan margins. The combined impact resulted in shortfall in net income of £1,134,544.
- **Customer Services (£777,318 Overspend)** – the Customer Services directorate exceeded its budget, primarily due to a late accounting adjustment (of £581,784) in respect of Housing Benefit Overpayments (HBOs); the size of the adjustment was driven – to a large extent – by a substantial increase in the value of HBO invoices raised in the year (up 42% from £612,575 in 2021/22 to £869,187 in 2022/23). This can be a volatile budget line, with the increase in HBOs in 2022/23 driven most notably by the full rollout of the DWP Housing Benefit Accuracy Award (“HBAA”), which required the Council to conduct additional testing on Housing Benefit assessments (necessarily leading to an increase in detected errors). The ongoing automation of the Housing Benefit system (with the DWP directly uploading changes onto “Academy”) also plays a part. Detected HBOs will be higher generally in Epping as the Council performs particularly well in the Pan-Essex Anti-Fraud initiative, although the budget will be reviewed in detail in 2023/24 in the light of the 2022/23 outturn.
- **Finance & Audit (563,169 Overspend)** – the most significant cost pressure in Finance and Audit in 2022/23 was the need to make additional contributions to the Bad Debt Provision (BDP). The year-end contribution requirement was £409,130 compared to a budget provision of £100,000, resulting in an overspend of £309,130; the position on the BDP this year was mixed with some good news (e.g., there was a reduced contribution requirement of £236,540 on Commercial Property Rents compared to 2001/22), but this was generally outweighed by the need to contribute more in a range of other miscellaneous areas (e.g., an increased year end Arrears List on Council Tax and Business Rates drove an increased contribution of £112,050 on outstanding Court Costs compared to 2021/22). In addition, expenditure on the Accountancy cost centre exceeded budget by £260,840, with the largest underlying variance being an overspend of £134,540 on the Agency budget; as previously reported, the Accountancy function has been reliant on substantial input from agency staff and other contractors during its transition into the new Corporate Finance Team and, although that process has now concluded, with the new permanent team in place (with almost all interim staff released), the continued delays in the Statement of Accounts audits (for both 2020/21 and 2021/22) has necessitated the limited retention of key interim technical resources beyond what was originally envisaged.
- **Planning & Development (£496,586 Overspend)** – the delayed Local Plan also caused substantial pressure on the Planning & Development budget, with many developers delaying the submission of planning proposals pending formal adoption of the Plan. The 2022/23 budget was prepared based on available intelligence at the time; this included the assumption that the finalised Local Plan would be in place for substantially all of the financial year and generate £1,711,780 in income from Planning Applications. The Local Plan was eventually finalised on 6th March 2023. Total income from Planning Applications in 2022/23 was £929,610 in the end, resulting in a budget pressure of £782,170. However, this was offset by a range of other positive variances, most notably on the anticipated costs of implementing the Local Plan itself, which were £214,710 lower than the overall budget; this included savings on Counsels Advice (£45,800), Site Selection and Infrastructure Delivery Plan (£30,520) and Viability Assessments (£30,300). These variances combined to drive a negative variance of £496,586 for the directorate as a whole.

- **Financing (£454,404 Overspend)** – rapidly rising interest rates have caused significant pressure on Financing costs this year. Higher interest rates actually benefit some budget lines with a notable underspend recorded on Interest Receivable (£334,130) in particular. However, as a net borrower, higher interest rates have a negative impact on this Council, with Interest Payable exceeding the budget provision by £1,053,030 in 2022/23; and
- **HRA Recharges (£108,108 Overspend)** – interest rates have also had an impact on HRA Recharges, with a sharp increase in interest payable (from the General Fund to the HRA) on HRA balances; the annual adjustment (based on “SONIA” rates) in recent years has been relatively stable at circa £60,000. However, the corresponding figure for 2022/23 was £294,190.

2.3 There are also a range of notable (over £100,000) *positive* variances – at a service directorate level – to the budget in the table above as follows:

- **Corporate Services (£1,021,929 Underspend)** – the forecast surplus on Corporate Services is dominated by three substantial underspends. Firstly, the ICT cost centre was underspent by £382,900. A detailed review of all ICT budget lines was undertaken in the light of the corporate position; this led to the modification of operational plans in some instances (triggering a combined saving of £96,440 on Professional, Agency and Consultants Fees for example). A wide range of other smaller ICT-related savings were also recorded for different reasons, including an underspend of £74,790 on the new/upgraded Finance System & Azure Cloud Hosting (both due to project delays). Secondly, a significant underspend (of £238,000) was also recorded on Other Support Services, with much of the variance driven by staff vacancies. This included two vacant posts in the Legal cost centre which, even after agency costs are factored in, resulted in savings of £124,000. And thirdly, the saving of £189,326 previously reported in Quarter 3 on Insurance Premiums (following the commencement of the new Insurance contract) was added to in Quarter 4 by a further saving of £48,000 due to a lower number of Casualty Excess payments compared to the budget assumption.
- **Community & Wellbeing (£328,309 Underspend)** – the most significant area of savings on this directorate relates to the Homelessness service, which was underspent by £113,560 due to a combination of two Homelessness Officer posts, which were vacant for the first 9 months of the financial year (saving £33,340), and additional Government grant of £90,680. Staff vacancies in Museums also drove an underspend of £89,720 in that service area, and the recent promotion of the Service Director to Interim Strategic Director (paid from the Chief Executive’s budget) resulted in a further underspend of £52,820. In addition, income received from the hire of the Limes Centre exceeded budget expectations by £56,140.
- **Housing & Property (£307,746 Underspend)** – the underspend recorded in this directorate was due to a range of contributory factors, with the largest area being Facilities and Depot Management where overall savings of £125,780 were recorded, primarily driven by an underspend of £111,450 on the Building Maintenance budget. Significant underspends were also recorded on Housing and Property Support Services (£90,640 mainly driven by recharges to the Capital Programme and the HRA) and Accommodation (£71,220 mainly due to a saving of £117,000 in Business Rates on the Civic Centre, following the removal of the Conder Building from the assessment).

- **Commercial & Technical (£264,016 Underspend)** – a combination of factors led to an underspend of £264,020 on this directorate. The most notable underspend (of £584,000) was recorded on the Recycling contract, primarily due to an income surplus, triggered by a substantial increase in market rates for recyclable materials (embedded in the contract for 2022/23); total receipts from this source exceeded original expectations by £461,810. Contract and Technical Support Services also recorded a surplus of £226,080 due to staff vacancies in the Policy Group (with the Service Director and Manager posts contributing a saving of £142,000) and Grounds Maintenance South (various contributing a saving of £89,000). In addition, a net surplus on rental income was recorded at North Weald Airfield (NWA), primarily due to the receipt of an ‘early exit payment’ from HMRC as part of the agreed terms for vacating the site. In contrast, the directorate did experience some offsetting budget pressures most notably in Leisure Facilities, which was overspent by £507,440 primarily due to a shortfall on the Leisure Services Management Fee (mainly as a consequence of a contract adjustment of £528,000 to reflect the sharp increase in energy costs incurred by the contractor). And finally, the rising cost of car parts experienced by the Fleet Operations service was a significant factor in the budget overspend of £158,210 recorded in the overall Car Parking budget group; and
- **Strategy, Delivery and Performance (£249,623 Underspend)** – the most significant area of underspend in the SDP directorate relates to a decision taken not to recruit to a vacant Performance & PMO Analyst post, resulting in an anticipated saving of £75,404. In addition, the re-scheduling of projects has led to an underspend on Consultancy Fees (£101,000) and Agency Fees (£40,000).

2.4 Members attention is also drawn to the following:

- **Staffing Budgets** – the budget for 2022/23 was set based on the assumption that staff would receive an annual pay award of 2.0% (plus a small contingency of 0.25%). Unfortunately – after the budget was developed and adopted – UK inflation (in common with the rest of the world) – rose sharply; the UK Consumer Prices Index (CPI) peaked at 11.1% in October 2022, which was the highest rate for 41 years. The exceptionally high inflation rate has driven increased pay demands across both the public and private sector. Local government pay negotiations for 2022/23 eventually concluded, with the employers’ final offer of £1,925 to all employees (irrespective of base salary) accepted by the unions and awarded to employees. This (broadly and typically) equated to a 5.0% pay award for the average Epping Forest District Council employee and was behind an overall cost pressure of up to £800,000 on the Council’s base budget, which is embedded in the outturn. The figures also include a range of staff savings, primarily due to temporary vacancies (dampened by agency backfilling costs in some cases). The net impact varied significantly from one service area to another. Senior officers worked together to contain overall staffing costs within budget for 2022/23, whilst simultaneously developing and delivering savings proposals – including staff savings – as part of addressing the 2023/24 budget deficit; and
- **Energy Costs** – there was an intense media spotlight on the spiralling worldwide cost of energy including the UK for much of 2022/23, although this eased towards the end of the financial year. Most of the Council’s exposure to increased energy costs falls within the HRA (a £377,000 pressure is embedded in Supervision and Management costs in table below at Paragraph 4.1). Gas and Electric budgets in the General Fund for 2022/23 total £279,720. The Council had some protection from price rises in the form of forward contracts in 2022/23, but in the end recorded an overspend of £184,140 (although a Specific Contingency budget of £62,500 dampened the impact). The most affected directorate was Housing & Property Services (£102,820).



## **Funding**

2.5 The General Fund *funding* position for 2022/23, at the Quarter 4 (Provisional Outturn) stage is summarised in the table below.

<b>GF Funding Position 2022/23 (Quarter 4)</b>			
<b>Source Description</b>	<b>Budget Assumption 2022/23</b>	<b>Provisional Outturn (31/03/23)</b>	<b>Variance</b>
	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>
Council Tax	(8,639)	(8,640)	(1)
Business Rates	(5,011)	(5,353)	(342)
Collection Fund Adjs. (Council Tax)	(165)	(165)	0
Council Tax Sharing Agreement (CTSA)	(948)	(531)	417
New Homes Bonus	(776)	(776)	0
Lower-Tier Services Grant	(149)	(152)	(3)
2022/23 Services Grant	(229)	(230)	(1)
Other Grants (General)	0	(171)	(171)
Credit Loss Adjustment	(51)	73	124
Contribution to/(from) Reserves	337	(972)	(1,309)
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>(15,631)</b>	<b>(16,917)</b>	<b>(1,286)</b>

2.6 The overall funding position was mixed for the General Fund. The Business Rates position was relatively stable throughout the year, with promising signs that the budget assumption would be exceeded, as reported in Quarter 3. The position further strengthened during Quarter 4, with additional funding from Business Rates of £342,000 eventually recorded. In contrast, Local Tax (Council Tax and Business Rates) collection did not perform as well as expected; this was responsible for the Council receiving lower income from the Essex Council Tax Sharing Agreement (CTSA) than the budget assumption, with the Quarter 4 position eventually resulting in a shortfall of £417,000. However, additional unallocated Grant funding of £171,000 was received during the financial year (£65,590 regarding New Burdens funding and £105,120 in other funding adjustments related to Covid and the Business Rates Levy), which had a positive impact on the funding position.

2.7 In addition, there was a negative variance on the assumed funding from previous Credit Loss Adjustments (CLAs). A Fair Value review of Qualis Loans in the 2021/22 Statement of Accounts initially confirmed that a credit from the General Fund Reserve would be available to support the 2022/23 budget. However, more recently, a further loan advance of £1.3 million to Qualis (as part of the 'revolving credit facility') meant that this was no longer possible and, an updated Fair Value review of Qualis Loans (as part of closing the 2022/23 Accounts) confirmed that (instead), a further (negative) CLA adjustment of £73,000 was required to the General Fund Reserve; the combined impact on funding was a negative variance of £124,000 for 2022/23.

### 3) General Fund Reserves

#### General Fund Reserve (contingency balance)

3.1 The negative outturn of £1.286 million on net expenditure summarised and explained above in paragraphs 2.1 to 2.4, and the funding position presented in paragraphs 2.5 to 2.7 above means that it has not been possible to contribute £0.337 million to the General Fund (unallocated) Reserve as assumed in setting the budget. Instead, there is a contribution requirement of £0.972 million from the Reserve to support the budget (as presented in the table in Paragraph 2.5 above). The forecast impact on the General Fund Reserve is presented in the table below.

<b>Movement on General Fund Reserve: Quarter 4 2022/23</b>	
<b>Description</b>	<b>£000's</b>
General Fund Balance 31st March 2022 (pre-audit)	(4,070)
Contribution from Reserves 2022/23	972
Other Reserve Movements (transfer from Rental Loans Reserve)	(121)
<b>General Fund Balance 31st March 2023 (Q4 provisional outturn)</b>	<b>(3,219)</b>

3.2 Members are reminded that the Council's unallocated General Fund Reserve is a contingency balance and, following the Section 151 Officer's recommendation in accordance with Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, the Council approved the maintenance of a minimum balance of £4.0 million in February 2022.

#### Earmarked Reserves

3.3 In addition to the General Fund Net Expenditure budget (£15.631 million for 2022/23), the Council also incurs further expenditure on a range of other projects and facilities funded from Earmarked Reserves (which are 'topped up' from third party sources – including grants – and internal appropriations). This year, the Council received £2.005 million and spent £1.619 million, leaving a balance of £3.086 million. The Movement on General Fund Earmarked Reserves is summarised in the table below.

<b>Movement in General Fund Earmarked Reserves (April 2022 to March 2023)</b>					
<b>Description</b>	<b>Opening Balance 01/04/22</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Transfers (in)/out</b>	<b>Q4 Balance 31/03/23</b>
	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>
District Development Fund (DDF)	(612)	(8)	376	20	(224)
Community Projects	(597)	(353)	403	112	(435)
<i>Other Reserves:</i>					
All Weather Pitch	(119)	(18)	0	0	(137)
Garden Town	(82)	(593)	265	0	(410)
Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ)	0	(95)	77	(109)	(127)
Homelessness	0	(299)	167	(124)	(256)
Insurance	(150)	0	0	0	(150)
Invest to Save	(203)	0	0	89	(114)
Museum	(110)	0	0	0	(110)
New Burdens	0	(112)	0	0	(112)
North Weald Inland Port	(660)	(150)	193	0	(617)
Prosperity Fund	0	(83)	50	0	(33)
Staff Benefits Fund	(39)	(13)	21	0	(31)
Other Ongoing Projects	(116)	(281)	67	0	(330)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>(2,688)</b>	<b>(2,005)</b>	<b>1,619</b>	<b>(12)</b>	<b>(3,086)</b>

\*Excludes statutory ring-fenced, and other reserves used for accounting purposes.

- 3.4 The Community Projects Reserve comprised 20 different project categories at year end and is easily the Council's most 'active' reserve.
- 3.5 Members will recall that the budget for 2023/34 adopted by full Council in February 2023 included embedded Savings of £4.304 million, necessary in order to achieve a balanced budget. A significant proportion of those Savings represented the removal of staff posts; in most cases, the relevant posts were vacant, so could be realised without further cost to the Council. However, some limited costs were incurred in the case of occupied posts. One-off Severance costs to the Council eventually crystallised at £260,025. Subject to Cabinet approval, it is proposed to fund these costs from available resources within the District Development Fund (DDF).
- 3.6 The opening balance on the DDF for 2022/23 was £0.612 million and, following a review of previously accumulated DDF commitments and a realignment of existing funds from the Invest to Save Reserve, a total of £0.397 million was identified as available to fund the Severance costs (£260,025) and the Council's *previous* commitment to the Hillhouse Leisure Facility (£137,000). If approval is given for the funding of £260,025 in one-off Severance costs, the remaining balance on the DDF as at 31st March 2023 is £223,615 as presented in the table below.

<b>District Development Fund (DDF) analysis: 31st March 2023</b>	
<b>Description</b>	<b>£'s</b>
Community Housing Fund	(23,330)
New Finance System/"eFinancials" Upgrade	(30,000)
New Cloud System (Planning)	(33,285)
Hillhouse Leisure Facility (EFDC contribution)	(137,000)
<b>DDF Balance 31st March 2023 (Q4 provisional outturn)</b>	<b>(223,615)</b>

#### 4) Housing Revenue Account (revenue)

4.1 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) revenue position for 2022/23, at the Quarter 4 Provisional Outturn stage, is summarised in the table below. A surplus of £388,000 was recorded for the year; this contrasted with a budgeted (planned) deficit of £3,677,000, resulting in a positive variance of £4,065,000.

<b>HRA Budget 2022/23 (Quarter 4)</b>			
<b>Description</b>	<b>Budget 2022/23 (Updated)</b>	<b>Provisional Outturn (31/03/23)</b>	<b>Variance</b>
	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
Supervision & Management (General)	6,976	6304	(672)
Supervision & Management (Special)	4,111	4,120	9
Rents, Rates, Taxes & Insurances	504	525	21
Repairs & Maintenance	9,418	10,928	1,510
<b>Management &amp; Maintenance</b>	<b>21,009</b>	<b>21,877</b>	<b>868</b>
Capital Charges	8,958	10,422	1,464
Treasury Management Expenses	58	20	(38)
Provision for Bad/Doubtful Debts	93	115	22
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>30,118</b>	<b>32,434</b>	<b>2,316</b>
<b>INCOME</b>			
Dwelling Rents	(34,973)	(35,294)	(321)
Non-Dwellings Rents	(843)	(764)	79
Charges for Services & Facilities	(1,228)	(1,411)	(183)
Contributions from General Fund	(368)	(407)	(39)
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>(37,412)</b>	<b>(37,876)</b>	<b>(464)</b>
<b>Net Cost of Services</b>	<b>(7,294)</b>	<b>(5,442)</b>	<b>1,852</b>
Interest on Receipts and Balances	(6)	(294)	(288)
Interest Payable on Loans	5,613	5,348	(265)
<b>Net Operating Income</b>	<b>(1,687)</b>	<b>(388)</b>	<b>1,299</b>
<i>Appropriations:</i>			
Direct Revenue Contributions to Capital	5,364	0	(5,364)
<b>(Surplus)/Deficit for Year</b>	<b>3,677</b>	<b>(388)</b>	<b>(4,065)</b>

4.2 The HRA outturn for 2021/22 included an underspend of £140,000 on the ring-fenced revenue project "More than Bricks and Mortar" (a scheme primarily aimed at achieving infrastructure improvements on housing estates). Consequently, the unspent budget was rolled forward and added to the 2022/23 budget agreed by Council in February 2022. The table below reconciles the updated and original budgets.

