

**LOUGHTON HIGH ROAD
TOWN CENTRE PARTNERSHIP**
WORKING FOR THE PROSPERITY OF LOUGHTON HIGH ROAD

Please reply to the Chairman

Members of the Oversight and Scrutiny Committee
Epping Forest District Council

Dear Councillors,

Re: Town Centre Officer

It has come to my attention that Epping Forest District Council has decided to allow the contract for the TCO to expire in July, for financial reasons. I am shocked and extremely disappointed at this decision and I will comment on the reasons for my opinion.

Firstly, the position of TCO, since its inception as a result of the Section 106 agreement relating to Sainsbury's in Loughton, has been invaluable to Loughton High Road TCP (and other TCP's), despite the comings and goings of various personnel. Examples of this has been the establishment of the Howzat cricket festival, the forging of links with larger local businesses, the strong relationship with the local High Road churches, and the re-establishment of Christmas Lighting, to name but a few. The progress would definitely have been stronger and faster had we had a TCO in office all of the time, rather than intermittently. In fact, during the longish spell of not having had a TCO (before the arrival of Cathy MacBride), the morale and the activities of the TCP reached very low ebb.

Secondly, the arrival of Cathy has brought a new dimension to our activities. Strategic initiatives, invaluable professional guidance, a keen marketing eye, and a wealth of experience have been the hallmark of her tenure as TCO, and the Partnership is beginning to benefit from these attributes.

Thirdly, I am surprised that EFDC has chosen this moment to cancel this contract. Local shops and businesses will need more support, not less, during the dark days ahead. I understand that EFDC has to make some savings, but as far as I am aware they are in a much better financial position than many Local Authorities, and the position of TCO would seem to me to be both affordable and desirable.

Lastly, having praised both the position of TCO and the individual performance of Cathy MacBride let me say that the activities of the LHRTCP, and the support that we can give to the people and businesses in the High Road, will be seriously affected if this decision is allowed to stand.

I strongly recommend that this decision is urgently reviewed and reversed as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully,

Peter Sheen
Chairman

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