

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL CABINET MEETING MINUTES

Monday 7 October 2024, 7.00 pm - 7.17 pm

Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping

Members Present:	Councillors C Whitbread (Chairman), N Bedford (Vice-Chairman), R Balcombe, P Keska, T Matthews, S Patel, K Rizvi, H Whitbread and K Williamson
Other Councillors:	Councillors I Allgood, C Amos, R Baldwin, R Brookes, W Kauffman, M Morris, S Murray, C Nweke, J M Whitehouse and G Wiskin
Apologies:	None
Officers In Attendance:	Jennifer Gould (Strategic Director and Chief Operating Officer), Tom Carne (Corporate Communications Team Manager), Natalie Cole (Corporate Communications Officer), Nick Finney (Interim Implementation Team Manager), Christopher Hartgrove (Interim Director Finance / Deputy 151 Officer (Shared Services)) and Vivienne Messenger (Democratic Services Officer)
Officers In Attendance (Virtually):	Laura Kirman (Democratic Services Officer)

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

48 WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

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

49 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

50 MINUTES

Decision:

That the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 2 September 2024 be taken as read and signed by the Leader as a correct record.

51 REPORTS OF PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

The following verbal reports were made by Members of the Cabinet on current issues affecting their areas of responsibility.

(a) Housing & HGGT Portfolio

Councillor N Bedford advised that the public consultation deadline had been extended by a week on the plans for the proposed [Latton Priory development](#) for the outline planning application (EPF/1793/24).

(b) Shaping our District

Councillor K Williamson reported that the [Buckhurst Hill conservation area](#) public consultation continued for a period of 6 weeks from 7 October 2024 concerning the designation of the St John's Conservation Area.

52 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE CABINET

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

53 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee reported that:

- scrutiny workshop had been held on 19 September to inform members and enable the Council to respond to the consultation on the government's proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);
- Communities Scrutiny Committee had been rescheduled to 22 October, after the meeting on 24 September had to be abandoned, instead of Place Scrutiny Committee; and
- dedicated meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was being held on 29 October when a representative from Transport for London (TfL) would be attending. There was still time to submit questions, which would be grouped in themes.

Councillor S Murray commented that he had asked the public to submit questions on TfL to himself. The in-depth questions he had received were quite diverse and showed a level of concern.

54 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LOCAL PLAN

The Shaping our District Portfolio Holder (Councillor K Williamson) outlined the report which provided members with an update on the progress of Local Plan implementation in relation to the Strategic Masterplans, Concept Framework Plans and Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) within the District. This also included major projects and planning applications dealt with by the Policy and Implementation Team. Regarding Strategic Masterplans, scheduled meetings and workshops continued to take place with site promoters and developers in accordance with project plans agreed within PPAs.

Councillor Jon Whitehouse asked about updates on the wider issues of the Local Plan, such as the strategies for air pollution and the green infrastructure although there were many more. The Portfolio Holder replied he was not aware of any updates, but the Council would be informed if there were any.

Councillor G Wiskin asked if it would be useful for members to be informed about windfall sites? For example, Pyrles Lane in Loughton. Also, Centric Parade was an opportunity for the Council for domestic residencies in Loughton High Road. The Portfolio Holder replied that some sites were not in the Local Plan as they were already in the system, such as the Pyrles Lane site. The Portfolio Holder acknowledged that there were only a small number of windfall sites in the Local Plan, but he would investigate this request further.

Decision:

That the Cabinet noted the progress of Strategic Masterplans and Concept Frameworks, including the use of Planning Performance Agreements and the progress of proposals at pre-application and application stage.

55 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was noted there were two late reports for consideration by the Cabinet, as below:

- Updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2025/26 to 2029/30; and
- Capital Programme Update 2025/26 to 2029/30

56 UPDATED MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN (MTFP) 2025/26 TO 2029/30 (INCLUDING BUDGET STRATEGY 2025/26)

The Finance & Economic Development Portfolio Holder (Councillor H Whitbread) introduced the report on the Updated MTFP, which laid the foundation for the budget. There were many challenges as a £1 million deficit was forecast. This was a lower budget deficit compared to recent years and reflected the positive impact that the North Weald Airfield (NWA) capital receipt was having on Capital Financing costs. However, Capital funding from the sale of NWA land to Google was locked in. Therefore, the Council needed to see where it could make savings and efficiencies as well as generating more income. The Cabinet would engage with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the budget process to achieve a balanced budget.

Councillor Jon Whitehouse asked if more information could be provided on how the Transformation revenue reserve was going to be spent and generate a return? Councillor H Whitbread congratulated Councillor Whitehouse on being the chairman of Audit and Governance Committee for this municipal year, but the Leader was jointly responsible for transformation with the Transformation Portfolio Holder (Councillor S Patel). The Leader advised that transformation focussed on service delivery through shared services and around efficiencies by using technology e.g. within Customer Services, as the Council could not rely on the Google capital receipt. The Transformation Portfolio Holder remarked that the Council was progressing a digital strategy for the EFDC website with Colchester City Council and that by pooling the resources of both councils more could be achieved.

Decision:

- (1a) That the Cabinet noted the General Fund element of the updated Medium-Term Financial Plan (2025/26 to 2029/30) (Appendix A of the agenda report); and
- (1b) That the Cabinet noted the Housing Revenue Account element of the updated Medium-Term Financial Plan (2025/26 to 2029/30) (Appendix B of the agenda report).
- (2) That the Cabinet considered the potential options for addressing the underlying budget deficit and would look at where savings and efficiencies could be made, in addition to where income generation could be achieved, to set a balanced and sustainable budget for 2025/26.

57 CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE (GENERAL FUND & HRA)

The Finance & Economic Development Portfolio Holder reported that the Capital Programme Update provided essential context and was a key part of early budget preparations for 2025/26. The updated (indicative) Capital Programme was in two parts and comprised total

investment of £179.422 million (General Fund £31.463 million, Housing Revenue Account (HRA) £147.959 million) over the five-year period 2025/26 to 2029/30. The HRA incorporated council housebuilding and regeneration projects while the General Fund covered the Epping Sports Centre development, the new airfield control tower building works and various Qualis projects. Overall, this was a very positive report.

Decision:

- (1) That the Cabinet noted the contents of the report, including both the updated General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Capital Programmes (2025/26 to 2029/30) (Appendix A of the agenda report); and
- (2) That the Cabinet considered the report, but no additional actions were identified (in the context of the updated Medium-Term Financial Plan) for the further refinement of the Capital Programme as part of developing integrated draft budget proposals for further consideration by the Cabinet in December 2024.

CHAIRMAN