<b>HRA Budget Reconciliation 2022/23: Quarter 4</b>	
Description	Value (£000's)
<b>(Surplus)/Deficit for Year (approved by full Council 24/02/22)</b>	<b>3,537</b>
<i>Brought forward project budget from 2021/22:</i>	
“More than Bricks and Mortar” Estate Improvement Scheme	140
<b>Total Budget Additions (@ Quarter 4)</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>(Surplus) / Deficit for Year (updated Budget 2022/23 @ Quarter 4)</b>	<b>3,677</b>

4.3 There are seven significant factors behind the outturn as follows:

- **Direct Revenue Contributions (£5.364 million Underspend)** – the most significant factor in the overall budget surplus/underspend, was due to slippage in the HRA Capital Programme, which eliminated the need to make a Revenue Contribution to Capital in the financial year (as originally planned)
- **Repairs and Maintenance (£1.510 million Overspend)** – there are a range of factors that have contributed to the budget pressure on Repairs and Maintenance. Firstly, the budget for Responsive Repairs was overspent by £552,000, with higher than anticipated demand for repairs to communal blocks and areas combining with an unexpectedly high demand for ad hoc roofing repairs driving the overspend. Secondly, Void Repairs also overspent by £435,000 due to the need to address higher volumes of Major Voids and Other Voids falling outside the Qualis SLA for Housing Repairs. And thirdly, additional (unbudgeted) Pensions Costs of £210,000 were incurred as a consequence of the restructure in the Property Services function.
- **Capital Charges (£1.464 million Overspend)** – additional Depreciation Charges were triggered as a consequence of year-end (Balance Sheet) valuation changes. It should be noted that, although the charges are a necessary accounting requirement, they are effectively ‘reversed out’ of the HRA and replaced by a transfer (of the same amount) to the ring-fenced Major Repairs Reserve (MRR), which is subsequently available to support Capital spending or the repayment of (external) Debt.
- **Supervision & Management (General) (£0.672 million Underspend)** – there are two notable factors underlying the underspend here. Firstly, there was a delay in the commencement of the Stock Condition Survey, which has displaced the largest element of work into 2023/24, thus triggering an ‘underspend’ of £270,000 in 2022/23. And secondly, there was also a £249,000 underspend relating to the “More than Bricks and Mortar” (revenue) project (with around half of the revenue saving as a result of the installation costs of privacy panels in various housing blocks being charged to the HRA Capital Programme instead, in order to comply with the accounting requirements) (see also Section 6 below re HRA Capital Programme)
- **Dwelling Rent (£0.321 million Underspend)** – improvements in void turnaround times is led to rental income levels exceeding budget.
- **Interest Receivable on Balances (£0.288 million Underspend)** – in accordance with proper accounting practice, the HRA is credited with interest based on the estimated average HRA revenue balances held throughout the year. The sharp increase in interest rates has led to larger interest receipts than anticipated in the budget; and
- **Interest Payable on Loans (£0.265 million Underspend)** – HRA Capital spending in 2021/22 was lower than expected, thereby negating the need for additional borrowing, and reducing the associated interest payable in this – the 2022/23 – financial year.

4.4 Members should note that the current HRA Business Plan includes the assumed maintenance of a minimum balance of £2.0 million in the HRA reserve; as at 31st March 2022, the balance was £4.164 million, which reflected an overspend on HRA Net Operating Income of £1.375 million in 2021/22 (reported to Cabinet and Stronger Council Select Committee in July 2022).

<b>Movement on HRA Balance: Quarter 4 2022/23</b>	
<b>Description</b>	<b>£000's</b>
HRA Balance 31st March 2022 (pre-audit)	(4,164)
2021/22 Roll Forward (Para 4.2)	140
2022/23 Budget (Deficit) – full Council 24th February 2022 (Para 4.2)	3,537
2022/23 Net Operating Income Outturn Variance Q4 (Para 4.1)	1,299
2022/23 Reduction in Capital Contributions Q4 (Para 4.1)	(5,364)
<b>HRA Balance 31st March 2023 (Q4 Outturn)</b>	<b>(4,552)</b>

## 5) General Fund Capital Programme

5.1 The General Fund Capital Programme Outturn for 2022/23 is summarised – at a service level – in the table below. A more detailed analysis – at a scheme level – is included in **Appendix B**. The updated Programme budget totalled £118.156 million. Actual spending for the year amounted to £11.949 million, leading to an underspend of £106.207 million. A large proportion of this underspend is due to slippage in schemes; approval to carry forward budget on such schemes will form part of the 2023/24 Quarter 1 monitoring report.

<b>General Fund Capital Programme provisional outturn 2022/23 (Quarter 4)</b>			
<b>Description</b>	<b>Budget 2022/23 (Updated)</b>	<b>Spending (31/03/23)</b>	<b>Variance (Under) / Over</b>
	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>	<b>£000's</b>
Community & Wellbeing	770	0	(770)
Commercial & Technical	16,213	3,176	(13,037)
Corporate Services	3,524	514	(3,010)
Customer Services	160	12	(148)
Housing (General Fund)	564	247	(317)
Place	677	0	(677)
Qualis Loans	96,247	8,000	(88,247)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>118,156</b>	<b>11,949</b>	<b>(106,207)</b>
<i>Capital Financing:</i>			
Borrowing	113,692	9,625	(104,067)
Capital Grants	971	940	(31)
Capital Receipts	3,493	1,384	(2,109)
<b>Total Financing</b>	<b>118,156</b>	<b>11,949</b>	<b>(106,207)</b>

- 5.2 A General Fund Capital Programme budget of £72.308 million was approved by Council in February 2022. A net total of £45.848 million in unspent budgets have been rolled forward from 2021/22, resulting in an updated Programme budget of £118.156 million.
- 5.3 There are three dominant areas of underspending/slippage on the General Fund Capital Programme outturn:
- **Qualis (£88.247 million Underspend)** – as explained in Paragraph 2.2 above, the drawdown of Qualis loans has been slower than envisaged at the time of preparing the Capital Programme, primarily due to planning delays on development sites.
  - **Commercial and Technical (£13.037 million Underspend)** – there are two big projects driving the underspend as follows:
    - **Epping Forest Leisure Centre** – the Leisure Centre is a long-term project with an original budget of £25.0 million (with spending of £10.937 million profiled for 2022/23). However, actual spend during the year amounted to £0.080 million resulting in an underspend of £10.857 million. Approval to appoint a development contractor for the Leisure Centre was granted by Cabinet on 13th March 2023, along with an increase in the budget provision of £8.1 million, resulting in an overall revised budget allocation of £33.1 million (Decision Ref. C-040-2022-23). The project is expected to commence in August 2023 and be completed by April 2025; and
    - **Cartersfield Road** – the budget allocation for this project in 2022/23 was £1.436 million; actual spending totalled £0.375 million, resulting in an underspend of £1.061 million. There has been steady progress on the project, although initial delays were experienced in arranging vacant possession from some long-term tenants; spending included demolition costs and clearance works to enhance the saleability of the site (which has continued into the new financial year) prior to transferring the site to Qualis for re-development. The scheme – as originally planned – involved the Council retaining the asset; the revised approach means that only a small proportion of the £1.061 million underspend will need to be rolled forward into 2023/24.
  - **Corporate Services (£3.010 million Underspend)** – the most significant area of capital underspending relates to the ICT Strategy, which has a budget allocation of £3.325 million for 2022/23. The actual outturn for the year was £0.484 million, leading to an underspend of £2.841 million. Some individual schemes progressed well during year (e.g., Digital Planning and Revenues & Benefits Cloud transfer). However, due to internal resource constraints, other business priorities and some deliberate alterations to plans, some projects took longer than expected to move from the initial discovery stage to works in progress and will not be completed until 2023/24. Such projects include the New Finance System; New Telephone System; a Licencing Replacement Application; rebuilding the GIS Application and upgrading the VMWare Infrastructure.
- 5.4 Members should also note the acquisition of the lease on the former Prince of Wales public house in Loughton at a cost of £687,500 (exc. legal fees) (Delegated Decision Ref. HAC-003-2022/23) during Quarter 2. The asset was purchased from the General Fund (see Appendix B) and (as indicated in the Q3 report) has now been transferred to the HRA for the purposes of Housing Development. The capital cost is matched by a debt re-allocation between the General Fund and the HRA (where budget is held), based on the agreed market value of £900,000.

## 6) Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme

6.1 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme outturn for 2022/23 is summarised in the table below. A more detailed analysis – at a scheme level – is included in **Appendix C**. The updated Programme budget totals £52.499 million. Actual spending in the year amounted to £15.875 million, leading to an underspend of £36.624 million. A large proportion of the underspend was due to slippage in a number of schemes; a request for approval to carry forward unspent budget on such schemes will form part of the 2023/24 Quarter 1 Budget Monitoring report.

Description	Budget 2022/23 (Updated)	Spending (31/03/23)	Variance (Under) / Over
	£000's	£000's	£000's
Housing Development	28,809	5,532	(23,277)
Capital Works	16,314	8,798	(7,516)
Other Housing Schemes	7,376	1,545	(5,831)
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>52,499</b>	<b>15,875</b>	<b>(36,624)</b>
<i>Capital Financing:</i>			
Direct Revenue Contributions	5,364	0	(5,364)
Major Repairs Reserve	14,613	11,300	(3,313)
Capital Receipts	5,970	3,238	(2,732)
Other Contributions	466	437	(29)
Borrowing	26,086	900	(25,186)
<b>Total Financing</b>	<b>52,499</b>	<b>15,875</b>	<b>(36,624)</b>

6.2 An HRA Capital Programme budget of £47.790 million was approved by Council in February 2022. A net total of £4.709 million in unspent budgets have been rolled forward from 2021/22, resulting in an updated Programme budget of £52.499 million for the year.

6.3 There are three significant areas of underspending/slippage on the HRA Capital Programme outturn. Thus:

- **Housing Development (£23.277 million Underspend)** – there are three elements to note:
  - Housebuilding – the programme for Housebuilding had a total budget of £15.598 million for 2022/23. Actual spending on the Programme was £4.633 million, resulting in an underspend of £10.965 million at the year end. Several schemes have encountered planning issues and delays, including two schemes (“Pentlow” and “Woollard”), which were originally expected to be completed in Spring and Summer 2022, but completion is now anticipated in 2023/24. A further two large Passivhaus schemes – at Chequers B (which has received planning permission) and Ladyfields (which still remains in planning) – with combined anticipated spend of over £8.0 million, are expected to start on site in 2023/24



- Qualis Acquisitions – the budget allocation for this scheme in 2022/23 was £10.461 million. No spend has taken place during the year resulting in an underspend of the full budget. Qualis experienced initial delays in planning consents which initially halted works; then sharp increases in industry-wide costs challenged the viability of some of the schemes. Although permissions have now been granted, there are still some viability concerns, so works are now not anticipated to commence until 2023/24 at the earliest; and
- Acquisition of Land for Building – the budget allocation in 2022/23 was £2.750 million; actual spending was £0.90 million resulting in an underspend of £1.850 million. Spending in the year related exclusively to the purchase of the Princess of Wales pub in Loughton (an asset owned by the General Fund) for a proposed new housing development site (Paragraph 5.4 refers).
- **Capital Works (£7.516 million Underspend)** – there have been delays this year in the delivery of Capital Works following the restructure of the Property Assets Team and the introduction of new working practices. There are four significant underspends as follows:
  - Kitchens and Bathrooms – the budget allocation in 2022/23 was £2.866 million; actual spending was £0.876 million, resulting in an underspend of £1.990 million. Delays in contract mobilisation by Qualis due to necessary Survey Works, affected the commencement of the programmed works for both Kitchens and Bathrooms. During the year, 85 Kitchens were completed compared to the 262 planned; of which, almost half were replaced during void periods. Similarly for Bathrooms, 108 were completed out of the 348 planned although fewer were completed during void periods. Planned Kitchens and Bathrooms not completed during the year have been rolled forward and added to the 2023/24 programme.
  - Net Zero Carbon Works – the budget allocation for 2022/23 was £1.50 million and no spending has taken place during the year. A match funding bid has successfully been made to the Social Housing De-Carbonisation Fund in partnership with E-On and the works are due to commence in early 2023/24
  - Structural Works – the budget allocation in 2022/23 was £1.985 million; actual spending was £0.536 million, resulting in an underspend of £1.449 million. Expenditure on Structural Works can be difficult to predict due to their reactive and diverse nature, and the technical expertise required to complete them. However, at the time of reporting, there are a number of sites where work is imminent, including three major works sites at Hornbeam Close (Hillyfields), Roundhills and Springfields, so substantial expenditure is anticipated in 2023/24; and
  - Windows, Doors, and Roofing - the budget allocation for 2022/23 was £3.435 million; actual spending was £2.210 million, resulting in an underspend of £1.225 million. The majority of the underspend relates to Roofing works; both flat roofs and tiled roofs where programmed (planned) works were reduced and limited to emergency referrals only.
- **Other Housing Schemes (£5.831 million Underspend)** – there are two regeneration projects primarily driving this variance:
  - Broadway Regeneration – this project had a total budget of £2.750 million in 2022/23. Actual spending was £0.220 million resulting in an underspend of £2.728 million. A detailed review of the project has been undertaken and a report presented to Cabinet on 13th March 2023 (C-044-2022/23), which led to the approval of an increase in the overall project budget to £6.0 million. Consultation with residents and leaseholders will commence in 2023/24, followed by any necessary planning consents. The project is expected to complete by 2025/26; and

- Limes/Copperfield Regeneration – this project had a profiled budget allocation of £2.772 million for 2022/23. Actual spending on the scheme in 2022/23 was £0.791 million, leading to an underspend of £1.981 million. Following some initial setbacks, the scheme began mobilisation in January 2023 and has an anticipated programme duration of 50 weeks to completion. As the project straddles the financial year-end, the £1.981 million underspend will be re-profiled to be spent in 2023/24.

6.4 The HRA Capital Programme is financed from several sources; external sources such as Grants and Capital Receipts are prioritised and applied first, followed by internal resources such as the Major Repairs Reserve and HRA Revenue contributions. The approach minimises the need to borrow and helps protect the HRA from higher interest payments. The underspend on the Programme has an impact on all sources of financing with the most significant being a £26.086 million reduction in the need to borrow in 2022/23.

### **Reason for Decision:**

This report facilitates the scrutiny of the Council's financial position for 2022/23.

The comments made at this Committee, where relevant, will be reported to Cabinet for consideration at their meeting on 21st August 2023.

### **Options:**

There are no matters for decision in this report. The Committee is asked to note the contents but may choose to take further action depending on the matters reported.

### **Resource Implications:**

The resource implications in this report are overwhelmingly financial in nature, in the form of budgetary control. Robust budget monitoring processes maximise the opportunity for services to react quickly to potential problems as they emerge, thus reducing the risk of financial problems, impeding the delivery of strategic priorities.

### **Legal and Governance Implications:**

The Council has a statutory obligation to maintain a balanced budget and the monitoring process enables the Committee to remain aware of issues and the process to maintain a balanced budget.

### **Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications:**

There are no SCG implications.

### **Consultation Undertaken:**

The development of the detailed 2022/23 budget was informed by the democratic scrutiny processes.

### **Background Papers:**

Management Accounts 2022/23 (Month 12)

### **Risk Management**

The report is primarily presented for information only and has no direct risk management implications, although regular monitoring and reporting of the type included in this report ensures early warning of significant issues that may place the Council at financial risk. This gives the Cabinet the best opportunity to take actions to mitigate such risks.

