



### NOTICE OF COUNCIL MEETING

You are hereby summoned to a meeting of the EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL to be held in the COUNCIL CHAMBER, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING at 7.00 pm on Tuesday 15 October 2024 for the purpose of transacting the business set out in the agenda.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G Blakemore'.

**Georgina Blakemore**  
Chief Executive

**Democratic Services  
Officer:**

Gary Woodhall      Tel: (01992) 564243  
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#### WEBCASTING/FILMING NOTICE

Please note: this meeting may be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast via the Council's internet site - at the start of the meeting the Chairman will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being filmed. The meeting may also be otherwise filmed by third parties with the Chairman's permission.

You should be aware that the Council is a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act. Data collected during this webcast will be retained in accordance with the Council's published policy.

Therefore by entering the Chamber and using the lower public seating area, you are consenting to being filmed and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for web casting and/or training purposes. If members of the public do not wish to have their image captured they should sit in the upper council chamber public gallery area or otherwise indicate to the Chairman before the start of the meeting.

If you have any queries regarding this, please contact the Public Relations Manager on 01992 564542.

## **BUSINESS**

### **1. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION**

The Democratic Services Team Manager will read the following announcement:

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

If you are seated in the lower public seating area it is likely that the recording cameras will capture your image, and this will result in the possibility that your image will become part of the broadcast.

This may infringe your human and data protection rights and if you wish to avoid this you should move to the upper public gallery.

Could I also remind Members to activate their microphones before speaking, and to switch them off when they have finished.”

### **2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

To be announced at the meeting.

To report non-attendance before the meeting, please use the [Members Portal webpage](#) 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'.

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To declare interests in any item on the agenda.

### **4. MINUTES (Pages 8 - 16)**

To approve as a correct record and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2024 and 8 August 2024 (attached).

### **5. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

(a) Chairman's Announcements

### **6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS (IF ANY) (Page 17)**

To answer questions asked after notice in accordance with the provisions contained within Part 4 of the Council Rules of the Constitution on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the District:

(a) to the Leader of the Council;

(b) to any Portfolio Holder; or

(c) to the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Questions, if any, will follow if not received in time to be incorporated into the agenda.

## **7. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS UNDER NOTICE**

To answer questions asked after notice in accordance with the provisions contained within the Council's rules in Part 4 of the Constitution on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the District:

- (a) to the Chairman of the Council;
- (b) to the Leader of the Council;
- (c) to any Member of the Cabinet; or
- (d) the Chairman of any Committee or Sub-Committee.

The Council's rules provide that answers to questions under notice may take the form of:

- (a) direct oral answer;
- (b) where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to that publication; or
- (c) where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, a written answer circulated later to the questioner.

Answers to questions falling within (a) and (b) above will be made available to the member asking the question one hour before the meeting. Answers to questions falling within (c) above will be circulated to all councillors.

Questions, if any, will follow if not received in time to be incorporated into the agenda.

## **8. REPORTS FROM THE LEADER & MEMBERS OF THE CABINET (Pages 18 - 36)**

To receive reports and any announcements from the Leader and members of the Cabinet on matters falling within their area of responsibility:

- (a) Report of the Leader of Council (verbal);
- (b) Report of the Housing & HGGT Portfolio Holder (attached);
- (c) Report of the Finance & Economic Development Portfolio Holder (attached);
- (d) Report of the Shaping Our District Portfolio Holder (attached);
- (e) Report of the Commercial & Estates Portfolio Holder;
- (f) Report of the Transformation Portfolio Holder (attached);
- (g) Report of the Contracts Delivery Portfolio Holder (attached);
- (h) Report of the Community Health & Wellbeing Portfolio Holder; and
- (i) Report of the Technical Services Portfolio Holder.

## **9. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS WITHOUT NOTICE**

The Council's rules provide for questions by any member of the Council to the Leader or any Portfolio Holder, without notice on:

- (i) reports under the previous item; or
- (ii) any other matter of a non operational character in relation to the powers and duties of the Council or which affects all or part of the District or some or all of its inhabitants.

