

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Asset Management and Economic Development Cabinet Committee **Date:** Thursday, 9 July 2015

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.00 - 7.50 pm

Members Present: Councillors A Grigg (Chairman), H Kane, S Stavrou, A Lion and D Stallan

Other Councillors: Councillors C Whitbread and J H Whitehouse

Apologies: Councillors W Breare-Hall and G Waller

Officers Present: D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Neighbourhoods), M Warr (Economic Development Officer), J Leither (Democratic Services Assistant) and A Hendry (Democratic Services Officer)

1. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION

The Chairman 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.

2. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Cabinet Committee noted that Councillor D Stallan substituted for Councillor W Breare-Hall and Councillor A Lion for Councillor G Waller.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(a) Pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct, Councillor C Whitbread declared a personal interest in agenda item 6, Asset Management Co-Ordination Group Report item 4, St John's Road by virtue of being a resident of Epping. The Councillor had determined that his interest was non-pecuniary and would remain in the meeting for the consideration of the issue.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2015 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TEAM PROGRESS REPORT

The Economic Development Officer presented a report to the Cabinet Committee and updated them on a number of projects and issues being explored by the Economic Development Team.

- (1) **Staffing** – The Economic Development team was now fully staffed.
- (2) **Essex Superfast Broadband** – EFDC Officers have worked with Essex County Council Officers to successfully complete the procurement process for the Rural Challenge Project phase of the Superfast Essex Broadband project. The contract had been awarded to Gigaclear, a company who specialise in the building and operation of fibre broadband networks in rural communities They build fibre to the premises (FTTP) networks. Marketing and engagement will commence immediately to the local communities. The building of the network and the delivery of the services were expected to commence by the end of the year.

Enquiries from the public asking how the programme was going should be directed to the Superfast Essex website where they would be able to access the interactive postcode checker map and identify whether their property was within the rural challenge project area. If they were not then they would be able to identify the status of broadband delivery to their postcode, as covered by other phases of the programme

- (3) **Eastern Plateau** – The Eastern Plateau Local Action Group have been awarded approximately £1.8m and the aim of the funding was to create jobs and promote business growth in rural areas. It will focus on projects covering farm productivity, rural tourism, the provision of rural services, culture and heritage forest/woodland productivity and small business growth.

The final formalities are being signed off with the Rural Payments Agency and the Eastern Plateau are looking to start processing active applications later this year. Marketing had begun on a number of projects spread across each of the different priorities, as previously mentioned. There had been some interest located in the Epping Forest District.

- (4) **One Business Briefing** – Our business newsletter has recently been issued, it has been given an overhaul with a brand new look and feel to it, aiming to deliver a high quality professional and informative magazine to businesses within the district.
- (5) **District Centres Economic Development Fund** – Members may recall that this was previously the Town Centres Development Fund which had now been expanded to include some of the smaller village centres in the district. We are meeting with the Town teams in a couple of weeks time and are hoping to be able to deliver a programme that they are keen to get involved in. We will report further at the next meeting.
- (6) **Business Survey** – EFDC have received a large quantity of data from Essex County Council which needs to be analysed and the team hope to report on this further in the near future.
- (7) **Tourism Development** – The Tourism Conference was a very successful event and as a result a number of local visitor related businesses have expressed an interest in becoming more involved in the work of the visitor economy and tourism board.

The director of Neighbourhoods advised the Cabinet Committee that the Council had received a draft proposal from the Tourism Forum suggesting that there was an opportunity in the market to host an air show at North Weald, due to the demise of the Southend Air Show. The proposal was not in any shape of a business plan it was just ideas and the intention was to firm up some of the costings and bring a report to

the Cabinet in the near future. He further stated the partnership community days that were hosted at North Weald Airfield had always involved local community groups.

(8) **Partner Liaison** – Recently members of the Economic Development Team have attended key events such as the Harlow Business Exhibition and the launch of the SELEP Rural strategy.

In terms of Partner Liaison also the work we have done with them in terms of putting the business briefing together, a number of external partners including Essex County Council have welcomed the approach to their information being published in our bulletin.

Resolved:

That the progress and work programme of the Council's Economic Development Section be noted.

Reasons for Decision:

To appraise the Committee on the progress made with regard to Economic Development issues.

Other Options Consider and Rejected:

None, as this monitoring report was for information not action.

6. ASSET MANAGEMENT CO-ORDINATION GROUP REPORT

The Director of Neighbourhoods presented a report to the Cabinet Committee and updated them on further progress which had been achieved since the publication of the Agenda.