## General Fund Revenue Budget 2022/23

## Quarter 4 (Provisional Outturn)

Epping Forest DC: General Fund Revenue Budget 2022/23						
@ 31 March 2023 (Month 12)						
<b>General Fund</b>						
Service Area	Activity	Full Year Budget	Q4 Draft Outturn (M12) Unadjusted	Reserve Movements	Q4 Draft Outturn (M12) Adjusted	Variance
		£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s
<b>Chief Executive</b>	Chief Executive Support Services	532,530	594,630	-	594,630	62,100
	Corporate Activities	75,820	62,649	-	62,649	(13,171)
	Chief Executive Other Activities	50,000	1,959	-	1,959	(48,041)
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>658,350</b>	<b>659,238</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>659,238</b>	<b>888</b>
<b>Commercial &amp; Technical Services</b>	Car Parking	(894,030)	(655,821)	(80,000)	(735,821)	158,209
	C&T Community & Partnership	232,330	188,910	-	188,910	(43,420)
	Contracts & Technical Support Services	1,810,440	1,584,360	-	1,584,360	(226,080)
	Cost Centres - Contracts & Technical	3,325,580	3,239,289	(4,158)	3,235,131	(90,449)
	C&T Emergency Planning & Other	2,500	1,072	-	1,072	(1,428)
	Environmental Health	232,250	318,827	-	318,827	86,577
	Land Drainage/Sewerage	129,830	94,901	-	94,901	(34,929)
	Land & Property	(7,688,610)	(7,694,529)	-	(7,694,529)	(5,919)
	Leisure Facilities	(1,215,530)	(708,089)	-	(708,089)	507,441
	North Weald Centre	(1,152,230)	(1,304,663)	(42,903)	(1,347,566)	(195,336)
	Parks & Grounds	471,920	545,699	(23,526)	522,173	50,253
	Private Sector Housing	(96,790)	(70,547)	-	(70,547)	26,243
	C&T Regulatory Services	(255,480)	(208,772)	-	(208,772)	46,708
	Waste Management	5,236,990	4,695,105	-	4,695,105	(541,885)
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>139,170</b>	<b>25,741</b>	<b>(150,587)</b>	<b>(124,846)</b>	<b>(264,016)</b>
<b>Community &amp; Wellbeing</b>	Community, Health & Wellbeing	120,340	103,689	(50,179)	53,510	(66,830)
	Cost Centres - Community & Wellbeing	457,670	458,726	(2,673)	456,053	(1,617)
	Economic Projects Support Serv	198,290	144,736	-	144,736	(53,554)
	Homelessness	73,000	84,778	(125,338)	(40,559)	(113,559)
	Museum, Heritage & Culture	682,640	588,904	4,602	593,506	(89,134)
	Voluntary Sector Support	250,740	247,126	-	247,126	(3,614)
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>1,782,680</b>	<b>1,627,959</b>	<b>(173,587)</b>	<b>1,454,371</b>	<b>(328,309)</b>
<b>Corporate Services</b>	Business Support	1,925,860	1,879,628	(37,177)	1,842,451	(83,409)
	Cost Centres - Corporate Support	335,600	318,596	-	318,596	(17,004)
	Elections	222,460	190,762	21,609	212,371	(10,089)
	Emergency Planning & Other	115,840	75,670	-	75,670	(40,170)
	ICT	3,810,130	3,444,941	(17,708)	3,427,232	(382,898)
	Insurance Premiums	810,060	572,648	-	572,648	(237,412)
	Corp Serv - Member Activities	381,760	357,176	-	357,176	(24,584)
	Other Support Services	1,866,960	1,675,682	(46,928)	1,628,755	(238,205)
	Strategy Support Services	294,150	319,870	(13,878)	305,991	11,841
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>9,762,820</b>	<b>8,834,973</b>	<b>(94,082)</b>	<b>8,740,891</b>	<b>(1,021,929)</b>
<b>Customer Services</b>	Cost Centres - Customer Services	2,472,370	2,593,741	(39,927)	2,553,815	81,445
	Customer Support Services	1,621,990	1,640,280	-	1,640,280	18,290
	Housing Benefits	(1,172,620)	(590,836)	-	(590,836)	581,784
	Local Taxation	(693,360)	(768,774)	112,108	(656,666)	36,694
	Customer Services - Members Activities	26,470	85,575	-	85,575	59,105
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>2,254,850</b>	<b>2,959,987</b>	<b>72,181</b>	<b>3,032,168</b>	<b>777,318</b>
<b>Finance &amp; Audit</b>	Audit Support Services	384,470	452,671	(31,794)	420,877	36,407
	Finance Support Services	1,063,390	1,364,510	-	1,364,510	301,120
	Finance & Other Activities	963,630	1,189,272	-	1,189,272	225,642
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>2,411,490</b>	<b>3,006,452</b>	<b>(31,794)</b>	<b>2,974,659</b>	<b>563,169</b>
<b>Housing &amp; Property</b>	Accommodation	457,940	386,720	-	386,720	(71,220)
	Cost Centres - Housing & Property	510,440	490,330	-	490,330	(20,110)
	Facilities & Depot Management	528,200	402,424	-	402,424	(125,776)
	Housing & Property Support Services	352,110	261,470	-	261,470	(90,640)
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>1,848,690</b>	<b>1,540,944</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,540,944</b>	<b>(307,746)</b>
<b>Place</b>	Place - Community & Partnership	40,920	4,956	50,792	55,748	14,828
	Cost Centres - Place	334,020	241,520	-	241,520	(92,500)
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>374,940</b>	<b>246,476</b>	<b>50,792</b>	<b>297,268</b>	<b>(77,671)</b>
<b>Planning &amp; Development</b>	Cost Centres - Planning Services	2,324,800	2,344,440	(77,967)	2,266,472	(58,328)
	Local Plan Implementation	1,048,700	326,135	544,300	870,435	(178,265)
	Planning & Development	(1,655,730)	(875,269)	(10,410)	(885,679)	770,051
	Planning Support Services	291,970	225,689	-	225,689	(66,281)
	Regulatory Services	(529,840)	(385,432)	(115,000)	(500,432)	29,408
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>1,479,900</b>	<b>1,635,563</b>	<b>340,922</b>	<b>1,976,486</b>	<b>496,586</b>
<b>Strategy, Delivery &amp; Performance</b>	Strategy - Other Activities	161,600	124,499	-	124,499	(37,101)
	Strategy, Delivery & Performance Support Services	688,040	475,529	(11)	475,518	(212,522)
	<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>849,640</b>	<b>600,028</b>	<b>(11)</b>	<b>600,017</b>	<b>(249,623)</b>
<b>General Fund Total</b>		<b>21,562,530</b>	<b>21,137,362</b>	<b>13,835</b>	<b>21,151,197</b>	<b>-411,333</b>
	<b>Qualis Income</b>	(2,909,440)	(1,774,896)	-	(1,774,896)	1,134,544
	<b>HRA Recharges</b>	(5,224,670)	(5,116,557)	-	(5,116,557)	108,113
	<b>Financing</b>					
	<i>Interest (exc. Qualis):</i>					
	Interest Receivable	(50,000)	(384,130)	-	(384,130)	(334,130)
	Interest Payable	863,440	1,916,474	-	1,916,474	1,053,034
	Minimum Revenue Provision	1,327,000	1,125,000	-	1,125,000	(202,000)
	Specific Contingency (GF Energy)	62,500	-	-	-	(62,500)
<b>General Fund (Net Expenditure)</b>		<b>15,631,360</b>	<b>16,903,253</b>	<b>13,835</b>	<b>16,917,089</b>	<b>1,285,729</b>

## General Fund Capital Programme 2022/23

## Quarter 4 (Provisional Outturn)

General Fund Capital Programme 2022/23: Provisional Outturn								
Scheme	2021/22 Budget Outturn (xtract)			2022/23 Budget			2022/23 General Fund Capital Outturn (@ 31st March 2023: Q4)	
	2021/22 Unspent / (Overspend) Balances	(Savings) / Overspends not c/fwd	Balances Rolled Forward into 2022/23	2022/23 Budget Allocation	Q1-Q4 Changes	2022/23 Budget (Updated)	Actual Spending 2022/23	Variance (Uspend)/ Ospend 2022/23
	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s
<b>Community &amp; Wellbeing</b>								
Joint Museum and Library Facility	688,018	(688,018)	-	770,000	-	770,000	-	(770,000)
<b>Sub-Totals</b>	<b>688,018</b>	<b>(688,018)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>770,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>770,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(770,000)</b>
<b>Commercial &amp; Technical</b>								
Cartersfield Road	1,436,464	-	1,436,464	-	-	1,436,464	375,485	(1,060,979)
Investment Property Acquisition Fund	1,117,867	-	1,117,867	-	-	1,117,867	521,370	(596,497)
Princess of Wales PH - lease acquisition**	-	-	-	-	-	-	695,489	695,489
CCTV Replacement Programme	85,437	(44,992)	40,445	102,000	-	142,445	73,073	(69,372)
CarPark CCTV Systems	(10,259)	10,259	-	20,000	-	20,000	6,920	(13,080)
Superfast Broadband (REFCuS)	350,000	-	350,000	-	-	350,000	-	(350,000)
Disabled Facilities Grants (REFCuS)	218,152	(218,152)	-	971,210	-	971,210	939,960	(31,250)
Home Assist Grants (REFCuS)	-	-	-	30,000	-	30,000	9,520	(20,480)
Car Park Schemes	(18,785)	18,785	-	-	-	-	-	-
Civic Offices Accommodation Project	(108,169)	108,169	-	-	-	-	-	-
Civic Offices Café External Access	75,979	-	75,979	100,000	-	175,979	-	(175,979)
Highway Ranger Vehicle & Equipment	519	(519)	-	40,000	-	40,000	-	(40,000)
Grounds Maintenance	40,945	-	40,945	30,000	-	70,945	32,650	(38,295)
Highways (REFCuS)	97,564	-	97,564	-	-	97,564	-	(97,564)
H2 Taxiway (ex NWA Prep Phase 1)	200,000	-	200,000	-	-	200,000	43,889	(156,112)
NWA Vehicles & Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	18,855	18,855
Vehicle Fleet Replacement & OHD Equipment	622,740	-	622,740	-	-	622,740	377,725	(245,015)
Ongar Leisure Centre	(4,953)	4,953	-	-	-	-	-	-
Epping Leisure Centre (Bakers Lane)	(1,562,560)	-	(1,562,560)	12,500,000	-	10,937,440	80,370	(10,857,070)
<b>Sub-Totals</b>	<b>2,540,941</b>	<b>(121,497)</b>	<b>2,419,444</b>	<b>13,793,210</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>16,212,654</b>	<b>3,175,304</b>	<b>(13,037,350)</b>
<b>Corporate Services</b>								
ICT General Schemes	142,379	(54,608)	87,771	103,000	-	190,771	20,288	(170,483)
ICT Strategy	1,715,452	(145,487)	1,569,965	1,960,910	(205,600)	3,325,275	484,083	(2,841,192)
Civic Offices Accommodation Project (ICT)	63,830	(55,288)	8,542	-	-	8,542	9,883	1,341
<b>Sub-Totals</b>	<b>1,921,661</b>	<b>(255,383)</b>	<b>1,666,278</b>	<b>2,063,910</b>	<b>(205,600)</b>	<b>3,524,588</b>	<b>514,253</b>	<b>(3,010,335)</b>
<b>Customer Services</b>								
Council Chamber Upgrade	-	-	-	160,000	-	160,000	12,351	(147,649)
<b>Sub-Totals</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>160,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>160,000</b>	<b>12,351</b>	<b>(147,649)</b>
<b>Housing (Property Services)</b>								
Oakwood Hill Depot Extension	6,572	-	6,572	-	-	6,572	24,727	18,155
Investment Properties (Planned Works)	(80,316)	80,316	-	19,220	83,657	102,877	56,689	(46,188)
202-220 Loughton HR (Roof and H & S works)	-	-	-	-	141,490	141,490	147,831	6,341
Operational Properties (Planned Works)	93,230	(12,250)	80,980	252,000	(19,547)	313,433	17,701	(295,732)
<b>Sub-Totals</b>	<b>19,486</b>	<b>68,066</b>	<b>87,552</b>	<b>271,220</b>	<b>205,600</b>	<b>564,372</b>	<b>246,949</b>	<b>(317,423)</b>
<b>Place</b>								
Climate & Environmental Projects	426,984	-	426,984	250,000	-	676,984	-	(676,984)
<b>Sub-Totals</b>	<b>426,984</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>426,984</b>	<b>250,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>676,984</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>(676,984)</b>
<b>Qualis</b>								
Regeneration Finance Loans	41,247,500	-	41,247,500	55,000,000	-	96,247,500	8,000,000	(88,247,500)
<b>Sub-Totals</b>	<b>41,247,500</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>41,247,500</b>	<b>55,000,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>96,247,500</b>	<b>8,000,000</b>	<b>(88,247,500)</b>
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>46,844,590</b>	<b>(996,832)</b>	<b>45,847,758</b>	<b>72,308,340</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>118,156,098</b>	<b>11,948,857</b>	<b>(106,207,241)</b>
** transferred to the HRA for development at year end (via debt transfer from GF to HRA)								
<b>Capital Financing:</b>								
Borrowing	46,626,438	(778,680)	45,847,758	67,844,380	-	113,692,138	9,625,279	(104,066,859)
Capital Grants	218,152	(218,152)	-	971,210	-	971,210	939,960	(31,250)
Capital Receipts	-	-	-	3,492,750	-	3,492,750	1,383,617	(2,109,133)
<b>Total Financing</b>	<b>46,844,590</b>	<b>(996,832)</b>	<b>45,847,758</b>	<b>72,308,340</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>118,156,098</b>	<b>11,948,857</b>	<b>(106,207,241)</b>

## Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme 2022/23

## Quarter 4 (Provisional Outturn)

HRA Capital Programme 2022/23: Provisional Outturn									
	2021/22 Budget Outturn (xtract)			2022/23 Budget				Outturn (@ 31 March 2023:Q4)	
	2021/22 Unspent/ (Overspent) Balances	Savings	Balances Rolled Forward into 2022/23	2022/23 Budget Allocation	B/Fwd (2021/22 to 2022/23)	Q1 - Q4 Changes	2022/23 Budget (Updated)	Actual Spending 2022/23	Variance (Uspend) / Ospend 2022/23
Schemes	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s	£'s
<b>Housing Development Programme:</b>									
Housebuilding	8,335,830	8,335,830	-	15,597,810	-	-	15,597,810	4,632,548	(10,965,262)
Acquisition of Land for Building	-	-	-	2,750,000	-	-	2,750,000	900,000	(1,850,000)
Acquisition of Street Properties	(2,968,310)	(2,968,310)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Qualis Acquisitions	7,492,000	7,492,000	-	10,461,190	-	-	10,461,190	-	(10,461,190)
<b>Sub-Totals</b>	<b>12,859,520</b>	<b>12,859,520</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>28,809,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>28,809,000</b>	<b>5,532,548</b>	<b>(23,276,452)</b>
<b>Capital Works:</b>									
Net Zero Carbon Works	100,000	-	100,000	500,000	100,000	900,000	1,500,000	-	(1,500,000)
Heating	691,840	-	691,840	1,556,000	691,838	-	2,247,840	1,854,008	(393,832)
Windows, Door and Roofing	848,550	-	848,550	2,886,000	848,553	(300,000)	3,434,550	2,210,037	(1,224,513)
Compliance Planned Maintenance	439,160	-	439,160	250,000	439,163	-	689,160	416,362	(272,798)
Kitchens & Bathrooms (inc void allocation)	566,420	-	566,420	2,300,000	566,417	-	2,866,420	875,837	(1,990,583)
Electrical	101,390	(18,380)	119,770	1,711,000	119,768	-	1,830,770	1,604,337	(226,433)
Sprinklers	275,000	275,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Environmental	306,280	150,940	155,340	275,000	155,339	-	430,340	163,364	(266,976)
Structural works	1,636,520	-	1,636,520	949,000	1,636,523	(600,000)	1,985,520	536,350	(1,449,170)
Disabled adaptations	(114,620)	-	(114,620)	1,145,000	(114,616)	-	1,030,380	1,051,132	20,752
Asbestos Removal	219,190	100,000	119,190	130,000	119,189	-	249,190	82,555	(166,635)
Estate Improvements	56,110	56,110	-	50,000	0	-	50,000	4,126	(45,874)
<b>Sub-Totals</b>	<b>5,125,840</b>	<b>563,670</b>	<b>4,562,170</b>	<b>11,752,000</b>	<b>4,562,173</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>16,314,170</b>	<b>8,798,107</b>	<b>(7,516,063)</b>
<b>Other Housing Schemes:</b>									
Service Enhancements									
HAM Project	251,730	-	251,730	400,000	251,726	-	651,730	463,225	(188,505)
HFFH Act Project	24,210	-	24,210	154,000	24,206	-	178,210	209,833	31,623
Limes/Copperfield Regen Project	(228,510)	-	(228,510)	3,000,000	228,514	-	2,771,490	790,984	(1,980,506)
The Broadway Regen Project	-	-	-	2,750,000	-	-	2,750,000	21,928	(2,728,072)
Frank Bretton Refurb	(115,720)	(115,720)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Emergency Alarm System Upgrade	-	-	-	360,000	-	-	360,000	-	(360,000)
Sheltered Blocks Refurbishment	-	-	-	330,000	-	-	330,000	-	(330,000)
Front Door Replacemnt Prog- L/Hold	99,000	-	99,000	235,000	99,000	-	334,000	22,329	(311,671)
<b>Sub-Totals</b>	<b>30,710</b>	<b>(115,720)</b>	<b>146,430</b>	<b>7,229,000</b>	<b>146,418</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>7,375,430</b>	<b>1,508,299</b>	<b>(5,867,131)</b>
<b>Vehicle Replacements</b>	<b>(80,070)</b>	<b>(80,070)</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>36,275</b>	<b>36,275</b>
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>17,936,000</b>	<b>13,227,410</b>	<b>4,708,590</b>	<b>47,790,000</b>	<b>4,708,591</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>52,498,590</b>	<b>15,875,229</b>	<b>(36,623,371)</b>
<b>Capital Financing</b>									
Direct Revenue Contributions	-	-	-	5,364,000	-	-	5,364,000	-	(5,364,000)
Major Repairs Reserve	4,708,590	-	4,708,590	9,904,000	4,708,591	-	14,612,590	11,300,361	(3,312,229)
RTB Receipts (1-4-1)	-	-	-	5,970,000	-	-	5,970,000	3,237,756	(2,732,244)
Capital Grants	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	187,195	187,195
Other Contributions	-	-	-	466,000	-	-	466,000	249,916	(216,084)
Borrowing	13,227,410	13,227,410	-	26,086,000	-	-	26,086,000	900,000	(25,186,000)
	<b>17,936,000</b>	<b>13,227,410</b>	<b>4,708,590</b>	<b>47,790,000</b>	<b>4,708,591</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>52,498,590</b>	<b>15,875,229</b>	<b>(36,623,371)</b>

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## Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee



**Date of meeting:** 18 July 2023

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

**Subject:** Quarterly Monitoring Report – Q2 (Year 4) 2022/23

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

**Democratic Services:** Laura Kirman (01992 564243).

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### Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) Discuss this report and agree any actions required.

#### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Governance framework for Qualis, as agreed by Cabinet in February 2020, included the requirement that Qualis should report to Epping Forest District Council on its performance Quarterly.
- 1.2. This report presents the second Quarter's monitoring report for the 4<sup>th</sup> Qualis trading year 2022/23 and covers the period from 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2023. Attached as Appendix A is the Qualis Board monitoring report for Quarter 2.
- 1.3. This report was previously considered by Cabinet at its meeting of 30 May 2023, but due to the fall of meetings comes to Overview and Scrutiny tonight. Any comments made by the Committee will be passed to the Portfolio Holder for consideration.
- 1.4. Financial performance is measured in the attached report against the business plan targets for 2022/23 contained within the Qualis 1 year Business Plan.
- 1.5. The Qualis group of companies was created by the Council to bring control back to the Council over the direction and style of development and over delivery of key services. Additionally, profits previously paid to, or retained by, third parties are now retained by the Council, significantly reducing the financial challenges faced by the Council at this time.
- 1.6. **Beyond the difficulties and challenges created by the economic factors previously reported, Qualis continues to make positive returns in 3 of its 4 companies, albeit below target levels. As reported last Quarter, Qualis Living is finding achieving targets the most difficult and this is attributed to targets for the year being too optimistic given current economic conditions. This will need to be addressed in the next iteration of the Qualis Business plan, when target will be revised again to reflect current market conditions. Despite the difficult trading conditions, the position still includes almost £2 million of interest payments made by Qualis to the Council (over the previous 12 months) for its lending and these directly support the Council's continued provision of valued services.**

- 1.7. Qualis has significantly improved the quality and ease of understanding of their Board reports for the Shareholders consumption to the point where the commentary in the cover report is now largely duplicating the content of the Board report provided. Consequently, elements of repetition, such as certain tables and narrative are now no longer included in this cover report and instead it focuses on key messages.
- 1.8. **Overall Qualis reports a Quarter 2 loss of £350,718, which is greater than forecast by £198,655 across all companies. This is an improvement on the Q1 position by £446,052. This is largely attributed to a correction to the treatment of Work in Progress and review of Budget Forecast assumptions as reported at the end of Q1.**

## **2. Introduction**

- 2.1. The Qualis Shareholder agreement, as agreed by Cabinet in February 2020, includes the following paragraph,

‘The Company shall procure that quarterly management accounts and reports (including a balance sheet, profit and loss account and cash flow statement) containing such information as EFDC may reasonably require are provided to EFDC and EFDC’s Representative.’

