

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE

2010/11

FORWORD BY COUNCILLOR DIANA COLLINS

THE LEADER OF EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Epping Forest District Council aims to deliver excellent services to the local community whilst also achieving value for money. The economic downturn has meant us having to manage sustainable services within stringent budgets and the pressure on the finances will increase greatly in the years ahead. Nonetheless our achievements in 2010/11 indicate that we are more than ready to meet the challenges ahead.

Those challenges include a need to increase economy and efficiency by working more collaboratively with others. To that end, we have become members of the West Essex Councils' Alliance which also includes Harlow and Uttlesford Councils, and through which, we will promote and protect the interests of residents in the area concerned. We have also been involved in the formulation of a Joint Investment Plan for West Essex and, on a sub-regional basis, we became members of the new Essex/Kent/East Sussex Local Economic Partnership.

As part of our community leadership role, we remained active partners on One Epping Forest, the District's Local Strategic Partnership, and were pleased to endorse 'Putting Epping Forest First' the new sustainable Community Strategy setting out the plans and aspirations of the Partnership based on the priorities decided by local people. The Partnership held a Stakeholder Conference, in February 2011, hosted by Epping Forest College, at which the Right Honourable Eric Pickles, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, was the guest speaker and over 100 delegates from businesses, local authorities, the statutory sector, voluntary and community groups came together to discuss in more detail how those aspirations can be achieved, and to learn about and discuss new opportunities for the District. The central theme of the conference was the Big Society initiative, a concept the District Council has subscribed to, as evidenced by its decision to maintain voluntary sector support at existing levels and working with Essex County Council on its 'Call for Ideas'.

Mindful of the opportunities the area offers as a whole, but particularly bearing in mind the additional advantages presented by the Olympics in 2012 and the opening of the White Water Canoe Centre, close to the boundary of the District, we approved funding towards a number of regeneration schemes for Waltham Abbey. Also, as an indication of our commitment to encourage healthy living, we approved extensions to the contracts with SLM for our various Leisure Centres for a further 3 year period from 2013.

Housing/Affordable Housing

On the housing front, the Council worked with our housing association partners and developers to facilitate the completion of 151 new affordable homes for local people on our Housing register. We also agreed to introduce a unique and innovative 'Open Market Shared Ownership Scheme'. This enables local people, unable to buy a home of their own, to have a home of their choice purchased off the open market by a housing association, with a loan from the Council – which is then leased to them on a shared ownership basis. Our Repairs Refresh Programme was also nearly completed, by the

innovative appointment of a private repairs management contractor. They will manage our Housing Repairs Service and the staff, who continue to be employed by the Council.

Crime Levels/Safer Communities

All crime data remains relatively stable; the latest figures available for 1 January 2011 – 31 March 2011 show 1954 crimes – a reduction of 70 crimes for the same quarter in 2010.

The unofficial figures for April and May seem to be maintaining this level of performance. Domestic Burglary and Domestic Abuse still remain a cause for concern.

Essex Police have set their targets for 2011; 1% reduction in all crime; 1% reduction in Anti-Social Behaviour. Despite significant restructuring of Essex Police, local contact and links remains excellent.

Despite the recession we have managed to keep Council Tax at its previous level and this year, as in recent years, service improvement has been achieved by redirecting resources rather than increasing overall spending. Our future plans will continue this approach of seeking to achieve service excellence and continuous improvement. We are always aware that it is your money we are spending.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report is submitted under Executive Procedure Rule 4(a) and (b) of the Constitution (Page H6). It provides a résumé of major policy issues determined and a summary of issues discussed by Cabinet across the various Council Portfolios during the Council year 2010/11, the ninth year of the full operation of the new Executive Constitution under the Local Government Act 2000.

1.2 Further information on all issues, including copies of the reports and minutes concerned, is available on the Local Democracy Section of the District Council's website.

