

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL CABINET MINUTES

Committee: Cabinet **Date:** 9 March 2017

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.00 - 9.25 pm

Members Present: C Whitbread (Chairman), S Stavrou (Vice-Chairman), R Bassett, W Breare-Hall, A Grigg, H Kane, A Lion, J Philip, G Mohindra and G Waller

Other

Councillors: R Baldwin, N Bedford, R Brookes, L Hughes, S Kane, H Kauffman, J Knapman, A Mitchell, R Morgan, M Sartin, D Stallan, B Surtees, J H Whitehouse and J M Whitehouse

Apologies:

Officers Present: G Chipp (Chief Executive), D Macnab (Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Neighbourhoods), A Hall (Director of Communities), C O'Boyle (Director of Governance), R Palmer (Director of Resources), K Durrani (Assistant Director (Technical Services)), S Hill (Assistant Director (Governance & Performance Management)), P Pledger (Assistant Director (Housing Property)), J Leither (Democratic Services Officer), D Bailey (Head of Transformation), O Shaw (Head of Customer Service), T Carne (Public Relations and Marketing Officer), D Coleman (Planning Policy Manager) and S Kits (Social Media and Customer Services Officer)

135. 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 the human and data protection rights of all in attendance.

136. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(a) Pursuant to the Council's Member Code of Conduct, Councillor G Mohindra declared an interest in agenda item 11, Covenants & Appropriations – Hillhouse, Waltham Abbey, by virtue of being a member of the West Essex CCG Board. The Councillor had determined that his interest was non-pecuniary and would remain in the meeting for the consideration of the issue.

137. MINUTES

Decision:

(1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2017 be taken as read and signed by the Leader as a correct record.

138. REPORTS OF PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

Technology and Support Services

The Portfolio Holder informed the Cabinet that work was continuing with the roll-out of the Essex Superfast Broadband programme under Phase 2, services were being delivered by BT and Gigaclear and at the end of Phase 2 there would be up to 60,000 homes that will be capable of speeds up to 25 Gbps. This will include Phase 2b which was the rural community pilot service which would be going in to the east of the district where £7.5 million has been invested under the Government sponsored BDUK programme delivering around 4,000 connections with speeds of up to 1 Gb.

Additional match funding has been made available from BDUK which would enable Epping Forest to be included in Phase 3.

Further information would be provided as the programme moves forward.

139. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND REQUESTS TO ADDRESS THE CABINET

Public Questions

(a) Mr T Blanks asked the following question:

“The Council are proposing that vulnerable people can be housed in ‘pods’ that will be sited in the grounds of Norway House. The Council has perceived that there was some risk to the staff, the other residents, and by extension to the people of North Weald and had estimated a sum of £5000 per annum for security.

My question is how has this risk assessment been made, by whom and when?”

The Portfolio Holder for Housing provided the following answer:

“As with any Cabinet Report, officers are duty-bound to assist me – as the Portfolio Holder – to identify and set out for me, in a balanced way, all the relevant issues relating to proposals that I put forward to the Cabinet for consideration.

In bringing this report to the Cabinet, I have been advised by the Council’s Director of Communities on the policy and strategic issues that the Cabinet needs to consider. As you can see, the report sets out both the financial and operational benefits of undertaking the proposed Pilot Scheme, as well as the potential risks and concerns – the latter of which are set out at Paragraphs 18-22 of the report and in the Risk Management section at the end.

In addition to identifying the potential risks, the report sets out - at the strategic level - how these could be mitigated, including a proposed budget for the provision of additional security if required and an approach to the selection of occupants for the pods.

If the Cabinet agrees the proposal tonight, as usual, there will of course be a full risk assessment undertaken and implemented relating to the risks at the operational level, and how these can be mitigated.

It is a regrettable fact that the Council currently has 29 single homeless people temporarily accommodated in bed and breakfast hotels, for whom the Council has a legal duty to secure housing. Not only is this an inappropriate form of accommodation, it is also very expensive to the council tax payer – for which all residents in Epping Forest are currently having to pay over £250,000 each year.

The proposed Pilot Scheme would accommodate a small number of single homeless people, in a new form of modular accommodation that, I believe, will provide good quality housing - at a lower cost than traditionally-built accommodation and at a lower cost than accommodating them in hotels.

Whatever the Cabinet's decision on this issue tonight, what is beyond doubt is that the Council has a legal duty to secure accommodation for single vulnerable homeless people - and that they therefore need to be housed somewhere. The proposed pilot scheme suggests that it would be better to accommodate a small number of single people in specialist accommodation where there are trained staff, whose purpose is to manage the accommodation and to support residents, rather than in unsupervised accommodation or in expensive bed and breakfast hotels.

Therefore, to summarise, the risk assessment will be made through consultation and assessment with staff and officers. It would be made by an EFDC senior housing officer and community safety officers. Once Cabinet have made their decision and if granted, planning permission would have to be obtained and if planning permission was granted then before anyone moved in the risk assessment would be made."

