

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES

Committee: Asset Management and Economic Development Cabinet Committee **Date:** Thursday, 27 October 2016

Place: Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping **Time:** 7.00 - 7.33 pm

Members Present: Councillors A Grigg (Chairman), H Kane, G Mohindra and G Waller

Other Councillors:

Apologies: Councillor W Breare-Hall

Officers Present: K Pabani (Chief Estates Officer), M Warr (Economic Development Officer), J Leither (Democratic Services Officer) and G J Woodhall (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

Also in attendance: C Pasterfield (Asset Management Development Consultant) and A Charalambous (Consultant, White, Young and Green)

19. 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.

20. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

The Cabinet Committee noted that there were no substitute members.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

22. MINUTES

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 22 August 2016 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

23. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TEAM PROGRESS REPORT

The Economic Development Officer (EDO) 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) Visitor Economy

A Visitor Accommodation Needs Assessment for the district took place in August 2016. This was the first phase in the study and comprised of:

- an audit of current visitor accommodation supply;
- a review of past and current proposals for visitor accommodation;
- a review of national trends in hotel and visitor accommodation development;
- initial consultation with Officers, Members and key stakeholders; and
- a review of approaches to tourist accommodation planning policies elsewhere.

Phase 2 of the study was being refined in the light of the Phase 1 findings and would commence in November 2016.

(2) Town Centres

The recent Town Team Meeting had been well attended and there was a positive attitude from the Town Partnerships. The Town and Village Centres Opportunities Fund had now been launched for 2016/17 and a number of interesting proposals have been submitted. An updated report would be presented to the next meeting.

(3) Business Support

Pop Up Business Café

The newly refurbished Epping Forest District Museum hosted our first Pop Up Business Café in July, which was co-ordinated by the Economic Development Team in partnership with BEST Growth Hub. There were six voluntary advisers from business based in the local area and over thirty local businesses attended to access informal advice on a wide range of subjects. The event was a great success and there have been enquiries since the event both from business that were there and business that would like to give advice at future events.

Low Carbon Across the South East (LoCASE)

LoCASE is a new project set up to help small to medium businesses. It aims to reduce business costs by cutting emissions and to promote the opportunities of the low carbon market. The Economic Development Team were working with LoCASE to promote the scheme and encourage more applicants to come forward.

Eastern Plateau Rural Development Programme

The continuation of the Eastern Plateau Programme funded by the European Commission and Defra is uncertain whether it will continue since Brexit. For now it would be business as usual with the Fund pending an announcement which could be made in the Autumn Statement. A further update will be presented at the next meeting.

(4) Broadband

In September 2016 a very successful Broadband Business Breakfast was held at Mulberry House in High Ongar. A number of local businesses from across the Epping Forest District attended as well as a number of key local stakeholders and industry representatives. Delegates heard presentations highlighting opportunities for business growth that were made possible by the building of the ultrafast and superfast broadband networks throughout the district.

The event was a great success, the event sponsors and participating speakers all spoke positively about the event and the opportunity to speak directly to businesses.

(5) Partner Liaison

The Economic Development team continued to liaise and support a number of Partner Organisations. These included:

- Essex County Council
- South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SE LEP)
- Invest Essex and Essex Innovation Programme
- Lea Valley Food Taskforce
- Essex Economic Development Officer group
- Essex Tourism Officer Group
- Epping Forest District Town Team
- Eastern Plateau Local Action Group
- Stansted Airport Local Authority Forum
- Tourism & Visitor Board
- West Essex Skills & Learning Forum
- Waltham Abbey Town Partnership
- One Epping Forest
- Superfast Essex

Councillor Mohindra requested that the LSCC be added to the Partner Liaison Organisation list as the Council were represented and attended their meetings.

RESOLVED:

To note the progress and work programme of the Council's Economic Development Section.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

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

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED:

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

24. ASSET MANAGEMENT CO-ORDINATION GROUP REPORT

The Chief Estates Officer presented a report to the Cabinet Committee and updated them on further developments to the report since it had been published.

(1) Epping Forest Shopping Park

There was a separate detailed report on the progress of the development at Agenda Item 8.

(2) Oakwood Hill Depot

There were no further updates at this time.

(3) Pyrles Lane

A development appraisal in accordance with planning approval had been prepared by the external consultants and would be submitted to the Cabinet at their meeting on the 1 December 2016. Members of the Cabinet would be asked to determine how the site would be subsequently marketed.