- 2.2. The Cabinet resolution also requires that the Council’s S151, as the key conduit between Qualis and the Council, provides a commentary to the Council on the performance of Qualis at each Quarter review.
- 2.3. In compliance with this requirement Qualis has provided the Council with the Quarters’ Management Accounts for consideration.

## **3. Commentary on the Trading Performance for Quarter 2, 2022/23 (Qualis Year 4)**

- 3.1. The Qualis Board report attached at Appendix A has been developed by Qualis over the past 2 quarters to make it more informative and intelligible to the shareholder, in part mirroring the summary previously provided within the cover report. It has now been developed to the point where the detail no longer needs to be extracted and summarised in the cover report as the key information is easily identifiable from the Board report itself. Consequently, the summary cover report has been reduced in length to remove duplication and instead will be used mainly to highlight issues or identify areas of disagreement or concern.
- 3.2. The key points identified are that trading position largely continues in line with the trends highlighted in previous Board reports, without major variation or exception. The trading losses for Qualis Living have reduced following the revision to the treatment of Work in Progress as reported in the Quarter 1 cover report. However, it is expected that Qualis Living will continue to lose money for the remainder of their trading year, (6 months). This is partly due to the continued difficult trading environment and partly due to overly ambitious targets set for the year, recognising that the two factors are interrelated. Action and revised targets will be set in the forthcoming revision and update of the Qualis Business Plan.
- 3.3. Also of note is that Qualis Management has, with the approval of the Shareholder, changed its name to Qualis Property Solutions with effect from 26 April 2023. Qualis sought permission from the Council, as required by the shareholder agreement. Qualis made this request as it better reflects the actual nature of their activity,



(management being more generic), but the name wasn't available at the point Qualis was originally created. As the name recently became available, Qualis asked if they could secure it. Their branding (vehicles and fleet), ownership structure and accounting year end will all remain unchanged and, essentially, they continue to be known only as Qualis. As the cost to change is minimal, permission was given.

- 3.4. The value of Qualis assets, against which the Council's loans are secured remain broadly equal, as set out in the Tables 5.1 and 6.1 within Appendix A. This remains a critical shareholder test and will be regularly reported.
- 3.5. Qualis Net Worth has reduced to negative £5.8 million, reflecting the addition of the reported loss for Q2.

#### **4. Resource Implications**

- 4.1. The Epping Forest District Council Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plans partly rely on interest paid by Qualis for the loans the Council has given. Delays in obtaining Planning consent, issues around title and delays in completing the loan agreements all have an impact and can mean that actual payments to the Council vary below those expected in 2022/23. The Budget for 2023/24 recently approved by Council provides a contingency provision to smooth fluctuations caused by events outside of the Council's control.

#### **5. Legal and Governance Implications**

- 5.1. None contained within this report.

#### **6. Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications**

- 6.1. None.

#### **7. Consultation Undertaken**

- 7.1. None

### **Background Papers**

Group Company Governance Document – Cabinet 6 February 2020

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**MEETING:** Qualis Group Board Meeting  
**DATE:** 10 May 2023  
**TITLE:** **March Finance Report**  
**PRESENTED BY:** Andy Howarth, Interim Finance Director  
Frances Malone, Finance Manager  
**ACTION:** To NOTE the contents of the report

## 2. Recommendation

1.1 This report is to review and note and no decisions are required.

### 2.0 Executive Summary

2.1 As at the end of March only QGL is ahead of budget, but QPS and QCL are both producing surpluses. QLL is reporting adverse variances primarily due to optimistic budget setting for new business streams that either have not materialised or are not producing anticipated income. The combined loss stands at £351k, £200k worse than budget. QCL Project costs and overheads have been moved to WIP to bring the P&L into line with budget assumptions.

2.2 Group assets and WIP are analysed at paragraph 5.

2.3 Group debt of £68m is further broken down at Paragraph 6.

2.4 The group cash balances at the end of the month were £2.3m. A high level 4-year cash projection has been completed and shared with EFDC as a basis for discussing how Qualis cashflow will be supported by loans drawn up until development projects complete.

### 3.0 Company Financial Performance

#### 2.5 Qualis Group Ltd

2.5.1 Essentially this reflects the recharge of central costs to the group companies and should not show any significant variances. The remaining year is forecast to budget which is why the YTD variances are the same as the full year variances.

Group	YTD			Full YR		
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Forecast	Budget	Variance
Revenue	1,235,579	1,266,004	(30,425)	2,501,575	2,532,000	(30,425)
Expenditure	1,178,196	1,237,647	59,451	2,352,549	2,412,000	59,451
Profit/Loss	57,383	28,357	29,026	149,026	120,000	29,026

#### 2.0 Qualis Property Solutions Ltd

2.0.1 The full year forecast result is now expected to be lower than budget at £270k and there are still risks to be managed over the second half of the year including the onboarding of the Grounds Maintenance contract. The GM contract is in the full year budget for the second half of the year but was prudently assumed to produce a break-even position. This contract commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> May.



Property Solutions	YTD			Full YR		
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Forecast	Budget	Variance
Revenue	5,670,325	5,428,758	241,567	12,541,243	12,321,222	220,021
Expenditure	5,596,855	5,304,516	(292,339)	12,271,680	11,979,341	(292,339)
Profit/Loss	73,470	124,242	(50,772)	269,563	341,881	(72,318)

## 2.1 Qualis Commercial Ltd

2.1.1 The budget included an assumption that Work in Progress would be shown as operating costs with income transferred to cover these costs. This approach has been reviewed and the accounting entries for the year to date now show the transfer to WIP within the expenditure section and not as income. The income shown relates to fees received.

2.1.2 The approach now used moves all project costs to WIP, but there could be future write offs to P&L as abortive costs if we establish that a scheme will not proceed.

Commercial	YTD			Full YR		
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Forecast	Budget	Variance
Revenue	34,716	882,000	(847,284)	69,433	1,764,000	(1,694,567)
Expenditure	0	842,000	842,000	0	1,684,000	1,684,000
Profit/Loss	34,716	40,000	(5,284)	69,433	80,000	(10,568)

## 2.2 Qualis Living Ltd

2.2.1 The forecast takes the realistic view that the budget investment income of £309k from newly acquired investments will not be achieved in this financial year.

2.2.2 The full year budget also included £300k of parking income expected to occur from July to September, which will probably start later than expected, possibly in September, and not be fully effective until the next Qualis financial year. Only £125k is included in the forecast together with other unbudgeted temporary car park income at St Johns.

2.2.3 The anticipated income for managing the EFDC portfolio was included in budget at £700k comprising a base fee of £500k with a share of £200k relating to income growth from lease reviews and renewals. However, the EFDC budget for this activity was less than £300k. We are expecting to reach a compromise position with a lower base fee and a sensible share of the growth. The forecast now includes £450k for this activity.

2.2.4 The forecast still assumes positive net favourable expenditure variances of c£30k.

2.2.5 Forecast interest costs of £2.5m have been accrued to budget but there is still an exercise to complete to establish a policy for costs capitalised on development schemes included in WIP.

Living	YTD			Full YR		
	Actual	Budget	Variance	Forecast	Budget	Variance
Revenue	1,336,073	1,540,500	(204,427)	2,762,593	3,378,000	(615,407)
Expenditure	1,852,361	1,885,163	32,802	3,739,830	3,770,326	30,496
Profit/Loss	(516,288)	(344,663)	(171,625)	(977,238)	(392,326)	(584,912)

## 2.3 Combined Profit / (Loss)

Overall Profit/Loss	(350,718)	(152,064)	(198,655)	(489,216)	149,555	(638,771)
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#### 4.0 Balance Sheets

2.0 The summary combined Balance sheet is as follows

<b>All Company Combined Balance Sheet as at 31 Mar 2023</b>		<b>£</b>
<b>Fixed Assets</b>	Freehold Property	44,464,331
	Office Equipment Net book value	73,427
	Motor Vehicles Net book value	42,420
	<b>Total Fixed Assets</b>	<b>44,580,178</b>
<b>Intangible Assets</b>	Debtors - Unpaid share capital	<b>4</b>
<b>Current Assets</b>	Debtors Control Account	2,303,679
	Other Debtors & Prepayments	321,903
	Accrued Income	284,158
	Deferred Income	(287,875)
	Natwest Current Account	2,280,583
	WIP Project Costs	17,965,581
	<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>22,868,028</b>
<b>Current Liabilities</b>	Creditors Control Account	2,710,063
	Other Creditors & Accruals	387,247
	<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>3,097,310</b>
<b>Total Assets less Current Liabilities</b>		<b>64,350,900</b>
<b>Long Term Liabilities</b>	Loans received EFDC	72,302,500
	Loan Repayments	(3,831,443)
	Provision for Deferred Tax	1,689,369
<b>Total Long Term Liabilities</b>		<b>70,160,426</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>		<b>(5,809,526)</b>
<b>Capital Employed</b>	Share Capital	4
	Profit and Loss Account	(5,458,813)
<b>Unposted Profit</b>	Retained Profit /Loss	(350,718)
<b>Total Capital Employed</b>		<b>(5,809,526)</b>

## 2.1 Assets analysis

2.2 The asset values shown in the combined balance sheet can be analysed by company as follows:

Asset Breakdown	Qualis Group	Qualis Management	Qualis Living	Qualis Commercial	Total
Freehold Property	0	0	44,464,331	0	44,464,331
Office Equipment	68,931	4,496	0	0	73,427
Motor Vehicles	0	42,420	0	0	42,420
					44,580,178
Debtors Control Account	528,664	1,695,888	56,892	22,235	2,303,679
Prepayments	105,281	205,948	2,887	7,787	321,903
WIP Project costs	0	0	14,539,189	3,426,392	17,965,581
Accrued Income	0	64,758	219,400	0	284,158
Deferred Income	0	0	(287,875)	0	(287,875)
Recharges	0	0	0	0	0
Bank Account	853,128	427,141	996,299	4,015	2,280,583
					22,847,324
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>1,556,003</b>	<b>2,440,650</b>	<b>59,991,123</b>	<b>3,460,429</b>	<b>67,448,206</b>

2.3 The key lines to note in the assets analysis are the Property and Work in Progress lines which can be further analysed by asset/scheme as follows.

Combined Assets & WIP	Inv Assets	Dev Assets	WIP	Total
	£	£	£	£
Birchwood Building	14,225,000			14,225,000
Greenfields House – Coventry	8,640,000			8,640,000
Wycke Hill – Maldon	6,820,000			6,820,000
Cottis Lane		3,477,092	5,757,150	9,234,242
Conder		2,057,116	2,725,417	4,782,533
St John's Road		7,849,619	3,708,265	11,557,884
Roundhills		1,395,508	845,577	2,241,085
Pyrles Lane			167,043	167,043
Cartersfield			204,712	204,712
Centric Parade			6,500	6,500
Hemnall Street			493,646	493,646
Bakers			24,290	24,290
Construction Loan			150,000	150,000
Development Advance Loan			351,000	351,000
EFDC Asset Purchase Loan			542,025	542,025
Qualis Homes Ltd			58,728	58,728
Temporary Car Park			22,776	22,776
OVERHEADS			2,908,452	2,908,452
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>29,685,000</b>	<b>14,779,335</b>	<b>17,965,581</b>	<b>62,429,915</b>

2.4 The shading in the table matches the shading in the loan analysis below to represent the correlation between loans drawn and project costs incurred.

2.5 There is still further analysis to be completed as there is a significant amount of unallocated Overhead that needs to be apportioned across the schemes. Furthermore, the expenditure itemised by loan source, which represents “capitalised” interest should be further analysed and also apportioned by scheme.

2.6 Project costs formerly reported in the current year in QC P&L have now been incorporated in WIP.

## 6.0 Loans

2.7 There are no loans recorded within QPS and QCL. The loan facilities are designed to enable borrowing in QGL which can then be on-leased to the other group companies. The Group debt is effectively being carried within QLL and the loan schedule is as follows.

Loans Summary	Term	Facility	Drawn	Repaid	Balance	Available
	Yrs	£k	£k	£k	£k	£k
Working Capital Loan	5	6,000	8,550	(2,550)	6,000	0
Investment Asset Purchase	10	30,000	30,000	0	30,000	0
Development Advance Loan	5	6,000	6,000	(400)	5,600	400
Construction Loan	30	62,000	13,000	(267)	12,733	49,267
EFDC Asset Purchase	30	14,753	14,753	(615)	14,138	0
EFDC Asset Purchase (Hemnall)	30	2,030	0	0	0	2,030
Regeneration Loan	-	35,000	0	0	0	35,000
<b>Total Loans</b>		<b>155,783</b>	<b>72,303</b>	<b>(3,831)</b>	<b>68,471</b>	<b>86,697</b>

2.8 The Working Capital loan has now been fully utilised, including further drawings to repay a historic debt for secondment fees to EFDC. A repayment holiday has been agreed on this loan whereby the January and July principal repayment instalments have been postponed.

2.9 The Investment Asset Purchase Loan of £30m correlates to the first three lines in the asset analysis in Paragraph 5 above.

2.10 The EFDC Asset Purchase Loan represents the initial purchase of the EFDC development assets.

2.11 The Development Advance Loan and the Construction Loan combined facility is £68m with a 30-year term. The advance loan is repayable over 5 years. The two loans combined have funded the project cost WIP itemised in Paragraph 5 above.

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## **Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

**Date of meeting: 18 July 2023**

**Subject: Overview and Scrutiny 2022–23 Annual Report**

**Officer contact for further information: V Messenger (01992 564243)**

**Committee Officer: L Kirman (01992 564243)**

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### **Recommendations/Decision Required:**

- (1) That the final draft of the Overview and Scrutiny 2022–23 Annual Report be agreed; and
- (2) That the Annual Report be submitted to Council for approval on 25 July 2023.

### **Report:**

1. The new scrutiny regime set up by the Council in April 2005 incorporates the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the three select committees. It is produced in accordance with Article 6, Overview and Scrutiny Rule 37 of the Constitution, which requires an annual report to be submitted to the Council each year.
2. The Overview and Scrutiny 2022–23 Annual Report highlights scrutiny business undertaken during this municipal year for all four scrutiny committees.
3. The Committee is asked to consider the final draft of the Annual Report, which has been updated to include any earlier comments made at the meeting on 20 April 2023.
4. Subject to approval by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the final draft version will be submitted to Council for approval, at the meeting on 25 July 2023.

### **Reason for decision:**

Annual report is in accordance with the Constitution Article 6, Overview and Scrutiny Rule 37.

**Options considered and rejected:** N/A

### **Consultation undertaken:**

The first draft was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 20 April 2023.

**Resource implications:** N/A

**Legal and Governance Implications:** N/A

**Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications:** N/A

**Background Papers:** None

**Impact Assessments:** N/A

**Risk Management:** N/A

### **Equality:**

There are no equality implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

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A stylized illustration of a forest scene. The background is a light blue sky with green foliage. In the foreground, two deer are silhouetted against the trees. The text 'Epping Forest District Council' is overlaid on the scene in white, with a logo to the left.

 Epping Forest District Council

# **Overview and Scrutiny**

## **2022 – 23**

# **Annual Report**

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Report by: V Messenger, EFDC Democratic Services Officer (April 2023)



## **Chairman's welcome and introduction**

May I welcome members of Epping Forest District Council and introduce the 2022 – 23 annual report.

This annual report highlights the work undertaken by the Council's four scrutiny committees, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the three select committees – Stronger Communities, Stronger Council and Stronger Place that are aligned to the Council's key objectives and aims within its Corporate Plan.

This year, I supported a greater focus on scrutinising the Council's services and activities. Scrutiny of outside bodies where the Council was unable to affect or influence their activities was agreed to be held as all-member briefings.

May I take this opportunity to thank the chairmen and members of the select committees and especially my Vice-Chairman, Councillor David Wixley, for all his help and support throughout this challenging year.

And of course, I would like to thank all the officers who have worked so hard to keep the members of the scrutiny committees informed and their help in providing any background information that members needed to carry out their investigations.

***Cllr Helen Kane***

**Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

## What is scrutiny?

- ▶ Scrutiny in local government is the mechanism by which public accountability is exercised.
- ▶ In practice the purpose of scrutiny is to examine, question and evaluate in order to achieve improvement.
- ▶ Value of scrutiny is to use research and questioning techniques to make recommendations based on evidence.
- ▶ Scrutiny enables issues of public concerns to be examined.
- ▶ At the heart of all the work is consideration of what impact Cabinet's plans will have on the local community.
- ▶ Overview and scrutiny functions are not meant to be confrontational or seen as deliberately set up to form an opposition to the Cabinet. Rather the two aspects should be regarded as 'different sides of the same coin'. The two should complement each other and work in tandem to contribute to the development of the authority.

