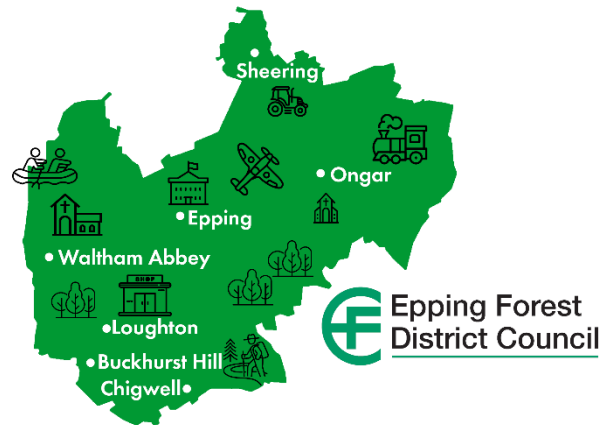


Your Epping Forest

Our Plan 2023 – 2027



Add logos as appropriate

Contents

1. Introduction – Our commitment to you	2
2. Our Values and Behaviours	3
Why are we here?.....	3
What we do.....	3
How will we do it?	3
3. Our Key Objectives	5
Stronger Communities	6
Stronger Place	7
Stronger Council	8
4. Delivering our plan	9
Public Sector Partners	9
Voluntary Sector Partners.....	10
Commercial Partners	10
Harlow and Gilston Garden Town.....	10
Advocate for our Community	11
5. Objective Key Results - OKRs	12

[1. Introduction – Our commitment to you](#)

[2. Our Values and Behaviours](#)

[3. Our Key Objectives](#)

[Stronger Communities](#)

[Stronger Place](#)

[Stronger Council](#)

[4. Delivering on our plan](#)

[5. Objective Key Results - OKRs](#)

1. Introduction – Our commitment to you

Councillor Chris Whitbread – Leader of Council

With its ancient forest, market towns and beautiful villages, Epping Forest is one of the most sought-after places in the UK. Close to London, linked by the Central Line and motorways, Epping Forest is the place to be for access to London and the southeast.

We have the forest and so much more. The royal history of Waltham Abbey stretches back over a thousand years. Chipping Ongar was the site of a medieval castle. Roman remains have been found in Chigwell. Loughton and Buckhurst Hill grew with the coming of the railways. Winston Churchill was our MP. Charles Dickens was inspired by our hospitality, and North Weald Airfield was our front-line in the Battle of Britain.

Steam trains run once again on the Epping and Ongar railway line. Families explore our industrial heritage at the Royal Gunpowder Mills. They walk, cycle, and relax beside the river Lee.

From the cafes and boutiques of Loughton and Buckhurst Hill to Epping Forest Shopping Park and the markets of Epping and North Weald, we are a thriving commercial and retail destination.

Epping Forest is the place to raise your family and grow your business.

The population of Epping Forest has increased by 8.3%, from around 124,700 in 2011 to 135,000 in 2021 (ONS Census). We are in demand, but the things that make our district special also bring challenges. The post-covid exodus from London has placed Epping Forest under pressure. As [Bloomberg News](#) reported, people are moving out of the city and Epping Forest is one of the most favoured destinations.

Leader of Council Foreword to follow

[1. Introduction – Our commitment to you](#)

[2. Our Values and Behaviours](#)

[3. Our Key Objectives](#)

[Stronger Communities](#)

[Stronger Place](#)

[Stronger Council](#)

[4. Delivering on our plan](#)

[5. Objective Key Results - OKRs](#)

2. Our Values and Behaviours

Epping Forest District Council - A good neighbour to our residents, a good provider to our customers, a good employer to our people.

Why are we here?

Epping Forest is our place of work. It is where we grow up and where we grow old. It is our family and our community – it is the people we serve, and it is our home.

- To lead and support our community.
- To help our residents build better lives through
 - equality of opportunity by recognising and treating everyone as individuals,
 - tailoring our services to people's individual needs,
 - helping everyone achieve their maximum potential.
- For people to create happy and healthy places to live, work and play.
- To speak on behalf of our district.

What we do

We work for our district, the people and places that make Epping Forest special and unique.

- Bringing all our skills, expertise, and resources together for the benefit of our community.
- Delivering excellent services as effectively and efficiently as possible.
- Making Epping Forest a better place than it is now.

How will we do it?

Working together with the people we serve.

- We will listen.
- Target our resources where they are needed most.
- Make a positive impact on people's lives by
 - making every penny count,
 - striving to improve services,
 - and delivering value for money.
- Working with our partners to focus on health, wellbeing, housing, life-expectancy and equality

These commitments are enshrined in our values and behaviours:

Trust - We will be open and honest with each other and our customers. We will treat everyone with respect and take responsibility for our actions.

Performance - We will take pride in our work and celebrate our achievements. We will learn from our mistakes and always do what we say we will do.

One Team - We will work together as One Council, supporting each other and our partners to achieve better results for everyone.