Mr Blanks thanked the Portfolio Holder for her answer and asked a supplementary question if the proposal for the pods was implemented, what would be the impact on the requirement to pay the DCLG the unspent 1-4-1 receipts of approximately £350,000 by 31 March 2017.

The Director of Communities responded that at the Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee Meeting on 6 March 2017, it was agreed to recommend to Cabinet to continue with the Council Housebuilding Programme. A report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Cabinet and, if it was agreed, the £330,000 estimated 1-4-1 receipts would not have to be paid to the DCLG. It was also noted that 30% of the cost of funding the proposed pods at Norway House would be funded from 1-4-1 receipts.

Requests to Address the Cabinet

(a) The Cabinet heard from Parish Councillor Sheila Jackman, representing North Weald Bassett Parish Council, who wished to express concerns regarding the proposal to house homeless vulnerable people in pods in the grounds of Norway House. She advised that she was speaking as a housing professional with a wide knowledge of mental health issues and the undesirability of housing people in such a way. She said that vulnerable people needed support with their medication and dietary requirements and the staff at Norway House were not trained for dealing with people with mental health issues.

(b) The Cabinet heard from Parish Councillor Mary Dadd, representing Ongar Town Council, who stated that all the work put in to produce the Local Plan by Members and Officers was greatly appreciated but wished to highlight the following three recommendations for consideration:

(i) Several national bodies have asked for more assessments to be completed in parishes and towns across the District. Sport England say the method used to predict demand for leisure and sport facilities was flawed and out of date. The Environment Agency recommended more detailed assessments of flood risk zones and sewage capacity levels around proposed developments such as the Roding and its tributaries. National Grid have questioned the viability of sites with high pressure gas pipes. We ask that you look at these recommendations and amend the Local Plan accordingly;

(ii) The 2017 Housing White Paper was late for the Epping Forest Local Plan but recommendations should be considered and amendments made. The White Paper stated that housing should be aware that there was employment to avoid long commutes and further protection of the greenbelt and neighbourhood plans should be respected to make developments more palatable; and

(iii) That Epping Forest planners should start to use the draft Local Plan as policy even before it was approved and in place. We would ask that you delay the next stage of the Local Plan until these recommendations have been put in place.

(c) The Cabinet heard from Howard Dawson, Managing Director, representing the Peer Group Plc. Mr Dawson advised that since the early 1990's the Peer Group have owned the freehold of the Ongar Park Estate lying to the East of North Weald. In partnership with Epping Forest District Council the Peer Group delivered the Tempest Mead development in the late 1990's. At no cost to the community the Peer Group gave land to the Bowls Club and also gave land to create the Weald Common and Nature Reserve. Our ownership extended to over 500 acres and included the land occupied by Blakes Golf Club, adjacent to the A414, the Redoubt and the land close to the Village Hall.

Since 2011 and through the Local Plan process we have promoted parts of our estate for residential allocation. In late 2013 the Council commissioned Allies and Morrison to undertake a Master Planning Study for North Weald. Since that Master Plan was published in mid 2014, the Peer Group has promoted the exact two sites identified by Allies and Morrison as being the most suitable for helping to meet the District's objectively assessed housing need. The two sites total 38 acres and could provide up to 300 homes on previously used, non-agricultural land. The sites are in our sole ownership and are entirely deliverable.

By its own admission, the Council has not assessed the actual sites we have been promoting and I would welcome a commitment from the Portfolio Holder, Cllr John Philip, about exactly when our sites are going to be properly assessed.

Our detailed Regulation 18 submission included an assessment of the environmental and social benefits of allocating land to the east of North Weald, in preference to the Council's present strategy to allocate large swathes of the "best and most versatile" agricultural land to the west of the settlement.

Paragraph 34 of the report submitted to this meeting stated a new project plan had been developed. When will this "new project plan" and the "new timeline for the work" be made public?

Paragraph 32 of the same report includes a statement that "**further Site Selection Work has been commissioned, and will provide an opportunity to correct any errors that have been identified, revisit site assessments where information or proposals have changed [and] assess any new sites submitted to the Council as part of the consultation...**". Given that Developer Forums have already commenced and Peer Group have been refused an opportunity to participate, when does the Council intend to carry out the further site selection work and how does the Council intend to engage with landowners whose sites have not been allocated but were to be allocated prior to Regulation 19 consultation?

140. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

The Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee reported that the following items of business had been considered at its meeting held on 28 February 2017:

- (a) a short presentation from the Principal of Epping Forest College, Ms. Famili outlining the measures being put into place to remedy the 'inadequate' report received after the latest Ofsted Inspection.
- (b) the call-in made by Councillor Lea on the waste and recycling policies was considered. A review meeting had been held the day before with the Portfolio Holder and two of the call-in signatories and a way forward was identified and the call-in, was formally withdrawn pending a follow up report;
- (c) the submitted PICK form concerning the Council's Transformation Programme which would be added to the work programme for the Resources Select Committee; and
- (d) a reply for the Government's Communities and Local Government Committee inquiry into Overview and Scrutiny in local government.