Alongside its role to challenge, the scrutiny function has continued to thrive. Scrutiny members have engaged positively with the Cabinet, which is why a Cabinet member cannot be a member of a scrutiny committee. This scrutiny has continued to provide valuable contributions to the Council and the Cabinet remained receptive to ideas put forward by the scrutiny committees throughout the year. The Constitution also allows members to call-in Executive decisions and for the public to ask questions at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## Scrutiny committees

### Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The main scrutiny committee has sole responsibility to discharge the Council's statutory duties and responsibilities under the Local Government Act 2000, as defined in the Constitution under [Article 6 – Overview and Scrutiny](#). All the scrutiny committees have a Terms of Reference. Their work programmes are continually updated throughout the year to reflect the progress of their ongoing scrutiny of Council business in relation to corporate performance reporting, service areas, strategies, policies and Qualis.

The committee regularly reviews the Cabinet's Forward Plan of Key Decisions to identify suitable matters for its work programme and for the overview of specific decisions being proposed. The Cabinet can equally ask Overview and Scrutiny to pre-scrutinise any of its business.

### Select Committees

Restructured into three select committees at the start of the 2019/20 municipal year, they are mainly aligned with the Council's Corporate Plan 2018-2023 and the three pillars of its corporate ambitions:

- **Stronger Communities**
- **Stronger Council**
- **Stronger Place**

Their Terms of Reference are agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its first meeting in the municipal year, which sets out a rolling programme of ongoing and cyclical issues specific to their corporate alignments. A lead officer of the Executive Leadership Team, appointed to each select committee, helps to facilitate this and co-ordinates member-led scrutiny throughout the year.

### Task and Finish Panels

These panels can be set up by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to deal with ad-hoc projects or reviews that are included in the annual work programme for overview and scrutiny. The Panels are restricted to those activities which are issue-based, time limited and non-cyclical in character and also have clearly defined objectives.

## Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee held seven meetings this municipal year. The committee membership was approved at Annual Council on 26 May 2022. The first meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was held on 16 June 2022 when the 2022/23 membership appointments to the select committees and the chairmen and vice-chairmen positions were approved. Councillor C Whitbread, Leader of Council, also presented an overview of the Council's corporate priorities.

### Members for 2022–23



**CHAIRMAN:**  
**Councillor Helen Kane**

**VICE-CHAIRMAN:**  
**Councillor David Wixley**

### COUNCILLORS:

Raymond Balcombe, Roger Baldwin, Richard Bassett, Pranav Bhanot, Elizabeth Gabbett, Ian Hadley, Steven Heather, Bob Jennings, Jeane Lea, Jaymey McIvor, Stephen Murray, Smruti Patel Janet Whitehouse

Led by the new incoming Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny, a general set of principles was agreed with the newly appointed select committee chairmen and vice-chairmen at the first Joint Meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen on 28 June 2022.

### General principles

- Less scrutiny of outside bodies where the Council was unable to affect or influence their activities. Where members would like to understand the work of these bodies, this might take the form of an all-members briefing and not form part of the scrutiny function.
- A greater focus on the financial overview of the Council's activities.
- Cabinet members should be more accountable to scrutiny for their service responsibilities.
- The implementation of agreed actions should be tracked by each committee.
- Project closure reports be made generally available to all councillors and not just available upon request.
- The function of scrutiny should be to assist Cabinet through pre-scrutiny of decisions.
- Scrutiny committee chairmen would attend Cabinet to present their committee's discussion on items coming through scrutiny to Cabinet.

- Performance Reporting (KPIs) should focus on exceptions and better explanations would be provided for these. Accountable officers should be on hand (virtually) to provide further information, if required.
- Strategies and policies generally to go through the Select Committees unless central to the Council's Corporate Plan objectives.
- Key Qualis decisions to go through the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

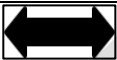


## Pre-scrutiny highlights

### Corporate Plan 2023 - 2028

The committee pre-scrutinised the Council's Corporate Plan 2023 – 2027 introduced by the Continuous Improvement Specialist (N Gambrell) on 27 September 2022. This key strategic plan detailed a new set of corporate aims including a new set of key results, developed to support the aims and key objectives. These corporate aims would be reviewed annually through objectives and key result measures, to deliver and work towards the achievement of each objective that year. The report included digital links to improve reader use. The committee made several suggestions during its scrutiny of the Corporate Plan. It was subsequently agreed by the Cabinet on 10 October and adopted by Council on 20 December 2022.

### Corporate Plan Key Action Plan Year 5 2022/23

Detailed pre-scrutiny by the committee was undertaken on a quarterly basis with quarter 1 on 26 July 2022, quarter 2 on 17 November, quarter 3 on 31 January 2023 and quarter 4 on 20 April. These reports detailed the project status summaries, key milestones and RAG status for those projects identified as 'priority projects' within the portfolio aligned to the corporate objectives of the Council. All KPIs regardless of status were also included with comparisons to previous quarters, so progress could be tracked. The committee reviewed performance data in detail at their meetings.

Green	Project on track to achieve milestones
Amber	Project at risk of missing milestones
Red	Project has missed milestones/project has serious issues
Blue	Project complete/on-hold
	Project status is unchanged since previous report
	Project status has improved since previous report
	Project status has declined since previous report

### Qualis 1-Year Business Plan

The Strategic Director and Section 151 Officer, A Small, introduced the 1-Year Qualis Business Plan at the 27 September meeting. Currently, in the rapidly changing economic climate, considerable economic pressures were not limited to the Council's finances and residents, but also to the Council's partners, e.g., in the construction industry. Although Qualis should produce a 4-Year business plan under the Shareholder Agreement, in this time of great uncertainty, the decision had been taken that a 4-Year Business Plan would be too challenging and be out of date sooner than forecast. The appendix to the report detailed the financial conditions and how Qualis would address them. Qualis had assessed its opportunities. It had reviewed the Council's commercial assets / portfolio with some success and therefore, the transfer of assets seemed the right time, as Qualis had more opportunities to maximise return. The Conder Building had been demolished. Development of the Epping Sports Centre site had started. The Council was confident good governance was robust at Qualis. S Jevans, Qualis Group Managing Director, continued that Qualis was building strong skills. There were challenges but the report set out the savings made, and had identified the key risks, strategic priorities and was optimistic on growth. The committee's many scrutiny questions were mainly answered by the Finance Portfolio Holder, Councillor J Philip. Minutes of the meeting can be viewed at [Overview and Scrutiny Committee 27 September 2022](#)

### Transfer of Grounds Maintenance Service to Qualis

An extra meeting of the committee was scheduled on 3 November 2022 to pre-scrutinise the business case for the transfer of this service ahead of the Cabinet decision on 7 November. The Strategic Director and Section 151 Officer introduced the report, which proposed to transfer the service in April 2023. Qualis had established a vision for itself as a property company promoting and undertaking property development, management and maintenance. The report provided a high-level summary of the current costs of delivering the existing in-house service, including an indicative Contract payment in the event of the transfer of the Grounds Maintenance service. The business case for the transfer represented an efficient way to deliver this service. It enabled the Council to reduce its back-office costs and offset these against the Qualis Management charge.

A lively debate followed as the committee's questions covered a wide range of concerns, which were mainly answered by the Finance Portfolio Holder along with the Strategic Director and Section 151 Officer.

However, the committee's recommendation to the Cabinet was that at this stage the committee felt unable to support the transfer of Grounds Maintenance to Qualis, as a proposed motion was carried. The Finance Portfolio Holder addressed the concerns raised by scrutiny members at the subsequent Cabinet meeting on 7 November. The Cabinet's decision approved the transfer of the Grounds Maintenance service to Qualis in April 2023, in accordance with the broad terms and approach proposed within the Cabinet report.

[The recording of 3 November meeting is available to view](#)

### Qualis – Overview

As members felt that a lot of people did not understand what Qualis was all about and in light of the committee being unable to support the transfer of service above, the Qualis Management team was invited to attend the next meeting. At the 31 January 2023 meeting, the Chairman introduced Qualis Group Managing Director, S Jevans, and the Managing Director of Qualis Management, B Johnson, who gave a presentation. This encompassed an oversight of the property management and housing repairs service Qualis provided on behalf of the Council. It also covered Qualis' values, complaints and lessons learnt, performance in 2020 / 21 and how the Council monitored Qualis and its key objectives. This presentation was included in the minutes of the meeting for information. Qualis Management also replied to a variety of questions from the members present.

### Annual review of work undertaken by the Epping Forest Youth Council

Our high-profile and national award-winning Youth Council comprised 23 young people, who represented 8 Epping Forest secondary schools, New City College (Epping Forest Campus) and one who was an independent and home schooled. These young people represented the views of their peers and wider school communities. The current cohort would stand down in May 2024. The committee was presented with an annual review of the work they had undertaken at the meeting on 20 April 2023. Paarth Patel and Olu Ayandare from Davenant Foundation, Sarah Chufoon from King Harold Business Academy and William Ayrton from Chigwell School highlighted the key areas of their work, which encompassed:

- ▶ **EFYC project 2022/23 'Repair My Pocket'** – focused on the cost-of-living crisis. Youth councillors had designed a 12-question survey and conducted street interviews at the Essex Police and EFDC community day of action. The survey was shared with all the District's secondary schools for students to complete. The aim was to assess how young people were being affected by financial pressures and to get a better understanding of how services could help them. The findings were presented at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- ▶ **Jack Petchey Foundation Funding** – £1,000 was received from the Jack Petchey Foundation to help educate young people about scammers. This was used to purchase 800 copies of the 'Little Book of Scams'. Youth councillors arranged a presentation to students in year 10 and above in their own schools during the spring term when these were



distributed. Produced by Thames Valley Police, the Little Book of Big Scams was a valuable resource to avoid being scammed and losing money.

- ▶ **Independent Advisory Group (IAG) Safety Survey** – three youth councillors attended the Brentwood and Epping Forest IAG. Youth councillors presented the results of a survey that had been conducted in all schools by the end of the spring term to identify how safe young people were feeling in their area and in their schools. It covered safety, including speeding, inappropriate parking, street lighting, scams and crime.
- ▶ **MiLife Blue (legacy project)** – the successful MiLife C19 mental health project for schools was designed by the 2021/22 youth councillors. The Council and the Red Balloon Foundation jointly worked on a new model to update the resources. The project remained available to local schools in the new format but was only available to schools outside the District at a cost. The project renamed MiLife Blue, supported a trauma informed response to young people dealing with mental health issues. This would sit alongside the inaugural award winning MiLife Green project, which related to more general mental health awareness.
- ▶ **EFYC Training** – youth councillors had completed their intensive induction training, covering professionalism, team building, leadership, presentation skills and public speaking. Their training would continue to address projects such as Dementia Friends, Hate Crime, Gaming and Gambling addiction, the environment, Ride London and positive mental health.

### Routine scrutiny business

Scrutiny undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at every meeting included:

- ▶ **Key Decision List** – regularly reviewing the Cabinet's Key Decisions enabled the committee to identify appropriate matters for the overview and scrutiny work programme and the overview of specific decisions proposed in the Forward Plan.
- ▶ **Work programme** – the committee regularly reviewed its progress on business transacted and also to identify additional items for its current work programme. Scrutiny of the Epping Forest District Museum's operating model was added to the work programme for 2023/24. It was envisaged the timeframe would extend to a 2-year period.
- ▶ **Select committees' business** – the Chairmen of the select committees had the opportunity to report back on their progress against the achievement of their respective work programmes and make any recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### Public questions

Public scrutiny in action at the 17 November 2022 meeting saw a resident submit a question on safeguarding at the meeting. Responding to a question on whether any reports had been made in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 8.2 of the Shareholders Agreement with Qualis Group Ltd since it was signed in February 2020, the Chief Executive, G Blakemore, replied on behalf of the Chairman, "yes" and also replied to the follow-up question.

### Call-in of Executive decisions

When an executive decision is made by the Cabinet, a Portfolio Holder or a Cabinet committee, or a key decision is made by an officer with delegated authority, such a decision is published in a notice specifying when the decision will come into force and be implemented, unless it is called-in. Further information in the Constitution under Article 6 (Overview and Scrutiny) provides details of the call-in arrangements and protocol for councillors. This year there were no decisions called-in.

### Agendas and minutes

Please view at this link [Overview and Scrutiny Committee](#)

## **Joint Meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen**

The joint meeting is held twice a year, usually every six months. It provides the scrutiny chairmen and vice-chairmen with an opportunity to discuss any issues raised with the Executive Leadership Team and the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager. The following items were discussed at the joint meetings held on 28 June and 6 December 2022.

### **Overview and Scrutiny procedures – review**

The agreement of a set of general principles that all scrutiny committees would follow was led by the Chairman, Councillor H Kane, at the June joint meeting, as detailed above. This included the specific allocation of scrutiny review tasks between the work programmes of the four scrutiny committees.

### **External scrutiny**

Reviewing external scrutiny at the June joint meeting, it was noted there was a distinction between partner and external organisations. In previous years, external scrutiny had taken up a large part of those meetings, but the reality was that members could not influence an outside organisation to make any changes. Although the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was responsible for discharging the functions under the Local Government Act 2000, the legislation did not compel external organisations to attend a Council scrutiny meeting. It was one of the functions that the Council could choose to do, so a principle was agreed not to preclude external scrutiny but just do it in a different way as all-member briefings in future. At the joint meeting in December, it was also agreed that the Democratic and Electoral Services Manager would organise three all-member briefings throughout the municipal year, which should suffice, but this could be flexible.

### **Minute actions**

Since the Chairman was keen to track actions from previous meetings these were to be detailed in the minutes, so every scrutiny committee could review any actions identified to ensure replies had been provided and none were outstanding.

### **Scrutiny training**

A well-attended member training session with an external scrutiny trainer was held in the autumn at the Civic Offices. As the feedback from those present had been very positive, the Democratic and Electoral Services Team Manager, G Woodhall, advised members at the joint meeting on 6 December that further scrutiny training would be organised for the next municipal year. This should take the form of the external trainer presenting two courses – essential scrutiny questions in June 2023 and learning key questioning skills around September 2023.

The Local Government Association and East of England LGA did offer various courses to councillors one of which was on chairmanship skills that members were recommended to do. There was a range of information on the LGA website all aimed at councillors. LGA had also produced a scrutiny handbook for members.

### **Agendas and minutes**

**Joint meeting** agendas and minutes can only be accessed on the Intranet / Extranet (via the Members portal).

### **Waste Management Task and Finish Panel**

The Task and Finish Panel concluded most of its work at the last meeting in early March 2020 before the first Covid lockdown. At the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 July 2020, a recommendation was made to reconvene the panel when there was any new information arising from the Environment Bill, which was re-introduced to Parliament on 30 January 2020 following the general election in December 2019, and /or any new legislation introduced by the Government.

## Stronger Communities Select Committee

The Stronger Communities Select Committee held five meetings this municipal year. The membership was approved at the first meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 June 2022. The first select committee meeting was held on 12 July 2022.

### Members for 2022–23



**CHAIRMAN:**  
**Councillor Jeane Lea**

**VICE-CHAIRMAN:**  
**Councillor Jodie Lucas**

#### COUNCILLORS:

Clive Amos, Raymond Balcombe, Ian Hadley, Stephen Murray, Chidi Nweke, Ronda Pugsley, David Stocker, David Wixley and Shane Yerrell

#### NON-VOTING MEMBER:

Mr Wyn Marshall – Chairman of the Tenants and Leaseholders Forum

Representing the views of the tenants' associations and acting as a consultative body for the Council on a range of housing issues, Mr Marshall was co-opted as a non-voting member of this select committee on 12 July 2022.

The select committee encompassed the corporate aims and objectives for stronger communities – people live longer, healthier and independent lives; adults and children are supported in times of need; and people and communities achieve their potential. Most of the work programmes were not cyclical apart from quarterly Customer Services updates, and the six-monthly update of the Council-funded Police officers' work.

### Pre-scrutiny highlights

#### Review of Housing Strategy 2022 – 2027

At the first meeting on 12 July 2022, the committee was informed that although the Housing Strategy was not a statutory requirement, it provided a cohesive direction of travel for cross-cutting housing related services. Introduced by the Interim Team Manager for Housing Strategy, the aim of the strategy was to reflect and facilitate the co-ordination of activities for those services that directly impacted on the current and projected need for and supply of affordable housing in the District. A review of the Housing Strategy commenced in May 2021 which was underpinned by reviews of the Allocations Scheme, the Tenancy Policy and the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. Approved by the Cabinet on 1 March 2022, these would take effect in September 2022 for the period 2022-2027. Questions answered covered – retaining green spaces in schemes for recreational use that was a key feature of the Council's 'It's more than bricks and mortar' project;

working on proposals and funding with E-ON for a pilot scheme to retrofit older Council properties to become more energy efficient; and in relation to costs involved that the Housing Strategy planned a number of existing services and partnerships that would be delivered through greater collaboration between these services and partnerships.

### **Sheltered Housing Refurbishment Programme**

The Housing and Property Director reported on the successful pilot refurbishment of the sheltered housing scheme at Frank Bretton House, which was completed within six months. The Council wished to continue the refurbishment program at other sheltered schemes within the District to make the communal areas feel modern, welcoming, and desirable. Residents' feedback from 75% of tenants on this pilot refurbishment would assist with the order of works and help improve the customer experience going forward. In July, the select committee recommended to the Cabinet that approval be given to continue the sheltered housing refurbishment programme.

### **Transfer of services from the Broadway Housing Office**

Also, in July 2022, the Housing and Property Director advised the committee that following a review of the number of tenants visiting the Broadway office for housing purposes, it was felt that there was a better, more efficient way to provide the services for those people and for staff to spend more time in the housing estates. The proposal was to close the Broadway office creating a saving for the Council. Meanwhile, St John the Baptist Church in Loughton had contacted the Council to join up with partnerships and other professionals to provide a hub service for tenants and residents, thus enabling the Housing officers to provide a flexible service. The committee had supported this proposal. Furthermore, to assist cash paying customers using the Broadway office, Allpay cards would be issued for council tax and non-domestic rates. Following the initial rollout of the Allpay scheme, an opt-in service would be provided to other customers paying council tax and non-domestic rates.

### **Refresh of the Epping Forest Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022 – 2026**

The strategy set out the aims and aspirations of the multi-agency Epping Forest Health and Wellbeing Board to improve the health and wellbeing of everyone living within the District. The partnership Board was made up of representatives from Epping Forest District Council, Essex County Council, the West Essex Health and Care Partnership and the NHS including a wide range of local health and voluntary sector organisations. The Board had published its original ten-year strategy back in 2018, but as a direct result of the Covid pandemic, the decision was taken to review and refresh the strategy early to ensure the District had a robust and meaningful roadmap to maximise resources and expertise to support the best possible outcomes for residents. Following a range of questions at the meeting on 15 November 2022, the select committee asked to receive an annual update.

