

## **Report to the Cabinet**

**Report Reference:** C-077-2009/10  
**Date of Meeting:** 1 February 2010



**Portfolio:** Leader  
**Subject:** Forward Planning Staffing Resources.  
**Responsible Officer:** Kassandra Polyzoides (01992 564119).  
**Democratic Services Officer:** Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

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

- (1) To create a two year fixed term Planning Administrative Technical Officer post, in place of the existing recently vacated temporary contract administrative post, at an estimated cost in the sum of £21,250 per annum;**
- (2) To create a two year fixed term Senior Planning/Consultation Officer post to assist in the expedient delivery of the EFDC core strategy and Local Development Framework, at an estimated cost in the sum of £38,930 per annum;**
- (3) To fund the creation of these posts via:**
  - (a) the deletion of the Rural Tourism Officer post and a bid for District Development Funding in the sum of £30,180 for 2010/11; and**
  - (b) a bid for District Development Funding in the sum of £60,180 in 2011/12; and**
- (4) To note that the funding bids in recommendation (3) above can be covered by the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Housing Planning Delivery Grant (10/11 and 11/12)**

### **Executive Summary:**

The proposals seek to utilise existing underspend and additional DDF contributions for the creation of two posts within the forward planning team. The aim is to ensure the efficient delivery of the Local Development Framework and of the internal and external stakeholder consultation process. Securing additional planning and administrative expertise and support is necessary for the delivery of the LDF and continuing to provide robust customer service.

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

Lack of appropriate resources could lead to significant delays in the delivery of the Local Development Framework. The majority of evidence reports are expected early in the new year and further evidence base reports are being prepared, which require increasing and ongoing technical/planning knowledge. The LDF consultation stages are going to require consultation expertise to ensure the timely and efficient engagement and provision of feedback and information to all stakeholders. Lack of structure to the consultation process could lead to delays in programme delivery and wider public disappointment.

## **Other Options for Action:**

Not to make any changes to the establishment.

## **Report:**

1. Forward planning have begun preparing the Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework. The key function of the Core Strategy will be to set the development strategy for the district up to 2031 and is a major corporate task. A review of the Council's Local Plan policies as part of the development of the Core Strategy will also require further and ongoing planning officer support.
2. Experience from the delivery of the Gypsy & Traveller DPD has highlighted that the team requires ongoing planning technical support and public consultation/participation and engagement expertise. It is therefore important that recruitment to these posts is addressed early to ensure the timely delivery of all key pieces of work associated with the LDF.
3. In discussions Cabinet members have already acknowledged that additional support may be required for the forward planning team for the delivery of the LDF. It was agreed that if an assessment was made that indicated that additional support was justified, that officers would bring the matter to the attention of senior managers, the Chief Executive and Members.
4. An assessment of tasks and existing skill base within the forward planning team have indicated the need for the following two posts.

### Planning Administrative Technical Officer post

5. Until recently this post was funded via the LDF budget as a temporary post carrying charges for agency fees. There have been two individuals sequentially covering this post within the last 12 months. The latest post holder has recently acquired a permanent position elsewhere within the Council.
6. This post is one of two providing administrative and technical support within the team. Both posts were integral in responding to public requests in relation to the Gypsy and Traveller consultation. It is foreseen that the delivery of the LDF will also lead to substantial public requests for feedback and information. The administrative technical officer role will continue to provide the needed administrative/technical functions within forward planning and for the preparation of the Local Strategic Partnership's (LSP) Sustainable Community Strategy. The position has also provided ad hoc assistance to the Forward Planning Manager in relation to other Gypsy and Traveller related items and to the Economic Development Officer. It is foreseen that technical support at this level, will be required within the team for at least an additional two year period.
7. A fixed term post would provide the team with more security, given the short notice period associated with temporary posts. This would help ensure that the Council is not left vulnerable and lacking appropriate staff cover, especially during periods of high workload, as anticipated over the next two years.

### Senior Planning/Consultation Officer

8. There are a number of key consultation tasks that EFDC will be required to deliver as part of the LDF process. The officer would be in charge of the Statement for Community Involvement (SCI) and the emerging LDF consultation strategy/plan. The SCI is a statutory document identifying how and when the public are engaged and is key to the successful

delivery of this piece of work. The officer will also work closely with EFDC's PR/consultation team for the duration of the delivery of the LDF, engaging both internal and external stakeholders in the process. Key tasks and associated timescales are currently anticipated as follows:

- (i) Issues and Options consultation June 2010;
- (ii) Preferred options consultation March/April 2011; and
- (iii) Pre-submission consultation Jan 2012.

9. The delivery of the Gypsy & Traveller DPD has revealed the need for community consultation expertise in organising and managing intensive consultation periods. This post will also provide additional technical planning skills to ensure the timely delivery of the Core Strategy and other Development Plan Documents as needed.

10. In order to accommodate any new members of staff within forward planning, office space layout will need to be reviewed and alterations made. Capital from the aforementioned Communities and Local Government (CLG) Housing Planning Deliver Grant could be a potential source of funding for this work.

**Resource Implications:**

The current costs associated with the temporary planning administrative officer post are approximately £14k per annum. This cost is currently being paid for via the LDF budget; the fixed term post will be at a cost of £21,250 per annum.

There are £30k worth of savings from the Rural Tourism officer post, should Members agree to item (3) under 'Recommendations', an additional £30,180 contribution is requested to fund both posts, for year one (10/11) as indicated in the table below. The Rural Tourism post was created for the purpose of delivering the 'beyond suburbia' project, which has not taken place.

There is an indication that a Housing Planning Delivery Grant in the region of £82K will become available to EFDC Planning for 2010/11, with an additional amount in the same region, becoming available for 2011/12. Although one third of that will need to be put to capital, the remainder could cover staffing costs requested in this report for both years 10/11 and 11/12.

<b>Savings</b>	<b>10/11</b>	<b>11/12</b>	<b>Additions</b>	<b>10/11</b>	<b>11/12</b>
Deleted Rural Tourism officer post	£30,000	0	Senior Planning Officer	£38,930	£38,930
			Administration assistant post	£21, 250	£21, 250
<b>Total</b>	<b>£30,000</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>£60,180</b>	<b>£60,180</b>
<b>Net request</b>				<b>£30,180</b>	<b>£60,180</b>

**Legal and Governance Implications:**

N/A.

**Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

Both these posts will work toward achieving key strategic objectives of the Council,

specifically in the creation of policies that will aim to create a safer, cleaner and greener District.

**Consultation Undertaken:**

None.

**Background Papers:**

N/A

**Impact Assessments:**

Risk Management

The Council has a statutory duty to ensure the delivery of the District's Local Development Framework.

Equality and Diversity:

It is not considered that there are any specific equalities issues arising from having these posts. Recruitment to these posts will take place in accordance to EFDC HR procedures and in line with the Council's Equal Opportunities in Employment policies.

*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?* No

*Where equality implications were identified through the initial assessment process, has a formal Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken?* No

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

None.

*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?*

N/A.