2. KEY PRIORITY OBJECTIVES

2.1 The Council set the following Key Priority Objectives. The major policy issues determined by the Executive during the year are a reflection of those priority objectives, namely:

- To review the Council's commercial landholdings to coordinate competing land use proposals, fulfil operational requirements, achieving value for money, and produce additional capital and revenue income to the Council;
- To utilise existing resources to support the Government's vision for the 'Big Society' where individuals and communities have power and responsibility to create better neighbourhoods and local services;

- To work in partnership with Essex County Council and other statutory and voluntary agencies, to ensure the effectiveness of local arrangements and services to safeguard the welfare of children and young people;
- To seek continuous performance improvement and the best use of resources against the background of diminishing public expenditure;
- To achieve the levels of net savings necessary to maintain the Council's sound financial position;
- To maximise the provision of affordable housing within the District;
- To mitigate the impact of the current economic conditions on local people and businesses, where resources permit and value for money can be achieved, from the Council's activities;
- To develop a sound Core Planning Strategy, to guide development in the District up to 2031, as part of the Local Development Framework.

3. PORTFOLIO CHANGES

3.1 The number of Portfolios covered by Cabinet Members was increased from 8 to 9 and there were a number of changes to the range of responsibilities covered by the Portfolios. Details of the Portfolios and Portfolio Holders are set out below:

Leader's Portfolio – Councillor Mrs Di Collins
 Finance and Economic Development – Councillor Chris Whitbread
 Leisure and Wellbeing – Councillor Brian Rolfe
 Operational Planning and Transport – Councillor Syd Stavrou
 Performance Management – Councillor Richard Bassett
 Environment – Councillor Mary Sartin
 Housing – Councillor David Stallan
 Legal and Estates – Councillor Lesley Wagland
 Safer and Greener – Councillor Penny Smith

4. LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

4.1 Sustainable Community Strategy

4.1.1 The District Council is required by statute to agree a Sustainable Community Strategy, and as a key decision this must be approved by the Council. This strategy sets out how partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors will unite together to 'improve the economic, social and environmental well being' of the local community.

4.1.2 The former Epping Forest Local Strategic Partnership (now One Epping Forest) determined the original strategy in 2003 and in 2009 agreed a wide ranging review should be undertaken, to ensure that the new strategy would be intelligence led, based on the latest information about how the District and the needs of the local communities were changing, driven by the priorities of local people and have greater focus on a small number of key priorities where partnership could 'add value' and achieve real outcomes.

4.1.3 Extensive consultation with partners, the public and elected members had culminated in the drawing up of a New Sustainable Community Strategy, adopted by the District Council and other key partners. This sets out a long term vision for the

development of the area, and key values that will underpin how the One Epping Forest partnership will work. The key objectives have been reduced from 57 to 11 and are clustered around the primary areas set out below. Given the need to address the national deficit, an additional priority area was identified around delivering better, more joined and efficient working in the public sector to mitigate the impact of sustained reductions in public funding in the short and medium term:

- Tackling crime and the fear of crime;
- Health inequality;
- Delivering sustainable communities; and
- Supporting and protecting young people.

4.2 West Essex Councils' Group – Memorandum of Understanding

4.2.1 The next few years are going to present all publicly-funded bodies with a huge challenge in terms of protecting services that people need and value, against a backdrop of diminishing resources. Thus it is vital for public bodies to seek opportunities to increase economy and efficiency, by working collaboratively. The Council is currently looking to offer its services to other local authorities, for which it would charge an appropriate fee to increase its income. At the same time, new structures are emerging with respect to growth, economic development and regeneration with the creation of the Essex/Kent/East Sussex Local Economic Partnership.

4.2.2 The District Council agreed to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with the local authorities of Harlow and Uttlesford. The Memorandum sets out principles promoting and protecting the interests of West Essex, recognising the intention to work in partnership on a sub-regional basis, with an informal timetable agreed between representatives of the three local authorities concerned.

4.3 West Essex Local Investment Plan

4.3.1 All local authorities are required by the Homes and Communities Agency to produce a Local Investment Plan to qualify for further funding in respect of affordable housing and infrastructure within their area. At the suggestion of the Agency, and in view of the relationship developing between Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford District Councils, a Joint Local Investment Plan for West Essex was formulated and adopted by the three local authorities concerned, in March 2011.