(4) St John's Road

The draft documentation was nearing completion and it was hoped a full report would be available at the next meeting.

(5) North Weald Airfield

Due to changes in procurement legislation, it would no longer be possible to seek to obtain an operational partner on a "concessionary contract" basis. A full OJEU process will need to be followed as per other major service contracts. Officer capacity was not available at this time to take the procurement forward but should commence early in the New Year. Short term opportunities to increase income for the Council are still being maintained.

The new market operator, Saunders Markets were trading well with many more stalls and trade had significantly increased. The Council were pleased with the growth of the market and the increased visitors attending.

Councillor Mohindra commented on the positive progress the new market operator had made in building up the market at North Weald by attracting more stall holders and visitors to the market.

Councillor Waller referred to the delay in the procurement for an Operational Partner at North Weald Airfield. He stated that local residents and tenants of the airfield were worried about the uncertainty of the airfield and it would be good to resolve the uncertainty and make a clear way forward.

Councillor Grigg advised that with the Council's other developments that were in hand there was not enough staff capacity to deal with the procurement and it was hoped that it would commence early in the New Year.

(6) Site of Former Public House – Winston Churchill

The developers of the site Higgins were on track to complete the development by July 2017. The Estates team would look to start marketing the the ground floor retail space early in 2017.

(7) Ongar Academy

The Council's landholding interest in this site had now been disposed of so there would be no further updates.

(8) Townmead Depot

There were no further updates at this time.

(9) Hillhouse Development

There were no further updates at this time.

RECOMMENDED:

That the Cabinet Committee noted the progress on the Council's Asset Management and Development Projects.

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 is a monitoring report is for information.

25. EPPING FOREST SHOPPING PARK - PROGRESS REPORT

The Council's Asset Management Development Consultant Mr C Pasterfield, presented a report on the current progress with regard to the development of the Epping Forest Shopping Park. Mr Pasterfield was accompanied by Mr A Charalambous of White, Young and Green, the Council's appointed consultants for the management of the shopping park and the highway works related to the development of the shopping park, pursuant to Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980.

Mr Charalambous advised the Cabinet Committee that earlier that day there had been two site progress meetings, one for the shopping park that he had attended and one for the highways development that his colleague Mr T McLaughlin had attended.

Epping Forest Shopping Park

The date of possession of the shopping park was scheduled for the 26 September 2017 although the contract completion date would be 19 June 2017. There would be hand over phases for the shopping park the units would be handed over approximately 4-5 weeks before the 19 June to accommodate the time scales for the unit fit outs. Some tenants would need only 4-5 weeks whilst other more complex fit outs would need 12-13 weeks to complete. Currently a draft timetable was being prepared and it was envisaged that some units would be open for trading before others.

The Contractors had no major issues and were liaising with the tenants to capture their requirements and planning ahead. The demolition of buildings on the site, stabilisation and ground levelling was almost complete.

Highways Works

The programme of works would be reviewed and aligned to coincide with the completion of the shopping park. The main delay had been with Essex County Council not allowing a sufficient licence to work on the carriageway, this had now been resolved and work had commenced on the highways work. The main focus was concerning the verge areas and widening of the carriageway, there would be no disruption to the carriageway before Christmas.

Councillor Mohindra asked if the completion date was still on track for the shopping park to open in August 2017.

Mr C Pasterfield advised that the main completion contract date was 19 June 2017 but this was not the date the shopping park would open for trading. The tenants

would then have to fit our their units and will be driven by the tenants when they were ready to open. An official opening would be towards the Christmas 2017 period when 80-90% of the shopping park was open.

Councillor Waller asked where the report was, as referenced on page 22 of the agenda, item 8, a report to be considered in Part II due to the commercial sensitivity of some of its content.

The Chairman advised that a report had not been provided as there were no sufficient changes in the tenant situation. When the main report was undertaken it was thought, at that time, a Part II report would be required but there had been no changes since the last meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the current progress report on the development of the new Epping Forest Shopping Park be noted.

REASONS FOR DECISION:

To comply with the previous request of the Cabinet Committee to monitor the development of the Council's property assets and in particular that it receive regular detailed reports on progress with regard to the development of the Epping Forest Shopping Park.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED:

None, as the progress report was submitted at the specific request of the Cabinet Committee.

26. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

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

27. 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