

## **Report to the Cabinet**

**Report reference:** C-010-2008/09

**Date of meeting:** 13 July 2009



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Portfolio:** Leader.

**Subject:** Forester Consultation and Local Strategic Partnership

**Responsible Officer:** Tom Carne (01992 564039).

**Democratic Services Officer:** Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

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### **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

- 1) To note the completion of the Forester public consultation as set out in the report to the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2 June;
- (2) To agree recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee including the:
  - (a) retention of the current A4 colour magazine format;
  - (b) greater use of imagery;
  - (c) shorter and more concise articles;
  - (d) retention of community news and features; and
  - (e) better front cover design; and
- (3) To authorise officer discussions with Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership to explore options for the use of the Forester in enhancing public awareness of the work of the LSP.
- (4) To undertake a review of these recommendations after one year.

### **Executive Summary:**

Forester is the residents' magazine produced by Epping Forest District Council four times per year. New arrangements have been implemented for delivery to all households and businesses within the district following the transfer of the work from Royal Mail to D2D, a private distribution company. The second delivery under the new arrangements will be completed in July. Following the conclusion of public consultation, Cabinet is being asked to endorse recommendations as agreed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee and proposals to open discussion with the Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership to explore the use of Forester as a platform for raising public awareness of the LSP.

### **Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

To endorse the views of Overview and Scrutiny.

### **Other Options for Action:**

To ask Overview and Scrutiny to reconsider its recommendations to endorse the findings of the public consultation exercise on the Forester.

That Overview and Scrutiny reconsider its recommendation that officers be authorised to enter into discussion with Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership regarding the potential use of the Forester as a means of raising public awareness of the LSP.

### **Report:**

1. As part of the terms of reference of the Customer Transformation Task and Finish Panel, officers carried out a public consultation exercise to gauge public satisfaction with the Forester magazine. Details of the survey findings were reported to the meeting of Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 2 June 2009. Members noted the positive outcome of the consultation and the strong public preference for the retention of the Forester in the current magazine format. Members also noted strong public satisfaction levels expressed through the qualitative survey work and expressed through Focus Groups.

2. Members also noted the public preference for a mix of council and community orientated articles, along with suggestions for greater use of imagery and photography.

3. Subsequent to the conclusion of the public consultation, officers have been asked to consider ways in which public awareness of Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) could be enhanced. Overview and Scrutiny Committee members were asked to express a view on whether officers should approach the LSP with the view to greater use of the Forester as a platform for LSP news. Members indicated that subject to the retention of editorial control and the Forester clearly remaining primarily a council publication, officers should explore the opportunities for greater use of the Forester by the LSP.

4. Subject to the approval and implementation of recommendations above and the outcome of discussions with the LSP, it is proposed to conduct a review of the changes to The Forester after one year.

### **Resource Implications:**

It is not intended to seek any additional District Council funding above current levels to support the production costs of the Forester or subsidise the LSP. Any costs associated with additional content produced on behalf of the LSP would be met from direct contributions from the partner agencies.

### **Legal and Governance Implications:**

Nil.

### **Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

Forester is printed from sustainable sources of paper produced under ISO 14 001.

### **Consultation Undertaken:**

Forester Public Consultation.

**Background Papers:**

Report to Overview & Scrutiny Committee 2 June 2009.

Report and Analysis of Forester Consultation – Members Room.

**Impact Assessments:**

Forester is delivered to all households with the Epping Forest District. By raising awareness, it enables greater access and take-up of council services, promotes a common community identity and cohesion. Forester publicises the work of elected members, publicising significant policy decisions and actions, and enhancing local democratic accountability. Forester is available in accessible formats including Large Print, Braille, Audio Tape and online with appropriate accessibility software at [www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk) .

Risk Management of the Forester involves careful checking to ensure accuracy of information prior to publication. The magazine must remain politically neutral and reflect the diverse social and economic nature of the district. Forester publication is suspended in the six week 'Purdah' Period preceding elections.