The Cabinet's Key Decision List was reviewed and the following issues were identified:

- (i) progress on the Council's Corporate Plan Key Action Plan for quarter 3 was noted;
- (ii) the current situation on the scrutiny of the Princess Alexandra Hospital National Health Service Trust and the Highways Service; and
- (iii) the latest information received from Transport for London following on from their recent visit in December 2016 was noted.

141. EPPING FOREST DISTRICT DRAFT LOCAL PLAN REGULATION 18 CONSULTATION

The Portfolio Holder for Planning Policy presented a report on the Draft Local Plan, Regulation 18 consultation.

The Portfolio Holder updated members on the progress of the Draft Local Plan by providing high level findings from the Regulation 18 consultation that took place between 31 October 2016 and 12 December 2016. The Council had received a large number of representations from a wide range of stakeholders. The findings from the questionnaire responses were set out in Appendix A of the report which was the Feedback Interim Report from Remarkable. It should be noted that this was an initial indication of the responses, based on the results of the multiple choice questions online and the hard-copy questionnaires only. It was therefore representative of around half of the respondents to the consultation. Initial analysis of the responses from statutory consultees, Parish and Town Councils had also been undertaken. Many of these were supportive of the overall vision and objectives of the Plan, the provision for additional affordable housing and the scale of growth being proposed. The main concerns and issues identified so far through consultation analysis of these responses included:

- Concern that the infrastructure requirements for the development proposed was not met particularly with respect to the capacity of the Central Line, education provision and health provision;
- The proposed distribution of growth across the District;
- Concern over the potential loss of managed open space and leisure facilities;
- Impact on the roads/traffic congestion;
- Loss of local identity and character and potential for coalescence; and
- Proposed alterations to the Green Belt boundary.

The Portfolio Holder advised that a more detailed analysis of all responses received, including consideration of findings on an area basis, was still to be undertaken and will form the basis of a further report which would be presented at a future meeting.

The Portfolio Holder advised that agreement was sought to an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS), the high level project plan for the preparation of the Epping Forest District Local Plan. The proposed new scheme would supersede the earlier Local Development Scheme agreed in July 2016, with the preparation of the single District wide Local Plan scheduled for submission to the Secretary of State for examination in May 2018.

The Portfolio Holder addressed some of the concerns by the Public Speakers and advised that the Council had commissioned new work to update the open space playing pitch and indoor sports facilities information working with Sport England. The Environment Agency have misunderstood our Draft Local Plan as no sites have been proposed for allocation in any area higher than a flood risk zone 1.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the Council was successful (together with East Herts and Harlow Councils) in securing £500,000 Garden Towns funding from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town to support the delivery of strategic sites in and around Harlow. This included the four strategic sites to the South, West and East of Harlow in this District. A joint delivery team was being established with this Council as the lead authority and the post of Project Director was currently being recruited.

Members expressed interest in knowing all of the new sites that had been put forward and sites withdrawn since the close of the consultation.

The Portfolio Holder advised that there were approximately 65 new sites identified and that the relevant information would be published in the weekly bulletin.

Decision:

- (1) That the initial findings of the Draft Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation be noted;
- (2) That the progression of the Draft Local Plan to Pre-Submission publication under Regulation 19 of the Local Plan Regulations 2012 be agreed; and
- (3) That the updated Local Development Scheme included within this reported be agreed and published on the Council's website.

Reasons for Decision:

To provide members with feedback from the recent Draft Local Plan consultation and advise them of the next steps in the plan preparation. The Council was obliged under

the Localism Act 2011 to prepare and publish a Local Development Scheme so that the public and stakeholders were aware of the likely timing of key stages of the plan making process.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

Not to advise members of the key issues from the recent Draft Local Plan consultation and implications for the next stages of plan preparation. To not agree, or to vary the Local Development Scheme.

142. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S ACCOMMODATION

The Leader of Council presented a report regarding a review of the Council's Accommodation.

The Leader stated that the Council wanted to ensure that it provided services that were "fit for the 21st Century" and had launched a Transformation Programme to improve working practices throughout the Council. The aim was to put the customer at the heart of everything the Council did and use modern technology to enable flexible working.

The Leader advised that the Council had commissioned Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC) to set out a Strategic Outline Case for optimising the use of Council owned land and buildings in order to realise ongoing running cost efficiencies. Changing the way the Council worked was central to the strategy, and the Customer Contact Review conducted internally had identified opportunities to standardise, simplify and centralise customer service contacts.