### **Domestic Abuse and Domestic Abuse Workplace Policies**

On 2 March 2023, the Specialist Technical Services Officer, C Wiggins, introduced these policies to the select committee. Members were informed the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) was launched in 2014 and was managed by Standing Together. The Council had aspired to achieve a DAHA Accreditation to support residents and staff by providing a positive, safe environment and encouraging them to have the confidence to approach the Council at a time of need. The policies set out the Council's commitment to take efficient and effective action to deal with all reports of incidents and explained how the Council would provide support tailored to the needs of the individual, working in partnership with specialist services to provide a coordinated response. The Specialist Technical Services Officer advised that Qualis would have their own policies, although the policies would be shared as they formalised the services already being delivered by the Council.

### **Essex Police presentation**

The select committee received a presentation at the meeting on 2 March from the Essex Police District Commander for Brentwood and Epping Forest, Chief Inspector Tina Cooper, who provided information on the following areas:

- Policing structure in the District
- The Force Plan 2022/25
- What community priorities were being delivered?
- Events held such as ‘Walk with Us’
- ASB issues, actions, and outcome in Ongar
- Community Engagement events attended
- Performance of the last 12-month period to January 2023
- Public perception survey results

[The recording of the meeting on 2 March is available to view](#)

### **Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership Annual Strategic Assessment, Annual Report and Plan on a page**

The Specialist Technical Services Officer, C Wiggins, reported on 2 March 2023 that the Community Safety Partnership was required to complete an annual Strategic Assessment that was used to direct and guide their activities, under the requirements as responsible authorities of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. The policing structure referred to in the annual report related to the Epping Forest District only and the officers were based at Loughton Police Station. The Crucial Crew event organised for the District’s state primary schools would be relaunched and was to be held at the Civic Offices.

### **Discussion Paper – Overview and Scrutiny Committee Structure 2023/24**

The Democratic and Electoral Services Team Manager, G Woodhall, advised that the Constitution Working Group had considered a report on 16 March 2023 about the proposed Overview and Scrutiny Committee Structure for 2023/24 but had requested that a scrutiny committee also discuss the report – hence its discussion on 21 March 2023 by the select committee. The select committee supported the Working Group’s recommendation of option 1, which would go to Council on 4 April 2023 for adoption.

### **Routine scrutiny business**

#### **Council-funded Police officers 6-month report**

The Council continued to fund the employment of an additional police sergeant and two police constables to supplement existing local policing resources. A third police constable funded by Essex Police joined the team in April 2022. The Police team, which started in July 2018 with an initial 3-year contract, had been extended. At the meeting on 20 September 2022, the Technical Services Specialist reported to the select committee that the police were tasked in-line with District Community Safety Partnership (CSP) priorities identified through the annual Strategic Assessment and aligned with the priorities set by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner’s Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024 and Essex Police Crime Prevention Strategy 2021-2025. In response to a question, the Brentwood and Epping Forest District Commander provided a detailed reply after the meeting on whether the police could take enforcement action against drivers who obstructed pavements.

The next six-month report on the work and range of operations of the Council’s funded Police team was presented on 2 March 2023 by the Specialist Technical Services Officer. The funded police team continued with the following primary functions of supporting functionality of Epping Forest District Council departments/teams; providing ‘added value’ to the District in supporting the Community Policing function; and targeting action against criminality in the District. By the end of 2022, the police team had accepted and completed thirty-nine tasking requests during that year.

#### **Museum collection rationalisation programme**

The Epping Forest District Museum was currently undertaking a review of its collections to ensure material held remained relevant, accessible, and safe for public and staff. This was a procedure recommended to be undertaken by all museums, and followed guidelines and ethics laid out by the Museums Association. The Heritage and Venues Team Manager, F Pellegrino, presented an

update on the progress of the project over the last year, which the select committee noted at its meeting on 15 November 2022.

### **Annual Lettings report**

The select committee reviewed the allocations and lettings performance between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022. Presented by the Interim Housing Strategy Manager, the report outlined the demand for social housing on 31 March 2022 from qualifying applicants in accordance with the Council's Allocations Scheme for 2018-2022. It covered typical waiting times and profiling information on age, mobility needs and ethnicity of the applicants that had been rehoused. Details were also provided on the number of mutual exchanges and management transfers that took place outside of the allocations scheme during the same period, and the number of properties that former tenants purchased from the Council under the Right to Buy. The select committee queried the appeals process, armed forces applicants and the statistics of applicants in different bands.

### **Housing Revenue Account Business Plan Update**

The Interim Housing & Property Director, P Wharfe presented an interim update on the HRA Business Plan on 21 March 2023. It was noted that the stock condition survey was underway, and an Asset Management Strategy would be produced alongside the HRA Business Plan. It would be presented to the Committee in October 2023 and annually onwards. Members asked a number of questions on the report and answers were provided by the officer in attendance.

### **What are our customers telling us?**

At the meeting on 20 September, the Service Manager (Customer Services), S Lewis, updated the committee progress over the last six months and answered several questions. These included – the wait time for customers phoning the Contact Centre, which was currently 5.5 minutes; Biffa was providing daily updates on waste collections which Customer Services passed on to residents; officers were working towards an automated response for all contact forms that would be part of the back office customer journey mapping; users of the Epping community hub were asked to complete a survey, so information could be compiled on where they had travelled from etc; and the Housing and Community Portfolio Holder, Councillor H Whitbread, advised that the idea was to recreate the community hub in other areas in the District in a similar form or as pop ups across the District. The Customer Service Manager would also raise any problems that members were experiencing with their Council devices or their own as not all devices were compatible with the Council's systems. A Members Portal had been created on the Council's website, which provided members with useful information plus access to committee agendas and minutes all in one place.

The Service Manager (Customer Services) presented a further Customer Services Strategy update report and what residents had been telling the Council on 21 March 2023. Members asked several questions on the report and answers were provided by the Officers and Portfolio Holder in attendance.

### **Other work programme highlights**

- ▶ **New support model for sheltered housing** (20 September 2022)
- ▶ **Review of proposal on caretaking in blocks** where residents rate the cleaning (21 March 2023)
- ▶ **Annual Housing performance report** (21 March 2023)
- ▶ **Estate improvements at Harveyfields, Waltham Abbey** creating great places where people want to live (20 September 2022)
- ▶ **Changing Landscape of Housing Paper 1** Building Safety and Health and Safety analysis (12 July 2022)

### **Agendas and minutes**

Please view at this link [Stronger Communities Select Committee](#)

## Stronger Council Select Committee

The Stronger Council Select Committee held five meetings this municipal year. The membership was approved at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its first meeting on 16 June 2022. The first select committee meeting was held on 21 July 2022.

### Members for 2022–23



**CHAIRMAN:**  
**Councillor Jaymey McIvor**

**VICE-CHAIRMAN:**  
**Councillor Smruti Patel**

### COUNCILLORS:

Richard Bassett, Rose Brookes, Elizabeth Gabbett, Ian Hadley, Steven Heather, Jayna Jogia, Richard Morgan, Sheree Rackham and Jon M Whitehouse.

The select committee had an overview of the Corporate aims and objectives for a stronger Council – democratic engagement; the People Strategy and a culture of innovation through improved workforce skills and performance through innovation and technology; and financial independence with low council tax. Therefore, much of the scrutiny work was of a cyclical nature, as the select committee regularly reviewed the following.

- ▶ Budget monitoring reports
- ▶ Qualis monitoring reports
- ▶ Financial planning
- ▶ Digital enablement
- ▶ People Strategy

### Pre-scrutiny highlights

#### Azure – move to the cloud

The select committee reviewed the business case for the move to Azure on 21 July 2022. For more than 12 months the Council had worked closely on this project with Microsoft and Agilisys to complete a detailed costing analysis and to spec out the Azure option. The Council's digitisation strategic plan included standardising its infrastructure and services to a cloud first strategy and this project would create a cloud platform that supported the longer-term digital ambitions of the Council. If our existing data centre was destroyed by fire, the Council would be completely without any IT structure. Also, the Government's advice was to move to the Cloud and not have a single point of failure. With the majority of staff working from home, we were almost in a cloud environment already. Members were assured there would not be a major issue on performance for the end user as many of the applications that we were moving to were designed to be used in the

cloud. What was changing was where the data was stored and how it was delivered but not the end use. The select committee commented on the business case. The decision taken to award a contract to Agilisys for the procurement of Azure – move to the cloud, which was made under delegated arrangement by the Internal Resource Portfolio Holder, Councillor S Kane, in July 2022 (IRS-001-2022/23).

### **Outsourcing of the Concierge Service**

On 24 November, members looked at the Concierge service provided at the Civic Offices. The service included numerous responsibilities – to open and close the building, manage and maintain our bookable spaces, monitor the employee car park, issue security cards, monitor CCTV and much more. The existing service covered 06.30-22.00 Monday to Friday, with out of hours, on site security being provided by a contractor between 22.00-06.30 on weekdays and across the whole weekend. Due to various operational and resource challenges, the Senior Leadership Team had agreed to explore the outsourcing of the Concierge Service by formally going out to tender, review the bids and then make a decision on whether the Council proceeded to the formal stages of outsourcing. Only one contractor, PCS Group, out of four had shown an interest and submitted a bid. It was noted that the current out of hours contractor had not made a bid. Members asked a range of questions. But in their comments passed to the Cabinet they wanted the current staff to be kept up to date on this proposal and that the new contracted workforce coming in, was trained properly on the ways of the Council and that there would be a continuity of those staff.

### **Draft Budget 2023/24**

The Finance Portfolio Holder, Councillor J Philip introduced the draft budget report for 2023/24 on 24 January 2023. This had gone to the Cabinet in December 2022, with a final report still to come. The full report included revenue and capital proposals for both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) as well as a schedule of suggested Fees and Charges for the forthcoming financial year. An updated Medium-Term Financial Plan covering the financial years 2023/24 through to 2027/28 was also included, which reflected both the impact of the draft Budget proposals as well as the latest available intelligence at the time. As required by law a balanced position (eliminating a previously identified projected deficit of £4.126 million) had provisionally been reached for 2023/24, and the medium-term financial position, although having a similar profile, had some differences compared to the position presented to the Cabinet on 10 October (and subsequently to this select committee on 24 November). There was a particular challenge still anticipated in 2024/25 and 2025/26 because of the forthcoming new Waste Management Contract. However, some significant uncertainties remained. The provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2023/24 released in December 2022 had provided further assurance as to the underlying financial sustainability of the draft Budget proposals as currently presented. The Council would be looking for voluntary redundancies but that might not be the case. Currently there were 18 roles involved in the overall budget package, with up to 48 staff involved in the consultation exercise. It was anticipated the loss of staff would be much smaller than that and mostly through voluntary redundancies.

### **Onboarding / induction**

On 24 January 2023 the select committee was updated by J Budden, Service Manager People, Culture and Wellbeing, on developments made to the onboarding/induction process. In addition, a live demonstration of the system by A Cartwright, HR Corporate Business Partner, showed the various elements that went into the onboarding process. Candidates would form an impression of an organisation throughout the recruitment process. However, what was often overlooked was the period between a successful candidate accepting a job offer when they were working their notice and their start date, which could be a number of weeks or months. Pre-start date onboarding helped to settle a new employee into the Council and ensured they had everything they needed before their start date. It also supported the new employee in understanding more about the Council's culture and values, as well as some of the more practical aspects that might otherwise be overlooked. New employees would do their induction and job specific training with their line manager and there was the opportunity to attend a welcoming introduction when they would meet one of the Senior Leadership Team. The Service Manager advised there were plans for member induction via the system as it could be useful to new councillors.



### **Launch of the new employee Wellbeing Hub**

The select committee learned about the launch of the new employee Wellbeing Hub at the January meeting, which included a short presentation. J Budden and S Kits, Business Partner (Corporate Communications), outlined the excellent wellbeing resources and support available to employees. In addition to the Employee Assistance Programme (Perkbox) that offered counselling sessions and support for all employees and their close family members, EFDC had focussed on developing a solid network of individuals within the organisation to help support colleagues. This included the Perkbox Wellness Hub for free content on wellness resources, and over 90 employees had trained to become Mental Health First Aiders. Members were impressed with the Wellbeing Hub, which set a high standard for other local authorities to follow. When querying the engagement of staff working from home, the select committee was advised that virtual coffee mornings for employees were organised and managers had been upskilled to educate them in mental health issues. In relation to staff retention, it did lead to a better understanding of that staff wanted.

### **Routine scrutiny business**

#### **Budget Monitoring Reports**

The General Fund revenue and capital positions as well as the HRA revenue and capital positions were reviewed at the meetings on 21 July 2022 (quarter 4 (outturn)) for FY2021/22 and for FY2022/23 on 26 September (quarter 1), 24 November (quarter 2), 24 January 2023 (quarter 3) and quarter 4 (18 April 2023). The Strategic Director Corporate and Section 151 Officer, A Small, and Interim Chief Finance Officer, C Hartgrove, highlighted the current global, national and local economic malaise and the uncertainty this created for the Council. The financial pressures were detailed in the monitoring reports and outlined the current positions, which were dominated by a range of substantial spending pressures. The Council's budget for 2022/23 (both General Fund and HRA) had been approved by full Council on 24 February 2022. These reports updated members on how the Council's services had performed against their budgets each quarter and projected forward to the anticipated outturn for the end of the financial year. When the select committee acknowledged the general fund reserve of £4 million now stood at £3 million at quarter 3, the Finance Portfolio Holder advised there was a desire to get back to our minimum balance, but without impacting on our services.

#### **Financial Planning Framework 2023/24 to 2027/28**

Like virtually all local authorities, the Council was facing major financial pressure following a series of significant external World events – including Brexit, a pandemic, and the invasion of Ukraine – which had combined to create a worldwide economic crisis that was worsening almost daily. On 26 September the select committee reviewed the proposed approach to financial planning until 2027/28, which included the reporting and governance timetable. The select committee was advised that the Local Government Settlement was expected to be announced by mid to late December 2022, but it was unlikely there would be a two-year settlement. The Finance Portfolio Holder advised that the Cabinet was working with lead officers, initially over a gap of £4 million.

#### **Updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)**

Although the Cabinet considered the updated MTFP on 10 October, as agreed in the governance timetable, it should be scrutinised by the select committee and was reviewed on 24 November. As a forward-looking document, it provided a tentative look at the Council's financial picture over the next five years (2023/24 through to 2027/28) and set the scene by providing a framework for developing both the General Fund and HRA budgets for 2023/24. The General Fund forecast within the MTFP revealed a projected deficit of £4.126 million for 2023/24. This reflected major spending pressures driven by inflation. Looking further ahead – assuming a balanced budget was achieved for 2023/24 without recourse to the use of reserves – a budget gap was expected to open-up again on the General Fund from 2024/25, with annual budget pressures in the region of £1.4 million anticipated for two consecutive financial years. It was noted that the biggest expenditure currently was staff and not accommodation. A substantial amount of savings would therefore have to come from staff. The select committee was informed that salary costs had always been high, exceeding any other expenditure that the Council had. The comparatively high vacancy

rate captured some of the potential savings to be had without impacting on staff directly. Options had been presented to the Cabinet and they were working through them.

### **Qualis Monitoring Reports**

Also in September, the select committee reviewed quarter 3 from 1 April to 30 June 2022 for the Qualis trading year 2021/22. Presented by the Strategic Director Corporate and Section 151 Officer, the Board report highlighted performance against the business plan targets using the recognised Red, Amber, Green (RAG) reporting system. This showed a continuing loss, which was primarily associated with delays in achieving planning consent at Roundhills, and challenges with finding suitable regeneration property to acquire. It was acknowledged that Qualis faced similar financial challenges to the Council. When the select committee queried if there were any economies that could be achieved by Qualis working with other third parties, the Finance Portfolio Holder emphasised that Qualis must remain a separate entity from the Council and detailed that Qualis had driven value from contracts. When asked if there would be any impact from changes in stamp duty, members were advised this would be difficult to predict owing to the position in the development sequence, but Qualis did ensure that external factors were regularly reviewed.

### **People Strategy 2020 – 2022**

In July the Corporate Services Director, P Maginnis, presented a detailed report for 2022. Also, a draft version of the new strategy that would run until March 2023, was being reviewed. The Service Director answered members and advised that: the Council was not experiencing a higher turnover of staff; the HR Business Partners led power hour sessions on various issues for managers/staff; the review on 'creating our tomorrow' focussed on how officers wanted to work in hybrid and agile ways; and a glossary of terms used in the report was provided for the minutes.

In November the select committee received a presentation from the Corporate Services Director on 'Creating our tomorrow – our ways of working for the future 2022 and beyond'. This outlined the results of the One Poll employee survey from 1 June to 12 July 2022. The 77% response rate amounted to 410 employees taking part. The Council had a performance management programme, with managers holding regular one to ones with staff, and also set targets and measurements for individual staff and parts of the organisation. Also, line managers controlled the allocation of work and monitored it. Many teams had regular meetings on 'Teams' and there were benefits and gains from staff working from home. Also, working from home was easier for some roles than others – it was a balance. The select committee commended the officers for organising the recent member / officer meetings. It was noted that officers were looking at customers and their needs in what we did as that was key to what we would do. They were also looking at better ways in how we communicated and how we could improve our systems to make them more effective.

### **Agendas and minutes**

Please view at this link [Stronger Council Select Committee](#)

## Stronger Place Select Committee

The Stronger Place Select Committee held four meetings this municipal year. The September meeting was cancelled owing to the death of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, as it would have taken place during the period of national mourning. The membership was approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 July 2022. The first meeting was held on 5 July 2022.

