

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 23 July 2024
Subject: Shaping Our District Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Ken Williamson

Recommending:

That the report of the Shaping Our District Portfolio Holder be noted.

1. Strategic Masterplans

The North Weald Bassett Strategic Masterplan Framework was endorsed by Cabinet in March 2024. An outline planning application for 780 of the homes provided for in the masterplan has now been received and is under consideration by officers. Discussions are underway with key technical stakeholders on the application including Essex County Council highways and National Highways in relation to capacity improvements to J7 of the M11.

The site developers and promoters of the South Epping Masterplan Area are engaged with Council officers on the development of a Strategic Masterplan and Design Code for the site. These documents have been approved by cabinet and are currently being consulted on. The consultation period will end on 25th July and the promotor wishes to submit for cabinet endorsement in September.

Masterplan discussions are under way with the two promoters of the West Ongar Concept Framework site. The programme is under review however a QRP has been held to scrutinise the scheme and the developer will submit revisions and review the public consultation strategy with Council officers in July.

The South Nazeing Concept Framework is under development, including a review by the Quality Review Panel. A parallel planning application has been received for the site, but its determination will be dependent on the finalisation and endorsement of the Concept Framework.

The developers of the Waltham Abbey North masterplan are engaged with officers, and we have recently provided comments on a draft Strategic Masterplan Framework document. We await updates on this document and will be discussion an appropriate time to target a cabinet decision on public consultation thereafter.

2. Sustainable Travel

- Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIP) are active at analysis and early consultation phase for Waltham Abbey and now Loughton/Chigwell/Buckhurst Hill – main public consultations on results/recommendations likely in September given Election.

- Using EFDC's UK Shared Prosperity Fund for the Waltham Abbey/Ninefields project appears to have encouraged ECC to fund the LCWIP covering SW of District.
- EFDC's Youth Council gave useful feedback on the LCWIPs at their inaugural meeting (Epping Forest Transport Action Group also participated).
- Since January, more than 1,000 rapid EV charging sessions per month have taken place in EFDC car parks (often with associated parking charge revenue).
- Still working with ECC on their county-wide Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) fund bid for a network of lower cost 'fast' chargers which will meet the needs of those with no off-street parking, smaller van fleets, minicabs/taxis, lower income areas etc.
- Quarterly Member meeting is being set up with TfL mainly to discuss Central Line performance and future service plans (ECC as Transport Authority need to be involved as some TfL/ECC bus issues may also be raised).

3. Climate Change

Private Housing Energy Efficiency Grants

Since January 2022 there have been several energy efficiency grant schemes run to improve the energy efficiency and carbon emissions of low income, private sector housing.

Finalised figures for the Sustainable Warmth grant scheme that ran from January 2022 to August 2023 have now been released. This scheme included the Local Authority Delivery 3 (LAD3) scheme for on gas housing as well as the Home Upgrade Grant 1 (HUG1) scheme for off gas housing.

The LAD3 scheme saw 46 energy efficiency measures installed across 25 homes with a total spend of £520,677. The most common measures installed were solid wall insulation (14 homes) and solar PV (7 homes).

In the Epping Forest District, there were two main projects under the HUG1 scheme, the first was a more general scheme where 11 measures were completed across 6 homes with a total spend of £91,154. The second scheme concentrated on park homes where 61 measures were completed across 47 homes with a total spend of £430,035. Measures installed were floor and wall insulation.

All the measures completed help to reduce energy bills for residents and improve the comfort of their homes while also cutting carbon emissions. This is especially true of the park homes project where inhabitants are largely elderly residents who are more likely to be vulnerable to the effects of the cold and energy bill rises.

Following on from the Sustainable Warmth Scheme is the Home Upgrade Grant 2 scheme (HUG2). The scheme is to improve the energy efficiency of low income, off gas properties and is running from September 2023 until March 2025. Marketing has included event attendance, mail outs, targeted social media posts, news releases and leaflets to key places in the district. So far referrals to the scheme have exceeded targets for 2023/24 but further marketing will go ahead to secure further referrals for 2024/25.

4. Development Management

Planning Appeals

Members are reminded that Planning Appeal details are published in the weekly Bulletin, and links to the appeal documents are now provided to enable members to view a relevant appeal by clicking the link.

Planning Skills Delivery Funding

Planning Services were awarded £36,000 in their bid for Planning Skills Delivery Funding from Central Government to assist in clearing a backlog of planning applications. This funding was utilised to bring in two short term contractors to help with the processing of planning applications, which has helped to reduce the level of backlog to date from 232 cases to 127 cases and has assisted the overall workload, morale and wellbeing of permanent staff.

Planning recruitment

As part of the agreed planning restructure a number of new and existing posts have been out for advertisement to supplement the existing teams. A number of internal promotions have been offered and interviews have taken place for all new and backfilled positions. Team Managers are in the process of deliberating and/or offering positions to a number of external candidates.

Enforcement action

The following enforcement notices have been issued:

Location: Forest Place, Roebuck Lane, Buckhurst Hill, Essex, IG7 5QL

Alleged breach of planning control: Breach of condition 1 on EPF/1610/18 in relation to the installation of a lift column with overrun.

Date issued: 06 June 2024

Date compliance due by: 12 July 2024

Appeal received: not at present

Enforcement Appeal Decisions

None in this period.