4.3.2 There was a commitment from all three local authorities not to seek any boundary changes in areas where new housing is developed other than through mutual agreement. Furthermore, if a boundary review was instigated by a third party then the affected local authorities would work together to ensure that any changes would not be detrimental to the others, particularly regarding the New Homes Bonus and nomination rights to affordable housing.

4.3.3 The implementation of the Local Investment Plan will be overseen by the West Essex Housing Forum, which comprises the Heads of Housing of the three West Essex councils and was formed during the year for this purpose. Already, the members of the West Essex Housing Forum have worked together to submit two bids for funding, in order to increase the amount of affordable housing that can be provided.

4.4 Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan

4.4.1 The revocation by the Minister for Decentralisation of the Secretary of State's Direction to prepare a separate Gypsy and Traveller Development Plan meant that it was no longer necessary for the Council to concentrate its Forward Planning resources on this one issue. Since its adoption, Local Plan Policy H10A (Gypsy Caravan Sites) had allowed and continued to allow the Council to consider new applications for pitches pending the preparation of a replacement Plan. Future pitch provision would be dealt with appropriately within the Local Development Framework. The letter from the Minister had vindicated the view of the Council and the local community, whilst recognising the progress which had been made in meeting the needs of the Traveller community.

4.4.2 The Council welcomed the decision of the Minister, as it ended a three-year period of uncertainty for those residents living in close proximity to sites that had previously been identified as potential sites for Gypsies & Travellers. The efforts of officers in both complying with the Direction, and then trying to lift the Direction, was gratefully acknowledged. It was felt that the decision of the Minister was in accord with the Government's stated policy of localism. It also indicated that the Council was prepared to listen to its residents, and it was hoped that residents would also participate fully in the process to develop a new Local Development Framework.

4.5 External Recruitment Freeze

4.5.1 The Council is facing an extremely challenging Medium Term Financial Forecast, requiring significant levels of savings to be achieved over the next four years. Employee costs are a large area of controllable expenditure, and the Council has a skilled and committed workforce, in which it has invested heavily in terms of training and development. Consequently, it was felt that a freeze on external recruitment should be implemented to control costs, mitigate the risk of redundancies and retain flexibility in the delivery of future services. It was acknowledged that this policy would place additional pressure on staff, but it could also provide development opportunities such as secondments to other Directorates. Temporary posts would also be subject to the new arrangements when the current contracts expired. A number of exceptions were identified – when the post was essential to health and safety, generated significant surplus income to the Council or was externally funded – but external recruitment to these posts would be permitted only following the failure to recruit internally.

4.5.2 The Council is not looking to make any other exceptions to the policy other than those already listed, and agency staff would not be recruited to fill any ensuing vacancies. The authority is under a statutory obligation to provide a number of services but every effort will be made to fill vacancies in such areas internally rather than externally. The Council agreed to reduce the use of agency staff to an absolute minimum, although the Benefits Division did receive a large external Administration Grant.

4.6 Other Issues

4.6.1 Other issues considered under this portfolio included the following:

- Community Governance Review – Greensted Ward
- Telecoms Mast – Honey Lane, Waltham Abbey

- Replacement of Restrictive Covenants – Epping Forest College
- Referendums – Budget Provision
- Calendar of Council Meetings

5. FINANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Capital Strategy 2010-15

5.1.1 The Capital Strategy is based on the Council's currently approved capital programme and takes account of the latest guidance on capital accounting arrangements for local government. The financing arrangements, set out, are intended to make the best use of the capital resources currently available and forecast the availability of resources for capital schemes up to 2014/15. It is a key strategic document linked to other key corporate and strategic documents produced by the Council and its partners, including the Corporate Plan, the Sustainable Community Strategy, and the Asset Management Plan. It is important to update the Capital Strategy annually and thereby maintain a high level of control over the Council's capital resources and fixed assets. In addition, the Council's strategic aims and priorities are used to reassess the Key Capital Priorities each year.

5.1.2 The ranking of the Council's Key Capital Priorities was also agreed in accordance with the revised strategy. An updated strategy, covering the period 2010 -15, incorporating a range of previously 'committed' capital projects and a number of 'proposed' schemes, ranked in priority order, was approved.