Customer - We will put our customers at the heart of everything we do, providing services that are tailored to the different needs of our communities.

Innovation - We will seek new ways of working to improve and change to meet new challenges.

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[1. Introduction – Our commitment to you](#)

[2. Our Values and Behaviours](#)

[3. Our Key Objectives](#)

[Stronger Communities](#)

[Stronger Place](#)

[Stronger Council](#)

[4. Delivering on our plan](#)

[5. Objective Key Results - OKRs](#)

3. Our Key Objectives

Council, Community, Place

In an unpredictable environment, Epping Forest District Council must maintain agile services and flexible policies to respond swiftly to the changing needs of our community.

[Stronger Communities](#)

[Stronger Place](#)

[Stronger Council](#)

[Stronger Communities](#)

[Stronger Place](#)

[Stronger Council](#)

Stronger Communities

We will safeguard vulnerable people. Our teams will support residents in need, providing support and equality of opportunity in a district that is safe for everyone.

- Consistent in our approach, we will strive to ensure all our residents can live in a safe and well-maintained environment.
- Break the cycle of domestic abuse by working in partnerships to reduce violence against women and girls.
- Use our place on the Epping Forest Community Safety Partnership with Essex Police, County Council, Fire and Rescue, and community groups, to deal with emerging local threats and issues.

We will work with our partners to achieve wellbeing and health equity for all our residents.

- Helping people to become healthier, we will focus on wider issues such as alcohol, smoking, obesity and social deprivation measured by the Robert Wood Johnson method*.
- Focussing our partnerships, resources and capacity in key locations, we will address individual needs to reduce health inequalities across the district.
- We will take a leading role in partnership projects to address strategic priorities in the Epping Forest Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2026:
 - Improve mental health and wellbeing
 - Reduce loneliness and social isolation
 - Increase physical activity
 - Support residents in relation to the rising cost of living
 - Tackle alcohol and substance misuses issues

We will listen to our communities and work with them when making decisions, developing policies, and designing services.

- We will coordinate our consultation and engagement to ensure residents' views shape the services we provide.
- Strengthen and empower individuals and communities to help themselves.
- Invite families living in council housing to help us develop a resident involvement strategy, with a range of options to support involvement in our decision making.

*The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation works to build a culture of health in society.

[Stronger Communities](#)

[Stronger Place](#)

[Stronger Council](#)

Stronger Place

We will strive to reduce pollution and protect our environment, encouraging jobs, housing and infrastructure that complements, rather than competes with the natural world.

- Investment and innovation to reduce energy consumption. Adopt cleaner forms of energy. Enable reduction of the council's carbon emissions to net-zero by 2030.
- Use regulatory and policy tools as well as our influence as a leader of place to encourage wider reductions in carbon emissions across the district.
- Reduce, reuse and recycle more of the waste generated within local homes and businesses.
- Work toward agreed strategic targets as set out in the Council's adopted sustainability guidance and as part of the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town partnership.

We will improve existing spaces and create new places for people to live, play, gain skills and do business.

- Providing places for new businesses to start and opportunities for existing businesses to grow.
- Maximising economic investment, potential and growth through partnerships and commercial opportunities.
- Providing affordable homes within sustainable developments, served by transport, leisure, health and other infrastructure to meet our residents' needs.
- Consultation and engagement with our residents in decisions affecting their place.

We will protect and enhance our green spaces for future generations while providing decent, safe homes to meet all our needs.

- Negotiate developer contributions towards green spaces and the environment as part of planning applications.
- Meet standards for good quality homes in sustainable locations enshrined within the Local Plan.
- Protect, maintain and enhance the ecology, landscape and heritage of our District.

[Stronger Communities](#)

[Stronger Place](#)

[Stronger Council](#)

Stronger Council

We will be a strong, well-managed, and efficient council in a post-pandemic world – adapting and responding to change in a district of opportunity.

- Maximising organisational capacity and capability:
 - Achieving our organisational goals through a high-performing, motivated workforce
 - Attracting, developing, and retaining great people
- Effective Leadership values and culture:
 - Developing people skills and behaviours to make EFDC an employer of choice
 - Developing our leadership to develop and inspire our people
- Employee experience:
 - Embracing change to support EFDC's cultural and digital evolution
 - Nurturing a culture of engagement and wellbeing

We will improve customer access to our services.

- Generating higher customer satisfaction through better accuracy and faster response.
- Making high-quality digital services the default choice for most residents, businesses, and visitors.
- Maintaining traditional channels and support for those customers who need them.
- Understanding and delivering better outcomes through data use, capture, and sharing according to our customers' needs.
- Providing digital solutions within a secure online environment, keeping us and our customers safe.

We will provide the highest standards of financial, competence management and governance.

- Ensuring value for money in the use of resources and delivery of services.
- Maintaining low Council Tax, embracing commercial opportunities, and achieving long-term financial sustainability.
- Optimising decision making and risk management through strong governance and best practice.
- Being accountable through transparent finance, governance and decision making.