(1) **Epping Forest Shopping Park** – The District Council held an extraordinary Council meeting on the 23 June 2015. Previously there had been a Cabinet recommendation that the Council sought to become the sole developer of this site. Previously a joint special purpose vehicle with the adjacent land owner Polofind Limited had been developed, to take forward this scheme jointly. However, there were indications that Polofind would like to sell their interests and it was deemed appropriate that the Council should be the sole owners of this development and that recommendation was made to the extraordinary Council meeting. The funding was made available and on Friday 3 July 2015 the Council became the sole owners of the site.

Marketing of the site was going very well and the Council are in talks with four key anchor tenants.

There was a significant highways improvement scheme which would be implemented, not only to facilitate access to the retail park but to address some of the chronic congestion problems in that locality.

(2) **Oakwood Hill Depot** – The waste contractor BIFFA vacated the Langston Road depot in early May and moved to their own depot in Waltham Cross. Additional space had been leased on Oakwood Hill Industrial Estate to facilitate the museum.

Part of the procurement of the retail park gives us the ability to retain a part of the Langston Road depot to temporarily retain the MOT centre and the fleet services on that site until the new depot at Oakwood Hill had been constructed.

(3) **Pyrles Lane Nursery** – Further work had been undertaken to address some of the concerns raised following the refusal of this application. Revised plans will be submitted and this application will go to the DDMC due to it being Council owned land. Ward Members will be advised in advance of that application being submitted.

(4) **St John's Road** – The Diocese have now released the covenant for Lyndsey House which Essex County Council are looking to purchase from us as part of the St John's Road development. An issue had cropped up whereby when public bodies sell assets, State Aid approval had to be sought to ensure that you were getting the best value. We have taken legal advice to ensure that we are complying correctly. Essex County Council will have to write to the Secretary of state to seek his agreement before the final approval. Completion was expected to be within the next 4-6 weeks.

(5) **North Weald Airfield** – There had been 3 days of hosting visits to the site from companies expressing interests in becoming a development partner. Savills were appointed to assist the Council with the marketing exercise and advertised through the relevant trade and aviation press. We have received back expressions of interest from 3 companies. Due to the commercial sensitivity Savills will be writing up an executive summary on each of those expressions and we will be bringing this report to Members to see if there was anything beneficial to the Council going forward. It was hoped to bring the Savills report to the next meeting of the Cabinet Committee.

Park and ride scheme at North Weald Airport Update – Essex County Council have undertaken to report on a Park and Ride scheme and the conclusion was that it would be very challenging to make such a proposal stack up financially. We have asked for a formal report which we have yet to receive and the Director of Neighbourhoods will chase ECC for the report.

The dynamic has changed slightly as TFL have had pre-application discussions to deck over part of Epping Station car park and increase the parking capacity. TFL have also submitted an application to extend car parking at Theydon Bois Station.

(6) **Sir Winston Churchill / The Broadway, Debden** – Local developer Higgins have acquired an interest in the Sir Winston Churchill site and are now potential development partners. It was hoped to see work start on this site within the next few weeks.

Formal notice had now been received from the Post Office on Debden Broadway. This was a large prominent site at the end of the Broadway.

The Chairman reported that she had been approached and met with a community group from Debden and they have shown the Chairman outline plans and proposals. The Council are required to market this site on the open market.

(7) **Ongar Academy** – EFDC have agreed to sell the playing fields which were previously acquired from ECC to the rear of the leisure centre to the Ongar Academy Trust. Their long term plan was to build a new secondary school which will house 700-800 pupils. In the short term there was a need for temporary accommodation and EFDC have leased the tennis courts to them to house temporary buildings in readiness for the new school year in September 2015.

(8) **Town Mead Depot** – The site was in flood zone 3 and the latest advice from the Environment Agency ruled out any prospect as a residential development site. The District Council would now need to decide what other uses the site could be used for.

(9) **Hillhouse Leisure/Community Hub** – Presents an exciting opportunity to bring together and co-locate a number of public services. There was a GP surgery on site that was situated in a flat and they would like to relocate. The next step was to appoint a consultant for a masterplanning exercise to check that we are getting the best use out of the site and to produce a report for Members for a formal view.

Resolved:

(1) That the monitoring report on the development of the Council's property assets be noted.

(2) That the Ward Members of the Pyles Lane Nursery site would be advised of the date this application would be heard at the DDMC.

(3) That the Director of Neighbourhoods would contact Essex County Council to request the report on the Park and Ride Scheme at North Weald Airfield.

Reasons for Decision:

To comply with the Cabinet Committee's previous request to monitor the development of the Council's property assets on a regular basis.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

None, as this monitoring report was for information not action.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Cabinet Committee noted that there was no other urgent business for consideration.

8. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Cabinet Committee noted that there were no items of business on the agenda that necessitated the exclusion of the public and press from the meeting.

CHAIRMAN