### Members for 2022–23



CHAIRMAN:

**Councillor Raymond Balcombe**

VICE-CHAIRMAN:

**Councillor Ronda Pugsley**

COUNCILLORS:

Ian Allgood, Richard Bassett, Peter Bolton, Heather Brady, Simon Heap, Steven Heather, Judy Jennings, Cherry McCredie and Richard Morgan

The select committee covered the Corporate aims and objectives for a stronger place – delivering effective core services that people want; a District with planned development; and an environment where new and existing businesses thrive. Its definition encompassed Epping Forest District as a physical Place and to scrutinise the direction, policies and projects of the executive that affect the spatial and infrastructure requirements of the District. Scrutiny of the work programme included:

- ▶ Local Plan updates
- ▶ Council housebuilding
- ▶ Economic growth, skills and employment
- ▶ District-wide Waste Management provision
- ▶ Leisure Management Contract updates

### Pre-scrutiny highlights

#### Litter Strategy

The strategy would help to deliver the commitment to the Government's Litter Strategy for England along with the Environmental Protection Act (1990) and the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse (2019). Officers would work with Keep Britain Tidy to ensure this strategy and any associated actions were in keeping with the aspirations of the Government's Litter Strategy. The strategy for a Cleaner Epping Forest District laid out the Council's plans to continue its work in the transformation of our open spaces and streets to ensure that it met the Government's expectations. It also reflected residents' desire to have a clean and healthy local environment free of litter, fly-tipping and dog waste. Street sweeping was one of the most important services any council operated to

improve the appearance of a street or area. With less litter, fly-tipping and dog fouling, the Council could reduce its spending on collecting and disposing of it. Having a litter strategy would contribute positively towards the Council's environmental policies to reduce carbon in response to the climate emergency. In addition to statutory performance indicators, success would be measured in the Council's reduced carbon footprint with less waste going to landfill. The strategy would provide a platform to engage with partners to enhance the local environment, by securing behaviour change. At the meeting on 5 July 2022, J Warwick (Acting Service Director (Contracts)) advised that five litter picks had been completed and 72 bags of litter collected during the Great British Spring Clean. There had also been sixteen applications for support for equipment for litter picks, with fifteen completed. The select committee challenged the strategy on a number of points and it was agreed that the strategy would be reviewed, strengthened and refined. On 8 November, the committee reviewed the Litter Strategy as approved by Cabinet in October and commended the revisions made to the draft version that had been scrutinised by the select committee in July. The select committee proposed that an update on the Litter Strategy should be included in the 2023/4 Stronger Place work programme.

### **Leisure Services Contract update**

The Council appointed Places for People Leisure as its partner for the development and management of its four leisure facilities when the agreement commenced in April 2017. It was a 20-year design, build, operate and maintain (DBOM) contract. On 8 November, the Acting Service Director (Contracts) stated that the contract was managed through monthly leisure contract managers meetings, where performance of the delivery of services in accordance with the agreed contract was reviewed. The Leisure Management Contract Partnership Board provided strategic oversight and robust challenges over the contract, providing effective dialogue and resolution of issues at senior officer and member level. The Council monitored the services to ensure performance against set requirements and Key Performance Indicators in the contract. During the Covid-19 pandemic, EFDC provided financial support to Places Leisure in order to maintain the operations of the leisure centres in the District. The recovery rates in leisure centre usage had enabled Places Leisure to resume the payment of management fees. Rising energy costs were posing a significant challenge but mitigating the rising energy costs was being achieved by implementing measures across the centres to reduce the levels of consumption. In January 2021, Cabinet agreed that the new leisure centre in Epping was to be delivered by Places Leisure under the DBOM contract, as had the Waltham Abbey Leisure Centre. A formal Deed of Variation was issued, and an external legal adviser was appointed to prepare and negotiate the DBOM contract variation. The new Epping Leisure Centre project was currently in the second stage of the procurement phase, with the contract award anticipated early 2023. The construction phase for the new leisure centre was expected to start in summer 2023, with a two-year construction period.

### **Waste Management Contract update**

On 8 November, the Interim Acting Service Director (Contracts) advised the Council was in contract with Biffa Municipal Ltd. for the delivery of waste, processing of dry recycling services and street cleansing. The Cabinet had agreed to undertake a full procurement process for this contract that would expire in November 2024. Officers had started the procurement process and market engagement events had been held with potential waste contractors. A Portfolio Holders Advisory Group would be established to consider the current challenges and support the procurement of a new waste and recycling contract. The Waste Management Partnership Board provided a strategic oversight of the contract at senior officer and member level. It was supported by monthly managers meetings and daily monitoring and inspections by the Waste and Recycling Team Manager and area waste officers. It was acknowledged that there had been unprecedented levels of missed collections over the course of this year. This was due to multiple factors including a national shortage of staff, in particular drivers and loaders, and vehicle breakdowns compounded by a lack of hire vehicles. Biffa had implemented a variety of investments and initiatives to improve their performance. The select committee asked for a list of missed collections to be highly visible on the Council's website when this involved whole streets or known areas; sought clarity on the wheelie bin trial in Theydon Bois; suggested narrow access vehicles could be used when there were cars parked on both sides of a road and in rural areas with restricted access; raised concerns that bins were not being repaired but replaced; and discussed the potential charging to collect garden

waste. A visit to the recycling centre at Edmonton for members of the select committee would also be arranged.

### **Parking update**

At the meeting on 16 January 2023, the Interim Acting Service Director (Contracts) presented the update report highlighting that the tariff changes agreed by Cabinet in November 2021 had been successfully implemented on 4 April 2022. An annual increase of approximately £150,000 in parking fees and charges was projected, compared to the previous year (post-pandemic). The select committee was advised that although pre-pandemic parking income levels had not been reached, car park income and occupancy rates were continually reviewed by EFDC officers. Other parking updates comprised news of: further electric vehicle (EV) charging points; a school-led initiative (3PR) offered across the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) to help prevent inconsiderate and dangerous parking around schools; and a new online process for Traffic Regulation Orders (TRO) applications. Also, as pavement parking was not prohibited in Essex, the NEPP could not enforce against obstructive parking, which could only be carried out by the Police.

### **Off Street Civil Parking Enforcement Policy**

In January, the Leisure and Parking Team Manager, A Hoke, advised the Committee that the Civil Parking Enforcement policy had been reviewed and amended. The updated policy provided a simplified document with updated terminology. The policy reflected the legal process, covered EV bays, virtual payments and the introduction of a £50 administration fee, which had been added to suspension requests in addition to standard suspension charges per bay fee. The select committee was informed the policy stipulated that motorists could challenge penalty charge notices for exceptional circumstances including breakdown and each representation was considered on its own merits and assessed in line with best practice; the observation period for offences was set by legislation with the grace period set locally at 10 mins; and blue badge holders parked for free if they correctly displayed a valid blue badge. However, officers would look to develop publicity around the misuse and confiscation of blue badges.

### **Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP)**

The Technical Services Manager, M Thompson, reported that the process to develop the AQAP was prescribed in law and required a public consultation exercise before submission to Defra for approval and the subsequent adoption by Council. The proposed draft AQAP sought to improve air quality in the District. It supported the aims of the Climate Change Action Plan and work around improving air quality for the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The Technical Services Portfolio Holder, Councillor K Williamson, commended the plan to the select committee on 16 January. Councillor N Bedford, Place Portfolio Holder, also advised that the Portfolio Holder Advisory Group for Air Quality had held discussions on air quality in Epping Forest and as part of the mitigation strategy associated with the SAC. Monitoring sites near the Wake Arms roundabout had been agreed with the City of London (CoL) which was considering the installation of temporary signs to advise motorists to turn off their vehicle engines, rather than leave them idling. In addition, road improvements had also been agreed on the A1403 between the Wake Arms and Woodford. Members raised a number of points with the Air Quality Environmental Officer, A Ventura, and the Environmental Health Team Manager, B Stalabross. Although the select committee endorsed the draft AQAP and approved the four-week public consultation between the months of January and February 2023, it suggested that transport was critical to the delivery of the AQAP and the impact on non-human sensitive receptors, e.g. bees, should be considered.

### **Sustainable transport update**

S Lloyd Jones, Sustainable Transport Officer, presented highlights of this report to the select committee on 7 March 2023, which included:

- The national and local pressure on bus services and the extension of the national £2 flat fare for buses until the end of June 2023.
- The introduction of a Flexi-route app to support the EFDC funded DaRT86 Service, the promotional material available and the social value of this service, which was run in

conjunction with Epping Forest Community Transport and needed to be booked at least 24 hours in advance.

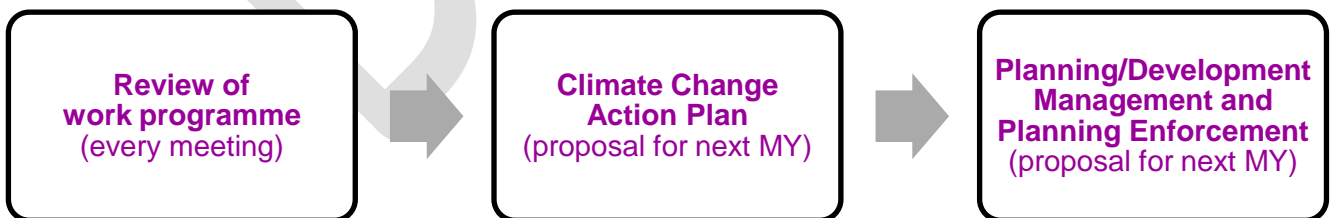
- The Electric Vehicle (EV) market share was increasing. EFDC had the highest number of Battery Electric Vehicles (BEV) on the road in Essex but the level of public EV charging points was an issue.
- Work with Instavolt would expand rapid chargers, these would be available in six Council car parks. The facilitation of planning requests for public or semi-public charges should increase the number of EV chargers to match the England ratio by the end of 2023.
- EFDC had very low utility and commuting cycling compared to the neighbouring boroughs. A Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for Waltham Abbey should be carried out in 2023/24.
- The Local Plan could provide funding for active travel.

The select committee recognised the value of the DaRT86 and requested promotional material for distribution and to publicise the bus service to the local councils. It was agreed there was a need for more infrastructure to encourage the shift to, and use of, public transport but acknowledged that this would need to be addressed on a subregional or national basis. Members recognised that the infrastructure for on street EC charging could be restrictive and additional pressures and requirements could be required for rural areas. It was suggested that a relaxation on the rules for personal driveways and integration with mobility grants could increase the number of EV charging points. The select committee acknowledged the lack of cycle infrastructure and that safe cycling was an issue across the District.

### North Weald Airfield development

The Commercial Service Manager, D Goodey, outlined the North Weald Airfield Master Plan and the proposed development of the eastern side of the aerodrome at the meeting on 7 March 2023. This would dictate a change to how aviation operations were performed due to the requirement to relocate the control tower building function, the potential need for a new entrance and alternative locations for operational buildings. Following a two-phase review that had been carried out by Osprey Consulting, the recommendation was that North Weald Airfield remained an unlicensed aerodrome but with improved facilities, security, and safety. Members had agreed with this recommendation and welcomed the aviation business and training opportunity this would provide. As the control tower building was listed it would remain in situ, but its function would be relocated. Details of the shared road and taxi runway space were provided at the meeting, in addition to the mitigation measures that were in place to minimise any risk of accident. Confirmation was received that the development for commercial use for freight was not a consideration of the report and that the London Metropolitan Police Helicopter base had moved back to Lippitts Hill, High Beach.

### Other work programme highlights



### Agendas and minutes

Please view at this link [Stronger Place Select Committee](#)

## COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE 2023/24

#### Core Areas of Responsibility

The Communities Scrutiny Committee core areas of responsibility align directly with the [Corporate Plan 2023-2027](#) and the key objectives for Stronger Communities, which are:

- To safeguard vulnerable people and support residents in need, providing support and equality of opportunity in a district that is safe for everyone.
- To work with our partners to achieve wellbeing and health equity for all our residents.
- To listen to our communities and work with them when making decisions, developing policies, and designing services.

The Communities Scrutiny Committee will be responsible for the scrutiny of the Housing & Strategic Health Partnerships, Community Health & Wellbeing, and Customer & Corporate Support Services Portfolios, as detailed below.

#### Key Areas covered by the Communities Scrutiny Committee

Housing, Community, Customer Services, Wellbeing and Community Partnerships.

#### Key Objectives

1. To develop an annual work programme that effectively scrutinises the areas of responsibility outlined above.
2. To provide scrutiny of services and areas of concern that are identified by Overview and Scrutiny Committee in its review of Corporate Key Performance Indicators.
3. To engage in policy review and development, with a focus on improvement and how this can be best achieved.
4. To consider any matter referred by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet or Portfolio Holder and to make recommendations as appropriate.
5. To establish working groups and task and finish panels to undertake any activity within the terms of reference.
6. To undertake pre-scrutiny through the review of specific proposals of the Council and its partner organisations or other local service providers to help develop policy.
7. To engage with the community and encourage community engagement.
8. To monitor and review relevant projects and associated closure and benefits reports.
9. To consider the impact on customers, residents, businesses and visitors to our District, and to respond to consultation activities.

## **(DRAFT) Proposed Portfolio Responsibilities**

### **Housing & Strategic Health Partnerships**

Matters relating to those services within the Housing & Property Service as follows:

Housing Management, Housing Options, Older Peoples Housing, Home Ownership, Housing Repairs, Housing Assets, Housing Development, Facilities Management, Depot Management.

Recognising the importance of Housing in the Health agenda across Greater Essex and Hertfordshire.

### **Community Health & Wellbeing**

Safer Communities, Neighbourhood Services, Safeguarding, Community Development, Arts & Museum Services, Grant Aid, Youth Council, Young People.

Voluntary Sector Champion.

### **Customer & Corporate Support Services**

Matters relating to those services within the Corporate Support and Customer Services as follows:

Customer Services, Compliments and Complaints, Internal & External Communications, Website, Public Consultation, Debt Recovery, Cashiers, Democratic Services, Elections, Civic & Member Services, Data Protection, Freedom of Information, People Team, Business Support (including Land Charges, Legal Services and Reprographics), ICT.

Car Parking.

Digital Delivery.

Objective to improve the customer experience.



**DRAFT**  
**Communities Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023/24**  
**Chairman: Councillor A Patel**

	<b>Item</b>	<b>Progress/Comments</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>
<b>27 June 2023</b>			
1	Resident Involvement Strategy	Introduction and approval to progress to Cabinet C/F from Stronger Communities Select Committee Work Programme	Surjit Balu
2	Housing Repairs Value for Money	Value for money -Exempt Report (restricted papers)	Andrew Small
<b>26 September 2023</b>			
3	Housing Allocation Scheme	12-month review of the Housing Allocation Scheme	Surjit Balu
4	Annual Lettings Report	To scrutinise allocations and lettings performance for 22/23 <i>C/F from Stronger Communities Select Committee Work Programme</i>	Surjit Balu
5	Safer Streets	<i>C/F from Stronger Communities Select Committee Work Programme</i>	Caroline Wiggins
6	Fire Safety Policy Gas and Heating Policy Lift Safety Policy Water Safety Policy Electrical Safety Policy	To review these compliance policies that are a regulatory requirement and form part of the Council's wider organisational commitment to driving a health and safety culture amongst staff and contractors.	Surjit Balu
<b>16 January 2024</b>			
7	HRA Business Plan	Yearly Performance update	Surjit Balu
8	Qualis Property Solutions Performance Reporting	Presentation on Housing Repair Performance (Qualis)	Surjit Balu / Ben Johnson (Qualis)
9	Customer Services (Overall satisfaction)	To receive an update on improvements to this Key Performance Indicator	Susan Lewis

	<b>Item</b>	<b>Progress/Comments</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>
<b>5 March 2024</b>			
10	Annual Housing performance report	Report on annual housing KPI's including compliance around the Building Safety Act <i>C/F from Stronger Communities Select Committee Work Programme</i>	Surjit Balu
11	Tenant Satisfaction Measures	<i>C/F from Stronger Communities Select Committee Work Programme</i>	Surjit Balu
<b>Items for Scrutiny date to be confirmed</b>			
12	Presentation from the District Commander for Epping Forest and Brentwood	Annual Report	Caroline Wiggins
13	Community Safety Partnership	Annual report and review of the district Strategic Intelligence Assessment	Caroline Wiggins

## PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE 2023/24

#### Core Areas of Responsibility

The Place Scrutiny Committee core areas of responsibility align directly with the [Corporate Plan 2023-2027](#) and the key objectives for Stronger Place, which are:

- To protect our environment, encouraging jobs, housing, and reduce pollution infrastructure that complements, rather than competes with the natural world.
- To improve existing spaces and create new places for people to live, play, gain skills and do business.
- To protect and enhance our green spaces for future generations while providing decent, safe homes to meet all our needs.

The Place Scrutiny Committee will be responsible for the scrutiny of Place; Contracts, Service Delivery & Improvement; and Regulatory Services Portfolios, as detailed below.

#### Key Areas covered by Place Scrutiny Committee):

Planning, Building Control, Technical Services, Enforcement, Leisure, Waste Management, Sustainability Climate Change and the Digital Innovation Zone.

#### Key Objectives

1. To develop an annual work programme that effectively scrutinises the areas of responsibility outlined above.
2. To provide scrutiny of services and areas of concern that are identified by Overview and Scrutiny Committee in its review of Corporate Key Performance Indicators.
3. To engage in policy review and development, with a focus on improvement and how this can be best achieved.
4. To consider any matter referred by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet or Portfolio Holder and to make recommendations as appropriate.
5. To establish working groups and task and finish panels to undertake any activity within the terms of reference.
6. To undertake pre-scrutiny through the review of specific proposals of the Council and its partner organisations or other local service providers to help develop policy.
7. To engage with the community and encourage community engagement.
8. To monitor and review relevant projects and associated closure and benefits reports.
9. To consider the impact on customers, residents, businesses and visitors to our District, and to respond to consultation activities.

## **(DRAFT) Proposed Portfolio Responsibilities**

### **Place**

Matters relating to those services within the Planning Service as follows:

Local Plan implementation and review.

Development Management, Planning Policy, Tree Preservation, Landscape, Built Heritage, Conservation, Large scale S106 and CIL

Harlow Garden Town liaison / board, local Masterplans, Town and Parish Council liaison.

Climate Change, Sustainable Transport.

### **Contracts, Service Delivery & Improvement**

Responsibility to give regular reports on the Council's major external contracts within the Contract and Technical Service review and monitor for delivery, and service improvement:

Waste & Recycling, Leisure Management, Qualis Board observer.

