

Report to the Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee



Report reference: LDF-008-2010/11
Date of meeting: 14 Sept 2010

Epping Forest District Council

Portfolio: Leader
Subject: Local Investment Plan
Responsible Officer: Kassandra Polyzoides (01992 564119).
Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) To consider and endorse the Draft Local Investment Plan Evidence Document 2010-2015 for submission/inclusion within the Joint Investment Plan for Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford Districts.

Executive Summary:

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) requires each Council to submit a Local Investment Plan (LIP), or join together with nearby authorities to submit a Joint Investment Plan (JIP), in order to gain funding for affordable housing in the next 5 year period.

Senior officers from Planning & Economic Development, Housing, and Estates have worked together to prepare a draft Evidence Base document, to feed into a proposed Joint Investment Plan to cover Epping Forest District, Harlow and Uttlesford Councils. The timescales for preparation have meant that consultation with Members has not been possible before the draft had to be submitted to the HCA (25th August). At the time of writing, Cabinet Members are due to discuss the draft at an informal meeting on Friday 27th August, and a joint workshop at which the three Councils will formulate the Joint Investment Plan, using the evidence documents prepared individually, has been scheduled for Monday 6th September.

The draft document prepared by officers gives background information on the District, the particular challenges it faces (through deprivation, unemployment etc.), and details of the investment priorities for the next 5 years. Most of the sites put forward in the document involve affordable housing for which the Council is seeking HCA funding. Some sites also involve retail, business and leisure elements. The sites put forward are split into sections relating to their status, as some have planning permission, some do not, and some are only 'under consideration'. Where possible the funding being sought has been quantified.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

It is essential that the Council submit evidence into the Joint Investment Plan, so that funding for affordable housing on sites in the District, for the next 5 year period, can be allocated by the HCA.

Other Options for Action:

Members of LDF Cabinet Committee could choose not to endorse the document for

submission into the Joint Local Investment Plan, however, this risks the level of funding for affordable housing in the District in the next 5 years being lower than required. Also, if the Council does not feed into the Joint Investment Plan sufficiently, the Plan could focus more on the requirements of Harlow and Uttlesford Councils, to the detriment of Epping Forest District's needs.

Report:

Background

1. The national Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) is now the sole body through which funding will be provided for affordable housing. The HCA requires that each Council submit a Local Investment Plan (LIP), or join together with other nearby authorities to submit a Joint Investment Plan (JIP). At present it is understood that this Council will formulate a Joint Investment Plan with Harlow and Uttlesford Councils.

2. A Local Investment Plan should outline priorities for investment in the District (primarily for affordable housing) giving evidence as to why particular developments are prioritised, for example, a corporate priority, or a high level of deprivation in the local area. The HCA will now only provide capital investment for projects which are detailed in the Local Investment Plan.

Timescales

3. The HCA required the Council to submit its part of the evidence/content for the Joint Investment Plan by the 25th August 2010. The draft evidence document was duly submitted, but it was made clear that Members had not yet been able to comment on it formally, and it was possible/likely that amendments would be made. The HCA accepted this. Indeed the HCA have stated that the Plan can be updated as often as is required, which will be necessary once new housing sites are identified through the emerging Local Development Framework.

4. At the time of writing this report, an informal meeting of Cabinet Members has been scheduled for Friday 27 August. Cabinet Members will be able to comment on the draft document at this meeting, and it is anticipated that any amendments required will be made in time for a joint HCA workshop, which is scheduled for the 6th of September. (The HCA set this date for the workshop so that all LIPs/JIPs would be in place before the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in October 2010. The CSR will necessarily dictate the total funding 'pot' which the HCA have to work with).

5. It is anticipated that at this workshop, which is to be facilitated/run by the HCA, the three Councils will share their evidence and form a proposed Joint Investment Plan. An oral update on these events can be given to Members at the meeting on the 14th of September.

The draft document

6. The draft EFDC Local Investment Plan Evidence Base document (and Appendices document) under consideration were prepared by officers from Planning & Economic Development, Housing, and Estates. Part of the content was provided by existing Council documents, such as 'Shaping the Future' (the District-wide data profile), the Ward Profiles Comparison document, and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

7. The draft document was designed to meet the HCA's requirements, set out in its 'Local Investment Plans – Core Elements' publication (2010). It is thus presented in the following sections:

- (a) *Local Context*: giving broad information on: the District's location, demographics, housing, economy, environment and general issues of deprivation;
- (b) *Corporate Priorities*: stating the Council's formal priorities, expressed through the Corporate Plan and Cabinet Key Objectives;
- (c) *Community Visioning*: giving details of our local community's priorities, highlighted by consultation responses to the draft Sustainable Community Strategy and the former Place Survey;
- (d) *Housing*: giving detailed information on previous housing completion rates, the local housing market, provision of new affordable housing, the Council's housing register, and homelessness etc;
- (e) *Strategic Challenges*: giving a detailed breakdown of deprivation in the District, and data on housing tenure, job seekers allowance claimants and crime/anti-social behaviour;
- (f) *SWOT analysis*: a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of the District as a whole; and
- (g) *Current Capital Investment Priorities*: detailing investment priorities identified within the District, on specific sites, in order to seek funding from the HCA.

