

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 25 July 2023

Subject: Place Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Nigel Bedford

Recommending:

That the report of the Place Portfolio Holder be noted.

1. Local Plan

Judicial Review Period

The Judicial Review Period elapsed on the 25th April without challenge so the Council have revoked the previously Local Plan documentation Including those policies of the Epping Forest District Local Plan adopted January 1998 that had not previously been replaced and Epping Forest District Local Plan Alterations adopted July 2006 and replace it with the new adopted Local Plan documentation (including the Policies Map, Adoption Statement, Sustainability Assessment Adoption Statement, Habitats Regulation Assessment Adoption Assessment) to form the Development Plan in line with the recommendation made at the March 2023 committee.

Business Continuity

The planning policy team is continuing to provide support to Development Management and Implementation teams through consultation responses to planning applications and pre application consultations as well as Planning Performance agreements (PPA) on larger and strategic allocated sites and strategic masterplan frameworks.

The Planning Policy team are also working closely with Natural England in updating the current Interim Air Pollution Mitigation Strategy to seek contribution from development that Impacts the Epping Forest SAC. They are also working alongside Essex CC as the responsible authority and other Essex Local Planning Authorities in developing a Biodiversity Net Gain Supplementary Planning Document which will identify how Local Planning Authorities will guide developers in securing at least 10% Biodiversity Net Gain in line with the North Weald Enhancement Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Monitoring

The Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) for 2021-22 has recently been published following member endorsement. The 2022-23 AMR has been delayed due to the significant time and resource required in the preparation and involvement in the Local Plan examination however, work is now being progressed and the 2022-23 AMR will be finalised later this year.

2. Harlow and Gilston Garden Town (HGGT)

- Full funding for a new, state-of-the-art Princess Alexandra Hospital has been confirmed by the Government's New Hospital Programme. The hospital will now progress plans to purchase the land for the new hospital in the preferred location within the East of Harlow masterplan area and finalise the Outline Business Case.
- The draft Latton Priory Strategic Masterplan Framework (SMF), a masterplan area which is within Epping Forest District and the Garden Town, is programmed for review for endorsement by Cabinet on 10 July 2023. This will be the first HGGT strategic masterplan to be endorsed.
- The Latton Priory Design Code is being undertaken in-house by the EFDC Implementation Team, funded as part of the Dept For Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Pathfinders Programme. The Design Code will be publicly consulted on in September 2023, after it has been to Cabinet.
- HGGT has been funded by DLUHC Local Digital Fund and PropTech Innovation Fund R3 to tackle challenges around consultation data and maximising value of digital engagement, across council boundaries.
- The draft HGGT Stewardship Charter, and draft East of Harlow Masterplanning Guidance SPD will be publicly consulted on from mid-July, seeking views from local communities and stakeholders on these two guidance documents.
- The HGGT Annual Report 2022-23 has been published online.

3. Sustainable Transport

Demand Responsive Transport (DaRT87)

Launched as a 'service of last resort' during Covid (Jan 21) following cessation of Arriva 87 service (ECC subsidy withdrawn due to a 60%+ collapse in usage). There were 200 registrations of interest via EFDC website form, but fewer than 10% of these ever took a trip, although a small number used it repeatedly.

DaRT87 is continuing as a skeleton service only for previous users and only when they wish to travel, pending Essex County Council reviewing their DRT strategy. In comparison, Digigo service around Braintree and parts of Uttlesford just saw its 20,000th passenger journey, which shows that with the right product, technology, marketing and service levels, DRT could be viable in the future here.

Public EV Charging – good progress in 2023

EFDC has moved from 7th to 5th in the Essex District 'league table' of public EV chargers with 39 chargers active at 1st April 23 following the successful launch of a further 4 Instavolt rapid charges at Ongar, Basons Lane car park and additional private sector 'destination' rapid chargers in recognition of our area's strong uptake of and interest in EVs.

The next DfT quarterly dataset is likely to show further improvement although Essex generally still remains well behind many comparable county areas in terms of public chargers per 100k population. EFDC has firm plans for at least another nine public chargers during the rest of 2023 (subject to approval and Epping, Cottis Lane multi-storey car park completion date).

Active Travel

Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for Waltham Abbey is being managed via ECC's team (but funded by our UK Shared Prosperity (UKSP) fund allocation). There has been some delays in UKSP release, but supplier/consultancy has been appointed, and project should commence this Summer.

Active Travel England (ATE) are also a new statutory consultee on major developments.

4. Climate Change

Climate Change Action Plan Review

Following the Climate Change Officer returning to work, a review of the Climate Change Action Plan has taken place and a summary document produced to record completed actions, actions that can now be seen as business as usual and actions to remove following investigation. The summary document also puts forward five priorities for the 2023/24 to drive forward climate action in the District.

The priority actions have been put forward from those in the original Climate Change Action Plan. These priorities were chosen as they are direct actions that the Council can take on its own assets, land and processes. They are actions that align closely with the Corporate Plan objectives and are expected to deliver higher carbon savings or enable greater carbon savings. The co-benefits of actions for the community and the Council were also considered, as well as actions that were deemed priorities by the public during the consultation period. The summary document and priority actions report was at Place Scrutiny Committee on 4th July for consideration.