5.2 Council Budgets 2010/11

5.2.1 General Fund budgets containing the following elements were approved:

- Revised Revenue Estimates for 2010/11, with an anticipated reduction of the General Fund balance of £307,000;
- A reduction in the target for the 2011/12 Continuing Services Budget from £17.1 million to £16 million (including growth items);
- An increase in the target for the 2011/12 District Development Fund net spend from £900,000 to £1.1 million;
- No change in the District Council Tax for a Band 'D' property currently set at £148.77;
- The estimated reduction in General Fund balances in 2011/12 of £248,000;
- The four year capital programme 2011/12 – 2014/15;
- The Medium Term Financial Strategy 2011/12 – 2014/15; and
- The Council's Policy on General Fund Revenue Balances to remain that they be allowed to fall no lower than 25% of the Net Budget Requirement.

5.2.2 Included in the revised estimates was the 2010/11 Housing Revenue Account. A number of rent increases and decreases were agreed in accordance with the Government's rent reforms and the Council's approved rent strategy which, with the addition of an extra element, resulted in an average overall increase of 7.2%.

5.3 Treasury Management – Strategy Statement and Investment Strategy 2011/12 – 2013/14

5.3.1 Approval was given to the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2011/12 and the Annual Investment Strategy Statement for 2011/12 to 2013/14. Within the new Strategy, the two previous limits of £5 million and £10 million were replaced with one limit of £10 million per counterparty, and the minimum credit scores for long and short term ratings were amended to reflect the change of limits. This resulted in the removal of a number of counterparties from the Council's approved list. The maximum investment in a non-UK country was increased from 10% of the portfolio to £10 million per country, and a new investment activity- the purchase of Bonds issued by multilateral development banks – had also been added to the Strategy. There were no changes proposed to the Prudential Indicators.

5.4 Capital Programme 2010/11 – 2014/15

5.4.1 The Capital Programme for 2010/11 – 2014/15, which would form the basis of the Capital Strategy and Asset Management Plan during that period, was approved. The programme showed an estimated capital spend of £50.74 million over the period. The funding available to finance schemes in the programme had been reassessed and the suggested application of the different sources of funding had been given for the five-year period. Estimated external funding from grants and private sources of £3.158 million had been identified, and estimated capital receipts of £15.31 million and estimated revenue contributions of £32.272 million were applied to finance the capital programme over the five years. The balance of capital receipts was predicted to fall from £21.091 million as at 1 April 2010 to £6.9 million by 31 March 2015, whilst the Major Repairs Fund balance was expected to increase from £5.73 million to £9.932 million by the end of the period.

5.5 Local Authority Business Growth Incentive Scheme

5.5 1 The new Government announced that funding for the Local Authorities Business Growth Scheme (LABGI) was to be withdrawn and no further grants would be payable. Throughout the period of the operation of the scheme, increases in the Council's non-domestic rating list ensured that the annual awards were received, the last of which was £71,584 in 2009/10. It was agreed that the award for 2009/10 would be ring fenced for economic development purposes. The decision to allocate the money towards schemes which assisted economic development was also in accord with recommendations put forward by the Federation of Small Businesses and other business support organisations.

5.6 Waltham Abbey Regeneration Schemes

5.6.1 In 2009/10 Lidl paid the Council a premium in respect of the new supermarket in Waltham Abbey. The premium was £165,000, a sum which was subsequently included in the Capital Programme, to support economic development and regeneration in Waltham Abbey which, as a historic market town set in the Lea Valley Regional Park, already has a rich heritage and a diverse day visitor offer ranging from the Abbey itself, the District museum, the market, a range of food, beverage and retail outlets, and the Royal Gunpowder Mills. Furthermore, the Olympic White Water Centre has the potential to provide significant legacy benefits for the area. This is primarily owing to the

significant number of users of the Centre who could be attracted to visit the town and support local business by way of secondary spend.

