

Report to the Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Report reference: LDF-018-2010/11
Date of meeting: 15 March 2011

Portfolio: Leader

Subject: Local Development Framework – Budget Update

Responsible Officer: Ian White (01992 564066)

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) To note progress on the Local Development Framework; and**
- (2) To note the expenditure on preparing the Local Development Framework in this financial year to date, and the estimates for further expenditure over forthcoming financial years.**

Executive Summary:

The planning system is being changed by the Coalition Government. The New Homes Bonus has been introduced and, when the Decentralisation and Localism Bill is enacted, Regional Spatial Strategies and all their housing and employment land targets will be abolished. Other provisions of the Bill need to be further clarified. It is clear, however, that Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) will remain the key local planning policy documents for the foreseeable future, and local authorities are being urged and encouraged to continue their preparation.

£83,684 has been spent from the LDF Budget in this financial year to date, with a further £47,773 committed for the remainder of the financial year.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

This report is intended to update Members on the progress with the LDF, and expenditure against the LDF budget. No decisions are required at this stage.

Other Options for Action:

There are no other relevant options at this time.

Report:

1. It is a statutory requirement that all local planning authorities prepare a Local Development Framework (LDF), a key part of which is the Core Planning Strategy (CPS). The Committee has received regular reports on the preparation of evidence base documents, including the results of the Community Visioning consultation exercise. It is now intended to consult on Issues and Options (I & O) for the Core Planning Strategy in the summer of this year.

2. It is probable that formal abolition of the East of England Plan will take place during the period of preparation of the Core Planning Strategy, and the Council will need to be mindful of this to ensure that significant additional work is not created. Officers are in discussion with Harlow and East Herts staff to consider the options for determining future housing and employment needs because all the EEP targets will also be abolished. This is likely to require the commissioning of further work, but the intention will be to share costs between as many relevant authorities as possible. The figures are not critical for the I & O consultation, but they will certainly be needed for later stages of preparation of the CPS.

3. The coalition government expects there to be a focus on incorporating “localism” as a key part of preparing LDFs. The Decentralisation & Localism Bill is intended to bring about the necessary changes to the LDF system. While it is still not clear what these changes will entail, the possible implications were discussed at February’s Cabinet Committee. In some recent speeches Ministers have indicated that the LDF will remain the key planning policy document at district council level. There is still a need, therefore, to bring the Council’s policies up to date and to engage with the local community and key stakeholders whilst doing so. It is crucial therefore to continue with the preparation of the CPS while the further changes to the planning system are being introduced.

LDF Budget Summary

4. The original budget for the LDF was estimated in late 2007, and has been kept under periodic review since then. Previous reports have detailed the expenditure in financial years up to 2010/11. Details to accompany the summary given below are included at Appendix 1.

Table 1 : LDF Budget Summary (Figures correct as at 25/2/11)

	Available funds	Deductions
Total Allocation (Cabinet 17/12/2007)	<u>£1,413,000</u>	
Less capital		£30,000
Less Planning Delivery Grant 5 contribution		£70,000
2007/8 spend		£25,000
Available	<u>£1,288,000</u>	
Supplementary Estimate – Design brief work	£91,000	
Supplementary Estimate – G&T consultant	£19,200	
2008/9 spend		£222,000
Available	<u>£1,176,200</u>	
2009/10 spend		£205,000
Available	<u>£971,200</u>	
2010/11 spend to date		£83,684
2010/11 commitments		£47,773
2010/11 evidence base to be commissioned		£5,000
Available	<u>£834,743</u>	
2011/12 evidence base to be commissioned		£125,000
2011/12 “Issues & Options” consultation costs		£20,000
Available	<u>£689,743</u>	
2012/13 “draft Submission” consultation costs		£20,000
Programme Officer		£15,400
Available	<u>£654,343</u>	
2013/14 Examination in Public		£117,000
Programme Officer		£21,560
Available	<u>£515,783</u>	

5. It is shown above that there is a sum of £515,783 which is not currently allocated to a specific project. However, it will still be necessary to prepare a number of development plan documents to follow and add detail to the CPS. Given the uncertainty outlined above, it is not possible to set a timetable and therefore profile the expenditure which may be necessary at this time. Original figures estimated that further documents would cost the following amounts:

(a) Development Management DPD - £164,700;

(b) Site Allocations DPD - £263,600; and

(c) Area Action Plan(s), e.g. for urban extensions to Harlow or other settlements in the District - £157,600.

6. When the position is clearer on what will be required by the government, these estimates will need to be revisited. It is clear, however, that the DDF budget allocated to the LDF will need to be extended beyond the original time period given (up to year end 2011/12). A further report will be prepared on this matter at a later date.

Current Activity

7. Invitations to tender for a study of the Lea Valley Glasshouse Industry have been sent out, and officers hope to appoint consultants by early April. A final report is expected in early November, but the Cabinet Committee will receive progress reports at various stages.

8. Significant work is continuing on preparing the evidence base to support the preparation of the Core Planning Strategy. A list of studies which have been completed or are in progress is attached at Appendix 2.

9. There has been some suggestion that village or neighbourhood plans will be a key part of the LDF in future. Whilst it is intended that these will be primarily community documents, an element of support will be required from the LDF Team and the extent of this is not yet clear. The financial resources needed to support the preparation of such plans will also need to be incorporated into future budget reviews.

Resource Implications:

This report sets out expenditure against the previously agreed DDF allocated to preparation of the Local Development Framework.

Legal and Governance Implications:

No relevant implications

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

None relevant

Consultation Undertaken:

None

Background Papers:

Various previous committee reports.

No other external papers.

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

The preparation of the LDF has been identified as a key corporate objective, and it is important that this is properly resourced. The budget available for the preparation of the LDF is monitored regularly to ensure that best use is being made of available resources, particularly in a time during which significant change to the planning system is taking place.

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? N/A

What equality implications were identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process?
N/A.

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.