Highways Rangers and Highways Liaisons.

Improving commercial offer to Town and Parish Councils.

### **Regulatory Services**

Matters relating to those services within Development Control and Planning

Enforcement:

Land Drainage, Contaminated Land, Grounds Maintenance, Arboriculture, Country Care.

Matters relating to those services within the Commercial & Regulatory Service as follows:

Licensing, Building Control, Environmental Health and Co-Ordination, Private Sector Housing, Health & Safety, Emergency Planning and Business Continuity.

**DRAFT Place Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023/24**  
**Chairman: Councillor H Kane**

	<b>Item</b>	<b>Progress/Comments</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>
<b>4 July</b>			
1	Grounds Maintenance	Grounds Maintenance Service Update (Qualis Presentation – Ben Johnson)	Jen Gould
2	Waste Collection Services Future Delivery Options	Scrutiny of Options Paper Options (Exempt Report) restricted papers	James Warwick
3	Climate Change Action Plan	c/f from Stronger Place Select Committee	Fran Edmonds/ Nigel Richardson
<b>19 September 2023</b>			
4	Technical Service	To provide an update on the service functions and key areas of delivery for the year.	Mandy Thompson
5	Grounds Maintenance	Contract Monitoring and review of grounds maintenance post transfer to Qualis Property Service	Mandy Thompson
6	District Wide Public Space Protection Order – Dog Control	The introduction of Dog control areas	Mandy Thompson
7	Waste Strategy for Essex	Overview of waste strategy for Essex and consultation plans (tbc)	James Warwick
8	Air Quality	Approval of an updated strategy to mitigate the impact of air pollution from new developments on the Epping Forest Special Area of conservation	Nigel Richardson
<b>9 January 2023</b>			
9	Planning /Development Management and Planning Enforcement	As requested by O & S APG 12 Jan 2023 To include virtual attendance at planning meetings (Stronger Council Select Committee c/f)	Nigel Richardson
10	Epping Leisure Centre Progress Report	Progress report on the construction of the new Epping Leisure Centre	James Warwick
11	Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ)	Annual progress review of the DIZ and to include an impact assessment of the project to provide fibre-based services to GP practices.	Jen Gould/ Mike Warr
<b>27 February 2024</b>			
12	Waste Programme Update	Progress report on three waste workstreams: WS1: Future delivery of Waste Services WS2: Mobilise a New Environment Operations Centre WS3: Procurement of a Waste Vehicle Fleet	James Warwick

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## Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023/24 Chairman: Councillor D Wixley

	Item	Progress/Comments	Lead Officer
<b>All Meetings</b>			
1	Cabinet Business	To review the Executive's programme of Key Decisions at each meeting, to identify appropriate matters for the work programme and provide an opportunity for the overview of specific decisions.  To consider any call-ins, as and when they arise.	
<b>18 July 2023</b>			
2	Council's Corporate Priorities	The Leader of Council presents the Council's corporate priorities. (First meeting of each municipal year)	
3	Scrutiny Committees – Work Programme 2023/24	Work programmes agreed for Overview and Scrutiny, Communities Scrutiny and Place Scrutiny Committees for 2023/24. (First meeting of each municipal year)	Andrew Small
4	Corporate Plan Performance Report	Qtr.1 Corporate performance report	C Graham
5	Budget Scrutiny 2022/3  Budget Scrutiny 2023/24	Qtr.4 Budget Monitoring report capital and revenue 2022/23 (Provisional Outturn) (Previously considered by Stronger Council) Qtr.1 Budget Monitoring report capital and revenue 2023/24	Andrew Small, Chris Hartgrove
6	Qualis	Quarterly Monitoring Report Qtr. 2 (Year 4)	Andrew Small
7	Epping Forest District Museum	C/F from Stronger Communities Select Committee Work Programme: Prior to Cabinet Decision 21 August 2023 (Exempt Report) restricted papers	Jen Gould
<b>24 October 2023</b>			
8	Corporate Plan Performance Report	Qtr.2 Corporate performance report.	C Graham
9	Budget Scrutiny 2023/24	Qtr.2 Budget Monitoring report capital and revenue 2023/24	Andrew Small, Chris Hartgrove

	<b>Item</b>	<b>Progress/Comments</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>
10	Qualis	Quarterly Monitoring Report Qtr. 3 (Year 4)	Andrew Small
<b>23 January 2024</b>			
11	Corporate Plan Performance Report	Qtr.3 Corporate performance report.	C Graham
12	Budget Scrutiny 2023/24	Qtr.3 Budget Monitoring report capital and revenue 2023/24  Budget Setting 2024/25	Andrew Small, Chris Hartgrove
13	Qualis	Quarterly Monitoring Report Qtr. 4 (Year 4)  Updated Qualis Business Plan	Andrew Small
<b>23 April 2024</b>			
14	Epping Forest Youth Council	Annual Report from the Epping Forest Youth Council on completed and proposed activities.	
15	Corporate Plan Performance Report	Qtr.4 (end of year) Corporate performance report.	C Graham
16	Budget Scrutiny 2023/4	Qtr. 4 Budget Monitoring report capital and revenue 2023/24	Andrew Small, Chris Hartgrove
17	Qualis	Quarterly Monitoring Report Qtr. 1 (Year 5)	Andrew Small
18	People Strategy	Progress/achievements against the 1 <sup>st</sup> year objectives for the Strategy (requested by Cabinet 30/5/23)	Paula Maginnis
19	Overview and Scrutiny 2023-24 Annual Report	Review draft report	Laura Kirman





**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**THE KEY DECISION LIST**

**INCLUDING PROPOSED PRIVATE DECISIONS**

**(01 July 2023)**

## **The Key Decision List including Proposed Private Decisions**

There is a legal requirement for local authorities to publish a notice in respect of each Key Decision that it proposes to make, at least 28 days before that decision is made. There is also a similar requirement to advertise those decisions, whether they are Key Decisions or not, which it is proposed to be made in private with the public and press excluded from the meeting. This Key Decision List, including those decisions proposed to be made in private, constitute that notice. Copies of the Key Decision List are available for inspection at the Council's Civic Offices, as well as on the Council's website in the 'Your Council' section.

Any background paper listed can be obtained by contacting the relevant Officer in the first instance, or failing that the Democratic Services Officer listed below.

### **Key Decisions**

The Council's Constitution defines key decisions as:

- (i) Any decision within budget and policy that involves expenditure/savings of £250,000 or more in the current municipal year;
- (ii) Any decision not within budget and policy that involves expenditure/savings of £100,000 or more in the current municipal year;
- (iii) Any decision that raises new issues of policy;
- (iv) Any decision that increases the Council's financial commitments in future years, over and above existing budgetary approval;
- (v) Any decision that involves the publication of draft or final schemes, which may require either directly, or in relation to objections to, the approval of a Government minister;
- (vi) Any decision that involves the passage of local legislation; and
- (vii) Any decision that affects two or more wards, and has a discernible effect on the quality or quantity of services provided to people living or working in that area.

Borrowing or lending decisions undertaken under delegated authority by the Chief Financial Officer are not defined as a key decision.

The Council has also agreed the following additional requirements in relation to key decisions:

- (a) Key decisions cannot be made by officers;
- (b) Key decisions not within budget and policy can only be made by the Council;

- (c) Key decisions within budget and policy but involving expenditure/savings in excess of £1million can only be made by the Cabinet and/or Council;
- (d) Key decisions within budget and policy but involving expenditure/savings between £250,000 and £1million can be made by the relevant Portfolio Holder;
- (e) Portfolio Holders can only make key decisions affecting their wards if the decision is based upon a recommendation by a Service Director or as one of a range of options recommended by a Service Director.

### **Private Decisions**

Any decisions that are proposed to be taken in private will be reported as such. The paragraph number quoted relates to Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, and their definitions are as follows:

- Page 75
- (1) Information relating to any individual.
  - (2) Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
  - (3) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
  - (4) Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
  - (5) Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
  - (6) Information which reveals that the authority proposes:
    - (a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
    - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
  - (7) Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

## **Corporate Aims & Key Objectives 2023/24**

### **Stronger Communities**

- (1) People live longer, healthier and independent lives:
  - (a) supporting healthy lifestyles; and
  - (b) promoting independence for older people and people with disabilities;
- (2) Adults and Children are supported in times of need:
  - (a) safeguarding and supporting people in vulnerable situations; and
- (3) People and Communities achieve their potential:
  - (a) enabling Communities to support themselves;
  - (b) Providing culture and leisure opportunities; and
  - (c) Keeping the District safe.

Page 76

### **Stronger Place**

- (1) Delivering effective core services that people want:
  - (a) Keeping the District clean and green; and
  - (b) Improving the District housing offer;
- (2) A District with planned development:
  - (a) Planning development opportunities; and
  - (b) Ensuring infrastructure supports growth; and

- (3) An environment where new and existing businesses thrive:
  - (a) Supporting business enterprise and attracting investment;
  - (b) People develop skills to maximise their employment potential; and
  - (c) Promoting retail, tourism and the visitor economy.

Stronger Council

- (1) Customer satisfaction:
  - (a) Engaging with the changing needs of our customers;
- (2) Democratic engagement:
  - (a) Robust local democracy and governance;
- (3) A culture of innovation:
  - (a) Enhancing skills and flexibility of our workforce; and
  - (b) Improving performance through innovation and new technology; and
- (4) Financial independence with low Council Tax:
  - (a) Efficient use of our financial resources, buildings and assets; and
  - (b) Working with commercial partners to add value for our customers.

**Cabinet Membership 2023/24**

Chris Whitbread	Leader of the Council
Nigel Bedford	Place
John Philip	Finance and Economic Development
Holly Whitbread	Housing and Strategic Health Partnerships
Smruti Patel	Community Health and Wellbeing
Ray Balcombe	Contracts, Service Delivery and Improvements
Ken Williamson	Regulatory Services
Sam Kane	Customer and Corporate Support Services

**Contact Officer**

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Democratic Services Officer

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**WORK PROGRAMME - 1 JULY 2023 TO 31 OCTOBER 2023**

**PORTFOLIO - LEADER PORTFOLIO HOLDER:  
CLLR C WHITBREAD**

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>KEY DECISION</b>	<b>DATE OF DECISION</b>	<b>DECISION MAKER</b>	<b>PRIVATE DECISION</b>	<b>REPRESENTATION ARRANGEMENTS</b>	<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>
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**WORK PROGRAMME - 1 JULY 2023 TO 31 OCTOBER 2023**

**PORTFOLIO - PLACE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:  
CLLR N BEDFORD**

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>KEY DECISION</b>	<b>DATE OF DECISION</b>	<b>DECISION MAKER</b>	<b>PRIVATE DECISION</b>	<b>REPRESENTATION ARRANGEMENTS</b>	<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>
Endorsement of Latton Priory Strategic Masterplan Framework	Endorsement of Latton Priory Strategic Masterplan Framework to have material planning weight.	Yes	10 July 2023	Cabinet		lone Braddick nrichardson@eppingfore stdc.gov.uk	See Cabinet report "To approve the draft Latton Priory Strategic Masterplan Framework and commencement of the public consultation for the Latton Priory Strategic Masterplan (C-022-2022/23) – November 2022
Approval of Draft East of Harlow Masterplanning Guidance SPD for formal consultation	Approval of the document for public consultation.	Yes	10 July 2023	Cabinet		lone Braddick nrichardson@eppingfore stdc.gov.uk	
Approval of draft HGGT Stewardship Charter for formal consultation	Approval of the document for public consultation.	Yes	10 July 2023	Cabinet		lone Braddick nrichardson@eppingfore stdc.gov.uk	
Approval for consultation of Latton Priory Design Code	Approval of the document for public consultation.	Yes	4 September 2023	Cabinet		Krishma Shah nrichardson@eppingfore stdc.gov.uk	
HGGT Governance / Joint Committee	Update on and approval of HGGT Joint Committee delegations Framework and other relevant decisions.	Yes	9 October 2023	Cabinet		lone Braddick, Nigel Richardson 01992 56 4110,	See Cabinet report HGGT Stage 1 Governance report - Feb. 2022 - C-042-2021-22
HGGT Green Infrastructure Framework	Noting of HGGT GI Framework as technical evidence base via PFH	Yes	1 August 2023 / Ongoing	Deputy Leader and Place Portfolio Holder		lone Braddick ibraddick@eppingforestdc. gov.uk	



	report.						
Air Pollution Mitigation Strategy	Approval of an updated strategy to mitigate the impact of air pollution from new developments on the Epping Forest Special Area of conservation.	Yes	TBC – Local Plan Adopted	Deputy Leader and Place Portfolio Holder		Nigel Richardson 01992 564110	Adopted current interim APMS

**WORK PROGRAMME - 1 JULY 2023 TO 31 OCTOBER 2023**

**PORTFOLIO - FINANCE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
PORTFOLIO HOLDER: CLLR J PHILIP**

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>KEY DECISION</b>	<b>DATE OF DECISION</b>	<b>DECISION MAKER</b>	<b>PRIVATE DECISION</b>	<b>REPRESENTATION ARRANGEMENTS</b>	<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>
Financial Planning Framework (2024/25 to 28/29)	Financial and governance framework for updating the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan and preparing the 2024/25 Budget.	Yes	4 September 2023	Cabinet		Christopher Hartgrove chartgrove@eppingforestdc.gov.uk	
Qualis Monitoring - Ongoing Quarterly	Financial reporting plan update.	Yes		Cabinet		Andrew Small 01992 564278	

**WORK PROGRAMME - 1 JULY 2023 TO 31 OCTOBER 2023**

**PORTFOLIO - HOUSING & STRATEGIC HEALTH  
PARTNERSHIPS PORTFOLIO HOLDER:  
CLLR H WHITBREAD**

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>KEY DECISION</b>	<b>DATE OF DECISION</b>	<b>DECISION MAKER</b>	<b>PRIVATE DECISION</b>	<b>REPRESENTATION ARRANGEMENTS</b>	<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>
Resident Involvement Strategy	Introduction and approval to progress to Cabinet.	Yes	10 July 2023 27 June 2023	Cabinet Communities Scrutiny Committee		Surjit Balu sbalu@eppingforestdc.gov.uk	
Fire Safety Policy	This compliance policy is a regulatory requirement and forms part of the Council's wider organisational commitment to driving a health and safety culture amongst staff and contractors.	Yes	9 October 2023 26 September 2023	Cabinet Communities Scrutiny Committee		Surjit Balu sbalu@eppingforestdc.gov.uk	
Gas and Heating Policy	This compliance policy is a regulatory requirement and forms part of the Council's wider organisational commitment to driving a health and safety culture amongst staff and contractors.	Yes	9 October 2023 26 September 2023	Cabinet Communities Scrutiny Committee		Surjit Balu sbalu@eppingforestdc.gov.uk	
Lift Safety Policy	This compliance policy is a regulatory requirement and forms part of the Council's wider organisational commitment to driving a health and safety culture amongst staff and contractors.	Yes	9 October 2023 26 September 2023	Cabinet Communities Scrutiny Committee		Surjit Balu sbalu@eppingforestdc.gov.uk	
Water Safety Policy	This compliance policy is a regulatory requirement and forms part of the Council's wider organisational commitment to driving a health and safety culture amongst staff and contractors.	Yes	9 October 2023 26 September 2023	Cabinet Communities Scrutiny Committee		Surjit Balu sbalu@eppingforestdc.gov.uk	

Electrical Safety Policy	This compliance policy is a regulatory requirement and forms part of the Council's wider organisational commitment to driving a health and safety culture amongst staff and contractors.	Yes	9 October 2023 26 September 2023	Cabinet Communities Scrutiny Committee		Surjit Balu sbalu@eppingforestdc.gov.uk	
St. Johns Development	Approval to progress to build subject to planning.	Yes		Cabinet		sbalu@eppingforestdc.gov.uk	

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	KEY DECISION	DATE OF DECISION	DECISION MAKER	PRIVATE DECISION	REPRESENTATION ARRANGEMENTS	BACKGROUND PAPERS
Epping Forest District Museum Operating Model	Approval to outsource Epping Forest District Museum into a single purpose Charity Incorporated Organisation (CIO).	Yes	4 September 2023	Cabinet		Gill Wallis gwallis@eppingforestdc.gov.uk	

**WORK PROGRAMME - 1 JULY 2023 TO 31 OCTOBER 2023**

**PORTFOLIO - CONTRACTS, SERVICE DELIVERY & IMPROVEMENT PORTFOLIO HOLDER:  
CLLR R BALCOMBE**

<b>ITEM</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>KEY DECISION</b>	<b>DATE OF DECISION</b>	<b>DECISION MAKER</b>	<b>PRIVATE DECISION</b>	<b>REPRESENTATION ARRANGEMENTS</b>	<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>
Waste Collection Services – Future Delivery Options	To agree the preferred option for future delivery of Waste Collection Services.	Yes	10 July 2023 4 July 2023	Cabinet  Place Scrutiny Committee to review prior to Cabinet decision but report to be restricted paper as commercially sensitive.		James Warwick jwarwick@eppingforestdc.gov.uk	
Procurement of Waste Fleet Vehicles	To approve the procurement of the specified waste fleet vehicles.	Yes	9 October 2023	Cabinet		James Warwick jwarwick@eppingforestdc.gov.uk	
Award of Off-Street Parking Enforcement Contract	To award the off-street parking enforcement contract.	Yes	13 November 2023	Cabinet		James Warwick jwarwick@eppingforestdc.gov.uk	

ITEM	DESCRIPTION	KEY DECISION	DATE OF DECISION	DECISION MAKER	PRIVATE DECISION	REPRESENTATION ARRANGEMENTS	BACKGROUND PAPERS
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ITEM	DESCRIPTION	KEY DECISION	DATE OF DECISION	DECISION MAKER	PRIVATE DECISION	REPRESENTATION ARRANGEMENTS	BACKGROUND PAPERS
Financial IT System	To replace the current financial and procurement system with one consolidated Cloud based IT system.	Yes	July / August 2023	Customer and Corporate Support Services Portfolio Holder		Chris Elliott 07419 214444	
Customer/Digital Strategy		Yes	TBC	Cabinet		Rob Pavey rpavey@eppingforestdc.gov.uk	



By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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