5.6.2 Waltham Abbey Town Council, in liaison with other business partnerships, is already proactive in initiatives to support the local economy. As such, the Town Council had identified a number of potential projects it felt could enhance the town for local residents, improve the visitor offer and deliver economic benefits to local businesses, including the following:

- Full refurbishment of Public Conveniences
- Bandstand in Market Square and associated seating
- Statue on one of the town entry roundabouts – Highbridge Street
- Signage to raise awareness of the WWC on Highbridge Street/Station Road
- Enhancements to King Harold's Tomb
- Match funding for shop fascia refurbishment
- Re-instatement of the pavement mosaics
- Quaker Lane Toilet Building renovated and change of use.
- Campsite at Town Mead
- Pub Trail
- Heritage Trail production
- Business signage at the entry to the Brooker Road Industrial Estate
- Flag Poles (Town Hall Square)
- Replace bollards (street furniture enhancements)
- Cycle Parking

5.6.3 It was agreed that the ring fenced sum of £165,000 should be used in respect of the schemes outlined above. The projects will be managed and procured by the Town Council and payments only made when receipts are supplied, as for all our grant aided projects.

5.7 North Weald Airfield – Aviation Intensification Study

5.7.1 In August 2010 Halcrow were appointed to undertake an Aviation Intensification Study of North Weald Airfield to examine the potential for an intensification of flying activity. Subsequently, Halcrow consulted with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) on Aerodrome Standards and Airspace Policy, and undertook with various operators and fixed base operators (FBO). This enabled the identification of three development options, as well as estimates of costs and revenues, business planning, and financial projections. The three options were to take no action, provide for organic growth or active development.

5.7.2 After careful consideration, it was agreed that the option of encouraging active development should be pursued. Although the business aviation market has taken experienced a downturn it is now growing again. Given the considerable capital costs and other risks involved, however, it was also agreed that market testing would be undertaken with fixed based operators to provide more information on the potential risks, investments and benefits.

5.8 Other Issues

5.8.1 Other issues dealt with under this portfolio included:

- New windows and In-Fill Cladding Panels
- O2 Mast – Honey Lane, Waltham Abbey
- Town Centres Officer Post and The Future Management of Town Centres
- Benefits Division – Structure and Benefit Claim Processing
- Introductions of Credit Card Payments

6. LEISURE AND WELLBEING

6.1 Individual Grants Scheme

6.1.1 The previous policy for Individual Grant and Leisure Bursary Schemes had been in place since the mid 1990's and had remained relatively unchanged since then. In respect of individual grants, the maximum level of grant awarded per individual was insufficient to make a real difference to the applicant at present day cost levels, in terms of their potential development. All applicants were required to equally match fund any grant awarded and this was a barrier to many individuals and families. Nor did the 'open' process for assessing applications throughout the financial year make efficient use of officer time.

6.1.2 In contrast, the bursary awards for arts and sports are determined on an annual basis to support young people in their pursuit of excellence and as a special recognition of their achievement at national and international level. There is no requirement for individuals to match fund their bursary award, but applicants are required to attend an interview and winners may not reapply for a period of 3 years. The higher level of funding available through the Leisure Bursary Scheme enables young people to develop their skills and reach their potential more effectively and this has been demonstrated through the success of previous Bursary Award winners.

6.1.3 Approval was given to the discontinuance of the Individual Grants Scheme and the introduction of a new enhanced Bursary Scheme with the availability of more Leisure Bursaries ranging from £750 to £1,500. It is considered that this provides a better level of support to young talented individuals and a more effective way of assessing applications as it provides an opportunity for those on the Bursary Awards Panel to meet the applicants, rather than judging the posted applications alone.

6.2 Sports and Leisure Management – Contract Extension

6.2.1 The present contract with Sports and Leisure Management Limited (SLM) for the management of the Council's four leisure facilities had been due to end in January 2013. In February 2010, it had been agreed that proposals brought forward by SLM to reduce revenue cost should be pursued further, in line with the Council's policy of generating revenue benefits from investing capital monies. As part of the negotiations the Council agreed it would consider extending the present contract for a further 3 years from January 2013.