[1. Introduction – Our commitment to you](#)

[2. Our Values and Behaviours](#)

[3. Our Key Objectives](#)

[Stronger Communities](#)

[Stronger Place](#)

[Stronger Council](#)

[4. Delivering on our plan](#)

[5. Objective Key Results - OKRs](#)

4. Delivering our plan

We deliver a huge range of services. We also work in partnerships for joined up services. Our list of partners is constantly growing and evolving.

Some of what we do

- Building Control
- Council Housing
- Private Sector Housing (landlords)
- Grants
- Waste and Recycling
- Planning applications, enforcement and the Local Plan
- Leisure, Arts, Culture, Health and Wellbeing
- Environmental Health
- Housing Benefits and Council Tax collection
- Community Safety
- Local Democracy and Elections
- Economic Development
- Commercial Property
- Carparks
- Grounds Maintenance (parks, verges, and public spaces)

Public Sector Partners

Central government plays an important role in the regulation of what we do. It also provides significant funding for local projects and services. Other significant partners include:

- Essex County Council
- Police Fire and Crime Commissioner, in association with
 - Essex Police Service
 - Essex Fire and Rescue
- National Health Services, in association with
 - The West Essex Integrated Care Board
- Town and Parish Councils
- Department of Work and Pensions
- Environment Agency
- Lea Valley Regional Park

- The Corporation of London
- Homes England
- The Innovation Corridor – linking London and Cambridge
- The DIZ – Digital Innovation Zone
- NEPP (North Essex Parking Partnership)

We represent the interests of our community further afield too. We talk with neighbouring London boroughs, the Mayor of London, Transport for London and any other organisations outside our district.

Voluntary Sector Partners

The voluntary sector makes a vital contribution to our community. Local organisations are coordinated and supported by Voluntary Action Epping Forest. The development of council-supported community hubs combine the expertise of the council with other government organisations such as the DWP, and voluntary organisations such as Epping Forest Food Bank and Citizens Advice.

Commercial Partners

We work with commercial partners to deliver many of our services. Major contractors include:

- Qualis - a group of private companies created by and wholly-owned by the Council.
- Biffa – household waste and recycling.
- Places Leisure – leisure centres and swimming pools.

Qualis is one of our most significant innovations. As the sole 'share-holder', Qualis gives Epping Forest District Council a competitive edge and access to private sector know-how.

Qualis is delivering major developments in Epping and Waltham Abbey. It is maintaining the Council's housing for more than 6,000 tenants and their families. Qualis is making commercial property investments to provide further long-term income returns to the Council. Money earned supports public services.

We also support services and keep Council Tax low through commercial partnerships at North Weald Airfield, Epping Forest Retail Park, industrial estates and retail units. We have innovated beyond traditional income. The arrival of Regus (office lettings) on the top floor of the Civic Offices has created another income stream.

We will continue to develop income from assets such as North Weald Airfield (Masterplan), to support front-line services and keep Council Tax low.

Harlow and Gilston Garden Town

Partnerships cross boundaries. Epping Forest District Council is working hard with other councils to meet the demand for new housing. 16,000 sustainable new homes are planned across Harlow and Gilston Garden Town by 2033, of which 3,900 of are proposed in the Epping Forest council area.

HGGT comprises:

- Epping Forest District Council
- Harlow District Council
- East Herts District Council
- Essex County Council
- Hertfordshire County Council

People need more than houses. HGGT is building sustainable communities. Transport, employment, schools and health services are all factored in. Infrastructure will include everything from water and electricity to broadband for environmentally friendly communities.

Advocate for our Community

Apart from Epping Forest District Council, many organisations provide local public services. For example

- Essex County Council
 - Highways
 - Social Services
 - School
- Utility Companies
 - Gas
 - Electricity
 - Water
 - Broadband
- Open Spaces
 - The Corporation of London – Epping Forest
 - Lee Valley Regional Park
- Public Transport
 - Transport for London buses and trains

We work to engage, influence, and encourage other organisations on behalf of our residents.

5. Objective Key Results - OKRs

[1. Introduction – Our commitment to you](#)

[2. Our Values and Behaviours](#)

[3. Our Key Objectives](#)

[Stronger Communities](#)

[Stronger Place](#)

[Stronger Council](#)

[4. Delivering on our plan](#)

[5. Objective Key Results - OKRs](#)

An agile organisation must be flexible to changing circumstances. It must also have targets and results to measure its performance.

Objective Key Results (OKRs) are part of our monitoring and review. They provide objective benchmarks alongside the Scrutiny and Select Committees which oversee, challenge, and hold to account the performance of the Cabinet and the Council.

OKRs need to reflect an agile working environment and changing circumstances. As such, OKRs may evolve, or be replaced as changing circumstances dictate. OKRs will be monitored and reported through quarterly statistics and annual performance review reports to members and the council website ([link to OKR webpage to be inserted here](#)).

New and revised OKRs are introduced from April 2023.