The Leader reported that the recommendations set out in the report were to optimise the use of office space, releasing much needed brownfield land which would help reduce the housing pressure on valued green belt. Reconfiguring the Civic Offices in Epping would allow the site currently occupied by the Conder Building to be redeveloped over a five year period. Options for relocating the Housing Repairs Service were also considered in the report and further work was recommended to prepare detailed business cases setting out the optimum configuration and location for an overspill office.

The Leader advised that the Housing Repairs Service, managed under a Repairs Management Contract by Mears, was currently operating from a depot based in the St John's area of, Epping. This site was required for the St John's Road Town Centre Regeneration Scheme and had to be vacated. The current contract had three years left to run and towards the end of the contract period the Council would, in the normal course of events, market test options for the re-provision of this service.

Councillor Bassett suggested that, following a meeting earlier in the week, the Housing Repairs Service should be co-located with the Grounds Maintenance and Fleet Operations within the Neighbourhoods Directorate at the Oakwood Hill Depot and that Recommendation 3(a) should be changed to reflect this.

Decision:

(1) That the principle of retaining the Civic Offices headquarters location for the Council in Epping town centre be agreed (moving towards implementation of a modified option 4 of the Price Waterhouse Coopers report) based upon:

- (a) the optimisation of space within the existing footprint of the main Civic Office building (without extension) to accommodate the majority of staff;
 - (b) the desire to achieve a workstation to staff ratio of no more than 7:10 through rationalisation of the layout in the building, flexible working by staff and agile business practices; and
 - (c) the phased vacation of the Condor Building, rear extension, 323 Building, link and associated car parks within 5 years with a medium term objective of making that part of the site available for residential and/or commercial use;
- (2) That an early review be undertaken of the options for the future provision of the Housing Repairs Service beyond the final 3 years of the existing repairs management contract;
- (3) That the peak operational usage requirements of the Housing Repairs and the Neighbourhoods Depots be reviewed and:
- (a) that these two services be co-located to the Oakwood Hill Depot with a further report on how this could be achieved; and
 - (b) the depot office space should be used to relocate staff there at a workstation to staff ratio of no more than 7:10;
- (4) That a planning application be submitted for the provision of a temporary Housing Repairs Depot at and around the Control Tower at North Weald Airfield (including the first floor meeting room), at an estimated cost of £17,500, with capital budget provision made for its construction once the timescale for the required vacation of the Epping Depot was known, in order to minimise rental costs;
- (5) That an assessment be undertaken to evaluate if there was a net requirement for office space for staff currently based at the Civic Offices and Hemnall Street offices that could, notwithstanding flexible and agile working practices, be accommodated in the revised layout of the Civic Offices and Oakwood Hill Depot;
- (6) That, if the evaluation concluded it was not possible to accommodate all staff at the Civic Offices and Hemnall Street at the reconfigured Civic Offices and Oakwood Hill Depot, a further report be considered by the Cabinet on the most appropriate way forward; and
- (7) That the proposed redesign of the Council's current reception area be approved in principle to provide a centralised Customer Service Reception subject to:
- (a) the later submission of a full design;
 - (b) a report on the capital budget provision required; and
 - (c) procurement of a contractor and project management for the scheme.

Reasons for Decision:

To optimise the use of Council land and buildings generating cost savings and to improve the Council's customer experience of accessing services.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

To continue to occupy and pay for more space than was required by current and future headcount. This option was discounted on the basis that it would not be good use of public funds.

143. OFF STREET CAR PARKING ENFORCEMENT POLICY

The Safer, Greener and Transport Portfolio Holder presented a report regarding the Off Street Car Parking Enforcement Policy.

The Portfolio Holder advised that in order for NSL Limited to carry out enforcement in Council car parks and for the associated functions to be performed by NSL and Council staff, it was essential to have the necessary approvals in place. This report sought authority for these considerations, which were also reflected in the Civil Parking Enforcement Policy.

The Portfolio Holder reported that following a review of the Off Street operations by RTA Associates Limited in 2015 a decision was taken to withdraw from the Off Street element of the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP). A formal notice to this effect was served on NEPP which meant that from 1 April 2017 the Council would manage the Off Street parking operations itself. As a result of the recently concluded procurement process NSL Limited won the contract for the enforcement and associated elements of the contract.

Councillor Mohindra advised that he had a query in relation to the differential between the severe charge of £70 and the less severe charge of £50 and noticed that the Portfolio Holder referred to the NEPP code of conduct and charging, could we make sure that this was a public document published on the Council's website when this scheme was introduced.

The Portfolio Holder stated that this would be published on the website.