6.2.2 There were two main elements to the proposals put forward by SLM:

- Capital provision for works to Loughton Leisure Centre and new fitness equipment for Ongar Leisure Centre and Epping Sports Centre.
- The project for a new hall at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool

6.2.3 SLM had subsequently produced a proposal for Loughton Leisure Centre within the allocated Capital Budget of £800,000 with a consequent decrease in management fee of £100,000 per year. The project was completed in early 2011, with the anticipated decrease in the management fee. The capital for fitness equipment required was £192,000. Whilst this necessitated a £62,000 capital budget in 2011/12, there would be a resultant reduction in the management fee of £53,000 per annum.

6.2.4 A proposal put forward by SLM, involving the withdrawal of an additional management fee of £15,000 in relation to the management of the proposed new Sports Hall at Waltham Abbey Swimming Pool was approved. Given current budgetary constraints, the scheme for the new Sports Hall was postponed. It will, however, be reconsidered each year as part of the annual process for reviewing the Council's Capital Programme.

6.2.5 The overall proposals resulted in a 12.5% return for the Council for its capital outlay. The Council was pleased not only with this aspect but the overall very good working relationship which had developed. Approval was given to the extension of the contract with SLM from January 2013 to January 2016, subject to the complete and satisfactory implementation of all the works outlined above.

6.3 Shared Olympic Officer Post

6.3.1 Approval was given to a contribution of £10,000 for each of the next two years towards the funding of a Shared Olympic Officer Post. That approval had been subject to the formal agreement of the post's work programme and regular reports from the Olympics Officer to District Council meetings. It was considered that the employment of the Officer would help in attracting funding and visitors to the Waltham Abbey area, both during and after the Olympic Games. Broxbourne Council and Hertfordshire County Council had each agreed to contribute £20,000 per annum over the same two year period.

6.3.2 The White Water Centre, on the border between Waltham Abbey and Waltham Cross, was officially opened to the public in April 2011. The Centre has the potential to provide significant legacy benefits for the local area. The District Council is an active partner in the multi-agency Olympic Legacy Partnership, chaired by the Leader of Broxbourne Council. The role of the Officer will primarily be to deliver projects and promote actions to ensure that the optimum positive outcomes in terms of economic development and regeneration, environmental improvement and tourism.

6.3.3 The post holder reports directly to Broxbourne Borough Council and has a seat on the Legacy Partnership Board. One of the most important roles of the post will be to attract funding to improve the areas adjacent to the Centre. The Olympic Centre is expected to attract at least 70,000 visitors per annum post Games, and this should also provide a boost to the local economy of nearby Waltham Abbey.

6.4 Community Arts and Public Relations

6.4.1 To gain an informed view of the value of arts provision in the District and to explore options for the possibility of outsourcing, the Council commissioned a review of the Art Service in 2007. At the time, the Council was in a stable financial position and the review had resulted in a recommendation to retain the Arts Service 'in house'. This was subsequently agreed by the Council in April 2008.

6.4.2 The later economic downturn placed significant pressure on the Council to review its spending and a more detailed exercise on the alternative delivery of Community Arts was undertaken in 2009/10. A range of options was considered, including the development of an independent trust or other separate entity for the Arts, but the costs identified for this option were considered prohibitive, and service support costs could not be reduced without undertaking a Council re-structure.

6.4.3 Nonetheless the need to find revenue savings remained and the Community Arts budget was therefore scrutinised to identify savings which could be made without impacting too significantly on district provision. This was achieved through £35,000 savings in Community Arts (by reducing the project budget and deleting a part-time post) and £65,000 in Public Relations (with the deletion of one full-time and one part-time post).

6.5 Other Issues

6.5.1 Other issues dealt with under this portfolio included:

- Limes Farm Redevelopment – Award of Tender

7. OPERATIONAL PLANNING AND TRANSPORT

7.1 On-Street Decriminalised Parking Enforcement

7.1.1 North Essex Parking Partnership was formed to take over the responsibility for on-street parking enforcement when the present Agency Agreement with Essex County Council ceased on 31 March 2011. Colchester Borough Council is the Lead Authority and will, in due course, be the employing authority for all parking officers for the North Essex Area, encompassing the districts of Epping Forest, Harlow, Uttlesford, Braintree, Colchester and Tendring. As Epping Forest District Council is the only authority in Essex with an outsourced enforcement operation, it was agreed that the contract with Vinci Park, which was due to expire in September 2012, would remain in place and continue to be managed by this Council. Discussions took place regarding outsourcing the new, wider on street enforcement operation but it was agreed that this would be considered after the Partnership had been successfully established.

