

## ***Report to the Finance & Performance Management Cabinet Committee***



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Report reference: FPM-016-2009/10**  
**Date of meeting: 23 November 2009**

**Portfolio: Performance Management/Finance and Economic Development**

**Subject: Report of the Joint Member & Officer 2010/11 Budget Working Group.**

**Responsible Officer: Bob Palmer (01992 564279)**

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

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

- (1) To consider the areas for review identified by the Working Group and where appropriate request the relevant Portfolio Holders and Chief Officers to commence the reviews; and**
- (2) To determine the frequency when update reports on the reviews are required.**

### **Executive Summary:**

At the meeting of this Committee on 5 October it was decided that a joint Officer and Member Working Group be established to identify areas for review and ensure that resources were allocated in line with the key Cabinet priorities. This was endorsed by Cabinet on 12 October.

The Working Group met on 5 November and considered a number of areas. It was decided that some of these were not appropriate to pursue at this time but a number of reviews were identified. It is not intended that the items set out in the body of the report are an exhaustive or definitive list and Members and Chief Officers are invited to identify any additional areas that might provide net savings.

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

To focus available resources on reviewing key areas to produce the net savings required in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

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

Members may identify other areas that they feel could provide greater net savings or that are a higher priority for review.

### **Report:**

1. On 5 October this Committee created a Working Group comprising the Leader, the Finance and Economic Development Portfolio Holder, the Performance Management Portfolio Holder, the Deputy Chief Executive and the Director of Finance and ICT. The Working Group was asked to identify areas for review and ensure that resources were allocated in line with the

key Cabinet priorities. The formation of the Working Group was endorsed by Cabinet on 12 October.

2. Due to various leave commitments it was not possible for the Working Group to meet until 5 November. A wide ranging discussion took place and a number of areas were identified as either suitable for review or not currently in need of further examination.

### Areas Suitable for Review

3. *Forester* – it was felt that the current exercise to tender for printing and distribution could be expanded to cover the potential outsourcing of aspects of the editorial role and greater input from the Local Strategic Partnership. A saving of £40,000 was identified as a target with the review to be led by the Deputy Chief Executive and the Leader.

4. *Members* – concern was expressed about the growth in the number of meetings and whether 58 remained an appropriate number of Members for the Council. A target saving was not identified and it was acknowledged that a review to reduce the number of Members might take a number of years to complete. However, a review was felt necessary and, as he has previously examined this issue, the Assistant to the Chief Executive is to be invited to lead the review with the Leader.

5. *Police Community Support Officers* - the Council entered into the commitment to jointly fund 6 PCSOs prior to the heavy investment in the Safer, Cleaner, Greener initiative and the expansion of the Safer Communities Team. It was felt appropriate that the funding for the PCSOs should be negotiated down in a tapered way over a period of time. The appropriate Chief Officer and Portfolio Holder to take this forward are the Director of Environment and Street Scene and the Community Safety and Transport Portfolio Holder.

6. *Insurance* – a tendering exercise is currently underway as a collaborative procurement with 8 other authorities. This is being co-ordinated by the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership and a target saving of £100,000 has been identified (with a minimum of £60,000 of the saving relating to the General Fund). This work is being led by the Director of Finance and ICT and the Performance Management Portfolio Holder.

7. *Voluntary Sector* – it was felt that the grants to Voluntary Action Epping Forest, Citizen's Advice Bureau and the women's refuge should be protected but at their current level. The area suitable for review here is the process by which grants are administered as it was felt that this could be streamlined. The appropriate people for this review are the Assistant to the Chief Executive and the Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder.

8. *Information Centre* – there was no desire to withdraw services from remote locations but it was felt that a review could consider the appropriateness of current locations. Specifically, a review considering the relocation of the Information Centre in Waltham Abbey from the Town Hall to the Museum or Library might be beneficial. This review should be conducted by the Deputy Chief Executive and the Leader.

9. *Print/Messenger Service* – concern over value for money had been highlighted by an Internal Audit report. It was felt that a review should be conducted by the Director of Corporate Support Services and the Performance Management Portfolio Holder to examine the greater use of electronic access and possible outsourcing.

10. *Secretarial Bureau/Land Charges* – Members felt a review covering efficiency and value for money should be conducted by the Director of Corporate Support Services and the Performance Management Portfolio Holder.

11. *Legal Services* – the Group were unsure why the Council were not participating in the shared services arrangements involving Essex County Council and most other districts in Essex. A review was felt appropriate to cover working with this shared service and examining other models of service delivery. This review should be led by the Director of Corporate Support Services and the Legal and Estates Portfolio Holder.

12. *Building Control* – the Planning Services Standing Scrutiny Panel have already initiated a review to consider a shared service and alternative models of service delivery. The need for this review was agreed and it is suggested that this Committee keeps the work of the Standing Scrutiny Panel under review.

13. *Grounds Maintenance/Country Care/Nursery* – it was felt that a review of these areas should concentrate on the combining of functions/management, ensuring full cost recovery from the Housing Revenue Account and Essex County Council and evaluating the direct purchasing of plant stock. This review should be led by the Director of Environment and Street Scene and the Environment Portfolio Holder.

14. *Leisure and Young People* – spending on Community Arts, the Museum, Sports Development and Community Development is currently £1.1 million. A target saving of £100,000 was identified from these areas, with the review to be led by the Deputy Chief Executive and the Leisure and Wellbeing Portfolio Holder.

15. *Depot Rationalisation/Property Development* – the Working Group noted the work of the officer asset management group and the projects underway to either reduce costs or create new income streams. It is suggested that this Committee keeps the work of the asset management group under review.

#### Areas not currently for further review

16. *Car Parking Charges* – Members felt that car parking charges should again be frozen. However, this should only be the case for 2010/11 and a review should be considered as part of next year's budget process.

17. *Waltham Abbey Cash Office* – it was felt that this facility was valued by the local community and should not be subjected to a review at this time.

18. *Cost of Senior Management* – given the short period of time since the last restructure it was not felt appropriate to conduct another review at this time.

#### Other Suggestions

19. The Working Group felt that it was important that the items set out above should not be seen as an exhaustive or definitive list and that both Members and officers should be invited to come forward with any additional suggestions they may have.

#### **Resource Implications:**

The Medium Term Financial Strategy established savings targets of £300,000 for 2010/11, £600,000 for 2011/12, £400,000 for 2012/13 and £200,000 for 2013/14. In order to achieve the savings required reviews will have to be undertaken in a number of areas. The resource implications of each review will not become clear until additional work has been performed.

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

Each review is likely to have different implications and the lead officers will need to be mindful

of these.

**Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

Some of the reviews will have environmental implications and lead officers will need to be mindful of these.

**Consultation Undertaken:**

None.

**Background Papers:**

Previous reports to this Committee.

**Impact Assessments:**

Risk Management

If savings reviews are not concentrated on key areas and initiated soon the Council may find it difficult to achieve the savings targets set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Lead officers will need to be mindful of the risks associated with their reviews.

Equality and Diversity:

Did the initial assessment of the proposals contained in this report for relevance to the Council's general equality duties; reveal any potentially adverse equality implications? YES

Where equality implications were identified through the initial assessment process, has a formal Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? Not fully

What equality implications were identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process?

The savings on community and cultural services may impact adversely on their target groups of the elderly, young people and people with disabilities.

A cap on voluntary sector grants will affect the level of service available to be provided by the Woman's Refuge, CAB Advisory Services and the work of the Voluntary Sector generally.

How have the equality implications identified through the Equality Impact Assessment been addressed in this report in order to avoid discrimination against any particular group?

Will be considered in greater detail as part of the review.