Decision:

- (1) That the good progress being made with the mobilisation of the Off Street Car Parking Enforcement Contract with NSL, due to commence on 1 April 2017, be noted;
- (2) That in order to comply with legislative and statutory requirements and enable successful operation of the Off Street enforcement contract the following be agreed:
 - (a) the use of Traffic Enforcement Centre (TEC) for debt registration;
 - (b) the use of Traffic Penalty Tribunal (TPT) for adjudication service in respect of disputed Penalty Charge Notice (PCN);
 - (c) to apply to the Driver and Vehicle Licencing Agency (DVLA) for permission to access their database to obtain the registered keeper's details for enforcement purposes;
 - (d) the appointment of enforcement agents, sometimes referred to as Bailiffs, for debt recovery in respect of Off Street operations;
 - (e) that the current level of PCN at Band 2, £70 for higher more serious and £50 for lesser contraventions be retained;

- (f) that as much as possible cashless payments would be encouraged for parking permits, season tickets, pay and display, PCN payments by the use of pay by phone and online technology however the option to pay by cash and cheque would remain available;
- (3) That the attached document titled Civil Parking Enforcement Policy and Guidance on the Processing of Penalty Charge Notices within the District be approved;
- (4) That an annual report setting out the activities of the service be presented to Cabinet within six months of the end of each financial year;
- (5) That NSL had been acquired by Marstons and that this would have no impact on the contract, be noted;
- (6) That a Car Parking Partnership Board be established to provide supervision of the contract with its membership and terms of reference being determined by the Leader of the Council; and
- (7) That delegated authority be given to the Director of Neighbourhoods (and officers appointed by him) to consider representations and challenges to PCNs under Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 (and enabling statutory instruments) and to determine, in accordance with the published Enforcement Policy, whether to cancel any Notice or enforcement action and determine, based on evidence or grounds for doing, whether to cancel any Notice or enforcement action.

Reasons for Decision:

To put in place formal arrangements as required by law to enable NSL and Council staff to carry out all the functions associated with the delivery of the Off Street Enforcement Contract.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

There were no other options, if the necessary approval was not given then the NSL contract would not commence.

144. COVENANTS & APPROPRIATIONS - HILLHOUSE, WALTHAM ABBEY

The Housing Portfolio Holder presented a report regarding covenants and appropriations at Hillhouse, Waltham Abbey.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the Council had been working in close partnership with Essex County Council (ECC) and NHS England (NHS) to develop the large areas of land in this Council's and ECC's ownership at Hillhouse, Waltham Abbey, to provide a new Leisure Centre (EFDC), Independent Living Scheme for older people (ECC) and Health Centre (NHS).

The Portfolio Holder stated that the two areas of land had had covenants placed on them when the land was originally acquired from the GLC in the 1970's. Therefore, in order to enable the land to be developed in accordance with the recent Outline Planning Permission, this Council's land needed to be appropriated for planning purposes and the covenants on the ECC land needed to be released, for which this Council had received a formal request from ECC.

The Portfolio Holder advised that a detailed joint financial appraisal by the Council's affordable housing and viability consultants had established that ECC's land had no value for the proposed developments and, in fact, the development had a deficit of around £657,000, which would therefore require ECC to provide a capital subsidy of around £715,000 from their county wide capital budget for independent living schemes to enable their development to go ahead.

Decision:

(1) That, as an improvement that would contribute towards improving the social well-being of the local area;

(a) The Council's land at Hillhouse, Waltham Abbey, shown on the plan attached as an Appendix to the Cabinet Report, be appropriated for planning purposes, in order to facilitate the development of the proposed new Epping Forest District Council (EFDC) Leisure Centre on the land; and

(b) The request from Essex County Council to release the covenants on the County Council's adjoining land (also shown on the plan in the Appendix to the report) – currently restricting the use of the land for the purposes of the Education Acts or as playing fields and prohibiting any of the land to be fenced off – be agreed in order to allow the land to be developed to provide a new independent living scheme to meet the housing and care needs of older residents from the Epping Forest District and a new health centre to help meet the primary care needs of residents from the local area.

Reasons for Decision:

The Council's land needed to be appropriated for planning purposes and the covenants on ECC's land needed to be released, in order for the land to be developed for the purposes for which Outline Planning Permission had been received.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

The main alternative options appeared to be:

(a) Not to appropriate the Council's land for planning purposes, but this would open up the Council to a legal challenge in the future, which could delay the construction of the Leisure Centre – which could be very expensive if construction works have commenced.

(b) Not to release the covenant on ECC's land – but this would be in conflict with the partnership approach taken to the development of Hillhouse throughout to date and, in any event, would probably result in ECC making an application for the release to the Upper Tribunal, which could quite possibly be successful and could result in the Council having to pay ECC's legal costs if the Tribunal considered the Council's refusal to have been unreasonable.

(c) Seek a payment from ECC for the release of the covenant – however, unlike other sites in the District where requests have been received, it had been established that the proposed development on ECC's land had a negative value, which would require ECC to provide a significant capital subsidy. Furthermore, if this was a condition of the proposed release, again, it was likely that ECC will make a successful application to the Upper Tribunal which, again, could result in the Council

having to pay ECC's legal costs if the Tribunal considered the Council's response to have been unreasonable.

145. TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME MONITORING REPORT - JANUARY 2017

The Leader of Council presented the monitoring report for the Transformation Programme for January 2017.