7.1.2 The advantages and disadvantages of joining the Partnership were assessed, following which the Council agreed to join. A revised approach was agreed whereby a break-even position could be achieved through more efficient operations and enforcement of existing restrictions: tariffs would only rise by the prevailing rate of inflation; residents' permits would only increase by approximately £10 over a four-year period; and higher tariffs or changes from the current arrangements would only be

considered if the Partnership wished to generate a surplus. The Council would also retain a vote at Partnership meetings during the period of its contract with Vinci Park. It was noted that any surplus generated through on-street enforcement would pass to the new Partnership.

7.1.3 The off-street parking element of the contract had worked well and provided a cost effective service. It was agreed to negotiate a two year extension to the contract with Vinci Park extending the contract from September 2012 to August 2014.

7.2 Parking Review Funding Allocation

7.2.1 The Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996 enable the Highway Authority/Essex County Council to introduce area wide parking restrictions on public highways. A number of area wide parking restriction schemes were introduced by the District Council when it was the Highways Authority, under delegated arrangements with Essex County Council.

7.2.2 The Agency Agreement between the two local authorities ended in 2006. The County Council is the Highways Authority and only it has the powers to introduce parking restrictions on public highways. However, the County Council has adopted a policy of not undertaking area wide parking reviews, only carrying out local traffic safety schemes and small scale traffic restrictions.

7.2.3 The District Council, under pressure from residents to reduce the impact of commuter parking, and to improve the use of available car parking spaces, undertook to carry out large area wide parking reviews in Epping and Buckhurst Hill. Both these schemes were completed by the County Council on behalf of the Council in 2007. The Epping and Buckhurst Hill Parking Reviews resulted in the displaced vehicles moving outwards. This meant that new areas of both towns are now being impacted by with displaced vehicles. This created problems for residents and it was resolved to undertake a review of parking restrictions introduced in 2007. The District Council instructed the County Council to undertake a review of the impact of parking restrictions introduced in Epping and Buckhurst Hill in 2007 and propose amendments.

7.2.4 It is a legal requirement for the statutory consultation for parking reviews to be published in a local newspaper circulated in the area in which any road or other place to which the parking restriction relates. In other words the paper should cover the entire area of the parking review.

7.2.5 The County Council places a number of advertisements, both for parking and other statutory notices, throughout the county, and, to secure better value for money, it asked its publishers to investigate alternative sources of advertising. This included the use of local independent newspapers, one of which was used for the consultation on the Epping Parking Review. The Council's budget estimates for the parking reviews were based on these lower advertising costs. However, it later came to light that the independent newspaper concerned does not offer full and complete coverage of the Epping Parking Review area, so the consultation carried out became abortive and a new formal public consultation is to be carried out with the local Guardian newspaper which covers the whole of the District.

7.2.6 The County Council sought recovery of the abortive advertisement costs and associated officer time in preparing the advertisements. On the basis of information available, the District Council found itself in a situation where abortive costs arose which were not of its making. Subsequently, assurances were received that, as the costs of both Epping and Buckhurst Hill Schemes could be kept within the budget allocation and as they were at an advanced stage, approval was given to continue with these schemes. The completion of the Loughton Broadway Review will follow in due course when resources permit. Meanwhile the County Council continued to look for ways of reducing costs through using alternative sources of advertising.

8. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

8.1 Health and Safety Policies

8.1.1 A number of the Council's health and safety policies were reviewed and amended where necessary. There had been revisions to the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2006 and the Council's Asbestos Policy was updated to reflect these changes. The Council's Stress Policy was also updated to comply with relevant health and safety legislation as well as best practice.