The Council's rules provide that answers to questions without notice may take the form of:

- (a) a direct oral answer from the Leader or, at the request of the Leader, from another member of the Cabinet;
- (b) where the desired information is in a publication of the Council or other published work, a reference to that publication;
- (c) where the reply cannot conveniently be given orally, a written answer circulated later to the questioner; or
- (d) where the question relates to an operational matter, the Leader or a member of the Cabinet will request that a response be given direct to the questioner by the relevant Service Director.

In accordance with the Council's rules, a time limit of thirty minutes is set for questions. Any question not dealt with within the time available will receive a written reply. The Chairman may extend this period by up to a further ten minutes at their discretion.

## **10. REPORT OF THE CABINET - CORPORATE PLAN 2023-27 (Pages 37 - 53)**

(Leader of the Council) The Corporate Plan has been amended to reflect the Fit for the Future themes agreed by Cabinet, in addition to specific objectives for Housing, Planning and Finance, and the Council is requested to adopt these amendments.

## **11. REPORT OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023/24 (Pages 54 - 58)**

(Chairman of the Audit & Governance Committee) To consider the attached report to approve the Audit & Governance Committee Annual Report for 2023/24.

## **12. REPORT OF THE APPOINTMENTS PANEL - OUTSTANDING NOMINATIONS FOR THE PLANNING COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES (Pages 59 - 62)**

(Chairman of the Appointments Panel) To consider the attached report to approve the outstanding nominations for the Planning Committees and outside bodies.

## **13. MOTIONS**

To consider the following motion, notice of which has been given under the Council's rules, proposed by Cllr H Whitbread and seconded by Cllr N Bedford:

## This Council Notes:

- the Labour Government's recent decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment to only pensioners in receipt of means-tested benefits like Pension Credit, as announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves. This decision will affect over 22,000 pensioners in Epping Forest;
- the estimated impact of this decision, which Age UK says will mean 2 million pensioners who badly need the money to stay warm this winter will not receive it;
- the significant role that Winter Fuel Payments play in helping older residents of the Epping Forest District and across the UK afford heating during the coldest months, thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health;
- the criticism from Age UK, the Countryside Alliance and other charities, highlighting the social injustice and potential health risks posed by this sudden policy change; and
- the additional strain this decision will place on vulnerable pensioners, many of whom do not claim Pension Credit despite being eligible, further exacerbating their financial hardship.

## This Council believes:

- that the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many older people across the UK and that restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship;
- while some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many thousands across the Epping Forest District sit just above the cut-off for Pension Credit and will now lose their allowance;
- the decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments, especially with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures, is deeply unfair and will disproportionately affect the health and well-being of our poorest older residents; and
- the government's approach fails to consider the administrative barriers and stigma that prevent eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, leaving many without the support they desperately need.

## This Council resolves to:

- promote local awareness for those eligible for Pension Credits, to help residents access Winter Fuel Payments for those most in need;
- request that the Leader of Council write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty;
- commit the Council to publicly support the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK and write to all Members offering them the opportunity to sign the petition themselves;

- encourage local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through Council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in the Epping Forest are supported in claiming their entitlement; and
- work with partners including charities to provide support to the most vulnerable elderly people in our communities - including the provision of 'warm hubs' and continuing to promote the 'stay safe and well this winter' initiative.

#### 14. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

To receive the report of the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to answer any questions without notice asked in accordance with Council Rules.

#### 15. JOINT ARRANGEMENTS & EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- (a) To receive from Council representatives the reports (attached - if any) on the business of joint arrangements and external organisations and to receive answers to any questions on those bodies which may be put without notice; and
- (b) To request written reports from representatives on joint arrangements and external organisations for future meetings.

#### 16. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

##### **Exclusion:**

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

<b>Agenda Item No</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Exempt Information Paragraph Number</b>
Nil	Nil	Nil

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

##### **Background Papers:**

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

- (a) disclose any facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the report is based; and
- (b) have been relied on to a material extent in preparing the report and does not include published works or those which disclose exempt or confidential information

and in respect of executive reports, the advice of any political advisor.

The Council will make available for public inspection for four years after the date of the meeting one copy of each of the documents on the list of background papers.