The Leader stated that regular highlight reports on the progress of the Transformation Programme were presented to the Cabinet. This was the highlight report for January 2017 and covered progress for all chartered projects of Medium and High Risk Potential, as well as key aspects of the Transformation Programme.

The Leader reported that, overall, progress indicators remained Green for 'cost', 'delivery / outcomes / outputs' and 'benefits'. The status indicator for 'time' was reported as Amber to highlight that 3 actions (from a total of 216) were overdue when compared with planned timelines. Project and Programme Managers had actions in place to deal with any potential negative effects. Progress would be kept under review and it was anticipated that the status of the majority of these items would return to Green in the next report.

Decision:

(1) That the progress of Projects and Programmes within the Transformation Programme for January 2017, alongside planned actions for February 2017 be noted.

Reasons for Decision:

To inform Cabinet of progress on the Transformation Programme, including work streams, programmes and projects.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

No other options were available. Failure to monitor and review progress of the Transformation Programme and to consider corrective action where necessary, could have negative implications for the Council's reputation, and might mean the opportunities for improvement were lost.

146. PILOT SCHEME FOR THE PROVISION OF MODULAR TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION FOR SINGLE, VULNERABLE HOMELESS PEOPLE - NORWAY HOUSE, NORTH WEALD

The Housing Portfolio Holder presented a report on a proposed pilot scheme for the provision of modular temporary accommodation for single, vulnerable homeless people at Norway House, North Weald.

The Leader of Council and the Housing Portfolio Holder were interested in considering the feasibility of providing temporary modular accommodation (referred to in the report and these minutes as "pods") to provide temporary accommodation for homeless households, at a lower cost than traditional-built, permanent accommodation and than the cost of placing homeless households in expensive bed and breakfast hotels.

The Portfolio Holder advised that the report proposed that a Pilot Scheme be provided on an identified site at Norway House, North Weald comprising of 3 pods

which would accommodate 6 single vulnerable people with shared kitchens, together with a storage container at a current total estimated cost of around £345,000, with 30% of the costs funded from some of the Council's unallocated 1-4-1 Receipts.

The Portfolio Holder stated that based on the Council's £8,280 per person per annum loss of housing benefit subsidy as a result of providing housing benefit to a household in B&B, and taking account of the licence charge to be made for the pods, the payback period for providing one pod would be around 5.3 years (or 3.7 years on the basis that the 1-4-1 Receipts that it was proposed would fund 30% of the costs would otherwise be lost to the Council).

The Portfolio Holder highlighted that there were concerns raised about the heightened risk to staff and other residents about increasing the number of occupants at Norway House with single vulnerable people. A number of ways of mitigating these risks were proposed, including the appointment of a private security company to provide security officers to attend Norway House when required, for which a small budgetary provision was required and selecting appropriate, lower risk, residents from the pool of single vulnerable people in bed and breakfast accommodation at any one time.

In response to questions from the Members present, the Portfolio Holder stated that the single vulnerable homeless people would have support from Social Services and the Mental Health Team when required. She also assured Members that if the budget of £5,000 for the security company was not enough, then further allocation would be made available if needed. She also acknowledged that a review of the Pilot Scheme should be undertaken after one year, starting from when the pods were first occupied.

Decision:

- (1) That, subject to the receipt of planning permission, a Pilot Scheme be undertaken at Norway House, North Weald (the Council's Homeless Persons Hostel) to provide three modular units of temporary accommodation for six single vulnerable homeless people, with shared kitchen facilities, as an alternative to expensive and less desirable bed and breakfast accommodation, together with additional storage facilities and some replacement car parking provision;
- (2) That authorisation be given to the submission of a detailed planning application for the proposed provision;
- (3) That Section 6.1 of the Council's Procurement Rules be waived to enable Mac Container Company Ltd, a local supplier of modular accommodation based at North Weald Airfield, to be the Council's Nominated Supplier of the accommodation units;
- (4) That competitive tenders be invited from contractors based on Constructionline to supply and install the modular accommodation (supplied by the Council's Nominated Supplier) and to undertake all ground and infrastructure works, through a JCT Intermediate Form of Contract;
- (5) That the estimated £345,000 cost of the Pilot Scheme be funded from the existing Capital Programme budget for the Council Housebuilding Programme, which was currently subject to a temporary moratorium, with 30% of the costs funded from 1-4-1 Receipts;
- (6) That revenue budgetary provision of £5,000 per annum be made (funded from HRA Balances for the first year and incorporated within the HRA Budget in future years) to fund the appointment of a security company to provide security officers to attend Norway House, on an ad-hoc basis as and when required, in order to assist,

support and protect staff and other residents on occasions when they feel at risk from residents, particularly out of normal office hours and when lone working;

(7) That, subject to the success of the Pilot Scheme, consideration of whether or not, and how and where, the provision of temporary modular accommodation could be deployed in the District on a wider scale in the future be undertaken by the Housing Portfolio Holder: and

(8) That a review of the Pilot Scheme be undertaken after one year, starting from when the pods are first inhabited.