8. The last section, part (g) above, contains the detailed information on capital investment funding sought from the HCA. (Sites for which funding has already been allocated are included for information, to provide a full record of the Council's priorities for development). The sites are mainly those which will provide affordable housing, but some also include, for example, retail, leisure, or business provision. The sites are separated into the following sub-categories:

- (i) *Schemes with planning permission - grant funding still required*: e.g. Jennikings Nursery, Manor Road, Chigwell;
- (ii) *Schemes without planning permission – grant funding still required*: e.g. Leader Lodge, North Weald;
- (iii) *Schemes with grant funding already allocated – works not yet commenced*: e.g. Epping Forest College (Phase 2);
- (iv) *Schemes with grant funding already allocated – works commenced*: e.g. Acres Avenue, Ongar;
- (v) *Potential schemes with Development Brief in existence/in development*: the Broadway area in Loughton Broadway, and the St John's Road area in Epping; and
- (vi) *Other potential developments, under consideration for the future*: these are more speculative sites under consideration, including the Depot/T11 site in Langston Road, the Town Mead Depot in Waltham Abbey, and the Church Hill car park in Loughton.

Resource Implications:

The draft document was prepared internally by officers, within existing budgets.

Legal and Governance Implications:

The preparation of the Local Investment Plan, or contribution into the Joint Investment Plan supports the following corporate objectives, as detailed below:

- Cabinet Key Objective 4, as it will enable the provision of additional affordable housing on the market
- Cabinet Key Objective 5, as it will support further business and retail provision, helping to mitigate current economic conditions
- Cabinet Key Objective 6, as it will (in future) provide funding for development to be identified through the emerging Local Development Framework Core Strategy
- Cabinet Key Objective 12, as it considers many sites in the Council's ownership for development

- Corporate Plan Action GU1, as it will enable further homes to be provided in the District, in sustainable locations
- Corporate Plan Action GU4, as it will (in future) provide funding for development to be identified through the emerging Local Development Framework
- Corporate Plan Action HN1, as it will help to increase the amount of affordable housing in the District
- Corporate Plan Action HN2, as it will help to provide housing which is more accessible to those with lower incomes, thus helping to prevent homelessness
- Corporate Plan Action EP2, as it includes proposals for housing and regeneration in and around the area of The Broadway in Loughton Broadway, enhancing and improving the area
- Corporate Plan Action EP5, as many of the proposals are within areas of high deprivation, thus helping the Council to respond to issues of deprivation

Although there is no specific legislation requiring the LIP/JIP to be prepared, it is required by the Homes and Communities Agency, whose responsibilities are set out in the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. The LIP/JIP will feed into the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review in October 2010. The outcome of this Spending Review will identify future investment streams for the HCA, which will be aligned with the HCA priority areas of 'New Housing Supply; Place Making and Regeneration; and Existing Stock'.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

There are no specific implications relating to the Safer, Cleaner, Greener Strategy. However, the preparation of a Local Investment Plan, or contribution into a Joint Investment Plan, accords with the general principle of sustainable development, as it helps to direct and support development through the Local Development Framework.

Consultation Undertaken:

Senior officers from Planning & Economic Development, Housing, and Estates have contributed to, and been consulted on, the draft document. Cabinet Members will be able to comment on the draft at the informal meeting scheduled for Friday 27th August. Corporate Managers will be able to comment on the draft at the meeting of CEF on Wednesday the 1st September.

Background Papers:

Draft Local Investment Plan Evidence Document 2010-2015

Draft Local Investment Plan Evidence Document 2010-2015 – Appendices

'Local Investment Plans – Core Elements' (Homes & Communities Agency, 2010)

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

If the Council does not submit a Local Investment Plan, or does not take part in a Joint Investment Plan with Harlow and Uttlesford Councils, the Council could potentially miss out on enough/any funding from the Homes and Communities Agency for affordable housing in the next 5 year period.

Furthermore, if a Joint Investment Plan (JIP) for the three Councils does go ahead, and the Council does not feed into this JIP sufficiently, it could focus more on the requirements of Harlow and Uttlesford Councils, to the detriment of Epping Forest District's own needs.

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? 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?

The preparation of the Local Investment Plan, or contribution into the Joint Investment Plan, has the potential to impact positively on equality issues, specifically under the 'socio-economic duty', as many of the areas being proposed for redevelopment, housing and regeneration etc., are among the most deprived in the District (under the 2007 Multiple Indices of Deprivation). Regeneration and redevelopment for housing and employment has the potential to improve the quality of life of people living and working in these areas, through access to more affordable housing, more jobs etc.

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?

The positive impact which could potentially arise is not limited to one particular group, but would affect all people living in, working in, and visiting the areas to be improved.