Reasons for Decision:

The Council was experiencing an increasing homelessness problem, with increased numbers of households having to be accommodated in temporary accommodation. The proposed Pilot Scheme would provide an alternative to accommodating single vulnerable homeless people in expensive bed and breakfast accommodation.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

The main alternative options appear to be:

(a) Do not undertake a Pilot Scheme – but this would not assist with alleviating the need for additional temporary accommodation, or with reducing the cost of accommodating households in bed and breakfast accommodation.

(b) Provide more permanent, traditional-built temporary accommodation on the identified site - however, this would cost more to provide.

(c) Provide more pods as part of the Pilot Scheme – however, there were no other suitable sites at Norway House.

(d) Provide less pods as part of the Pilot Scheme – however, this would reduce the provision of additional temporary accommodation and the savings from not using bed and breakfast accommodation, thereby resulting in reduced cost-effectiveness of the Pilot Scheme.

(e) Do not nominate Mac Container Company Ltd as the Council's Nominated Supplier – however, this would result in significant officer time and delay in order to seek competitive tenders; in any event, the Procurement Rules support the use of local suppliers and contractors where appropriate.

(f) Provide pods on another Council-owned site, instead of Norway House – however, it was suggested that Norway House was a suitable location for the Pilot Scheme.

(g) Accommodate homeless families in the pods, instead of single vulnerable homeless people sharing – however, this would not reduce the use or cost of bed and breakfast accommodation.

(h) Do not provide a revenue budget to appoint a security company – however, this was considered essential

(i) Fund 70% of the capital costs of the provision from general capital receipts – although this would reduce the cost to the HRA, it would utilise capital receipts that could otherwise be used for other (non-housing) Council capital projects.

147. CORPORATE PLAN KEY ACTION PLAN 2016/17 - QUARTER 3 PROGRESS

The Leader of Council presented a report regarding the Corporate Plan Key Action Plan 2016/17, Quarter 3 Progress.

The Leader stated that the Corporate Plan was the Council's key strategic planning document, which set out the priorities over the five-year period from 2015/16 to 2019/20. The priorities or Corporate Aims were supported by Key Objectives, which provided a clear statement of the Council's overall intentions for these five years.

The Leader advised that the Key Objectives were delivered by an annual action plan, with each year building upon the progress against the achievement of the Key Objectives for previous years. The annual action plans contained a range of actions designed to achieve specific outcomes and were working documents that were therefore subject to change and development to ensure the actions remained relevant and appropriate, and to identify opportunities to secure further progress or improvement.

The Leader stated that the Key Action Plan for 2016/17 was agreed by Cabinet in October 2015. Progress in relation to individual actions was reviewed by the Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on a quarterly and outturn basis.

Councillor Mohindra referred to Appendix 1 of the report, item 6) Evaluate the submission received for North Weald Airfield marketing exercise and asked for assurance that this work had now commenced.

The Leader assured Councillor Mohindra that work on this project had now commenced.

Decision:

(1) That progress on the achievement of the Council's Key Action Plan for 2016-17 at the end of Quarter 3 be noted.

Reasons for Decision:

It was important that relevant performance management processes were in place to review progress against the key objectives, to ensure their continued achievability and relevance, and to identify proposals for appropriate corrective action in areas of slippage or under-performance. This report presented progress against the Key Action Plan for 2016/17 at the end of the third quarter (31 December 2016).

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

No other options were appropriate in this respect. Failure to monitor and review performance against the key objectives, and to consider corrective action where necessary, could have negative implications for the Council's reputation, and might mean that opportunities for improvement were lost. The Council had previously agreed arrangements for the review of progress against the key objectives.

148. PLANNING APPLICATION FEES

The Portfolio Holder for Governance and Development Management presented a report to the Cabinet regarding Planning Application Fees.

The Portfolio Holder stated that on 7 February 2017 the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published the white paper “Fixing our broken housing market”. The paper set out a need to boost local authority capacity and capability to deliver. To address this the DCLG stated that they would increase nationally set planning fees.

The Portfolio Holder advised that an offer had been received from the DCLG and Councils were required to respond to this by 13 March 2017. Acceptance of the offer would allow the Council to benefit from a 20% increase in planning application fees from July 2017. However, the DCLG required a commitment that the additional income would be spent on planning functions to enhance the services provided by Development Management.

Decision:

- (1) That the offer from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to increase planning application fees by 20% from July 2017 be accepted;
- (2) That the commitment to spending the additional income on planning functions be approved;
- (3) That the Director of Resources be authorised to complete the proforma required by the DCLG to accept the offer; and
- (4) That a request be made to the Chairman of Council to waive the usual call-in arrangements for the Cabinet’s decisions on the grounds that, since the Cabinet’s decisions would need to be actioned by 13 March 2017, it would leave insufficient time for any call-in of the decision to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and any subsequent disagreement with the decision by the Committee to be considered by the Cabinet.

Reasons for Decision:

To allow the Council to benefit from an increase in planning application fees, this would be used to enhance the service provided by Development Management.

The Development Management Service was not cost neutral so there was an argument that the users of the service should be paying more already. Currently the service was being part funded by all Council Tax payers even though the majority of them did not use the service.

Other Options Considered and Rejected:

The only other option was to reject the increase in planning application fees. This was not recommended as it would mean either that no enhancements could be made to the Development Management Service or that any enhancements would need to be funded from savings in other areas which might be of more general benefit to Council Tax payers. This would not allow the service to address the anticipated increase in workload as the Local Plan developed.

149. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

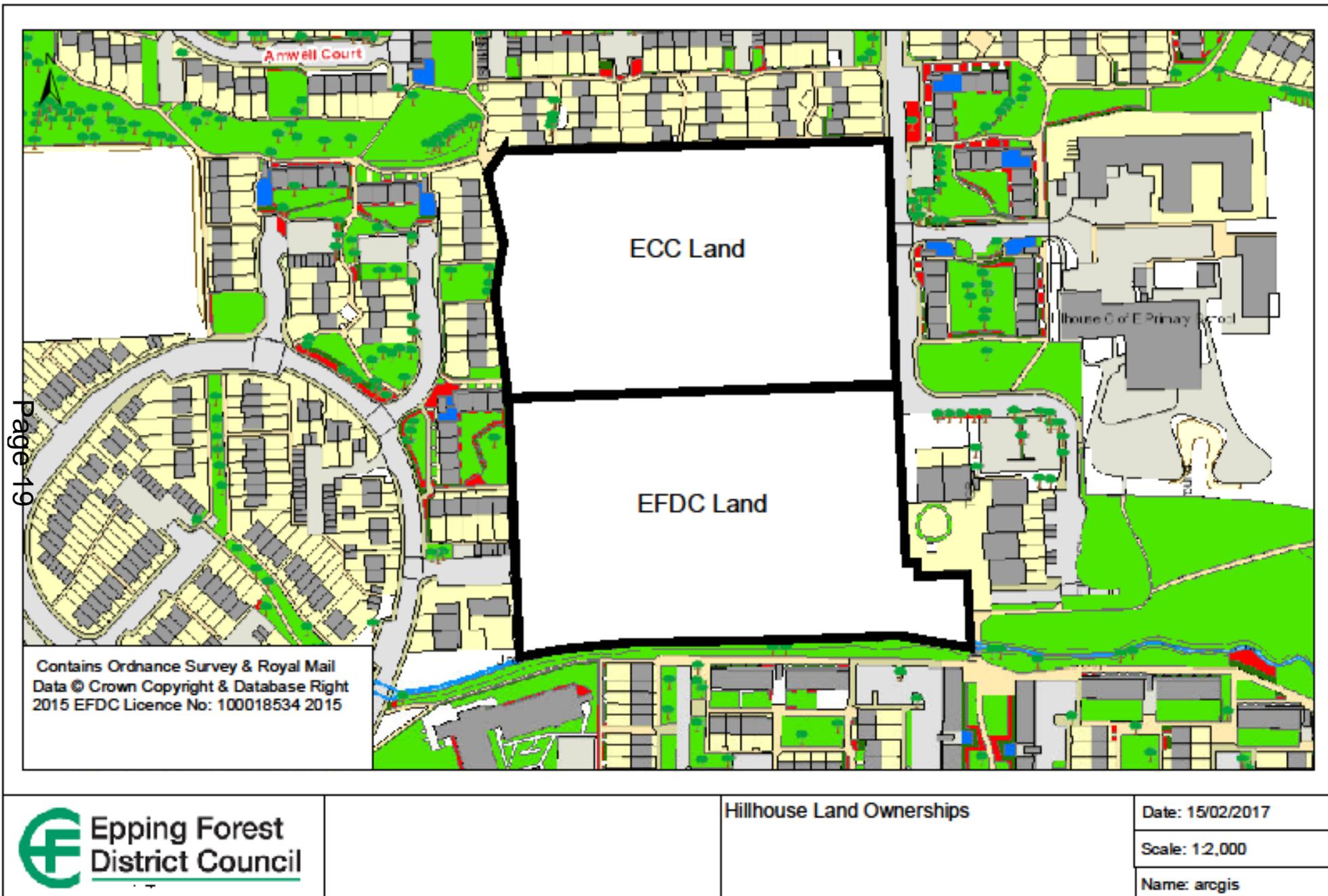
The Cabinet noted that there was no other urgent business for consideration.

150. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Cabinet noted that there was no business which necessitated the exclusion of the public and press.

CHAIRMAN

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