8.2 Council Key Objectives 2011/12

8.2.1 Revised Council Key Objectives were approved to reflect key issues facing the District at the current time. The objectives were updated to take account of the Council's service delivery priorities and provided an opportunity to focus specific attention on how areas for improvement could be addressed, opportunities exploited and better outcomes delivered for local people.

8.3 Planned Maintenance Programme – Operational Buildings and Commercial Property

8.3.1 The Planned Maintenance Programme ensures the Council's property assets are properly maintained and improved to meet health and safety requirements, statutory regulations, contractual obligations, customer demands and the long term protection of the Council's assets. The Council also has contractual obligations to undertake all the necessary external and structural maintenance works to the four leisure centres managed by Sports Leisure Management Limited, as set out in the terms of the leisure management contract. Contractual commitments also applied to commercial premises, ie industrial estates, shops and other commercial lettings, where the Council had external and structural responsibilities.

8.3.2 Approval was given to a programme for the years 2011/12 to 2014/15 although the programme would be kept under constant review to ensure that budgets are not exceeded. Adopting a prohibitive approach also ensures the following aims are met:

- The buildings and their infrastructure would be maintained to an appropriate level, meeting health and safety, statutory regulations and contractual obligations;
- The buildings and their infrastructure would be brought to a standard to comply with EU statutory regulations;

- The risk of unreliability and failure of critical systems, services and building fabric would be reduced;
- Good financial management through forecasting would be maintained; and performance standards and indicators would be maintained or enhanced upon.

8.3.3 The installation of solar panels was now considered a maintenance issue and accordingly was removed from the Planned Maintenance Programme. This would now appear as an individual item within the Capital Programme. A new five-year condition survey of the Council's Operational Buildings and Commercial Properties was to be undertaken in 2011/12 and the results of the survey will inform the Programme for future years.

8.4 Sickness Absence

8.4.1 The Council's target for sickness absence was a maximum average of 8 days per annum per employee. During 2008/09 the average was 10.85 days. An Improvement Plan was developed aimed at reducing the levels and the actions taken, as part of that plan, had contributed to an improved figure of 8.35 days during 2009/10. The reviewing of the parameter of sick entitlements was subsequently removed from the Improvement Plan. Nonetheless, the figure remains high and further actions will be required.

8.5 Maintenance and Statutory Testing of Electric and Hydraulic Lifts

8.5.1 All lifts require regular servicing, testing and certification to meet the requirements of the Health and Safety Executive to ensure that they are safe for all users. Critical tests are required to comply with the requirements of the Council's Insurers. In addition to providing good routine maintenance and covering breakdown calls, this provides for the maintenance and statutory testing of electric and hydraulic lifts, ensures full compliance with all statutory criteria and the Council's obligations under the relevant risk and safety criteria are met.

8.5.2 Through the servicing and maintenance of all lifts, it was established that there was a potential for savings to be made by collectively incorporating the work in respect of all lifts into the one contract. Following a competitive tendering exercise, the contract for the work was awarded to Amalgamated Lifts on that basis.

8.6 Value for Money and Data Quality Strategies 2010 – 13

8.6.1 Pursuant to the Local Government Act 1999, the Council is required to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions and services were exercised, with regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The relationship between economy, efficiency and effectiveness is defined as 'Value for Money', and the Council's Value for Money Strategy set out the overall approach to ensuring the provision of value for money services.

8.6.2 As part of the duty to secure continuous improvement, the Council has also to ensure that all data and information used to plan and deliver services was accurate, valid, reliable, timely, relevant and complete, in order to inform decision-making in respect of functions and services. Performance information is increasingly being used for the external assessment of local authority performance, and the Council's Data Quality

Strategy, now determined for the period 2010-2013, sets out the arrangement for ensuring that the quality of Key Data meets the highest standards.

8.7 Key Performance Indicators - Review

8.7.1 Under the Local Government Act 1999, the Council is required to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions and services were exercised, with regard to economy, efficiency and effectiveness. As part of this duty, a range of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) relevant to the Council's activities and key objectives are adopted each year.

8.7.2 The speed of delivery of planning decisions is considered an important measure of performance and was included previously as a National Indicator. With the abolition of the of the National Indicator set, approval was given to the retention of this as a Key Performance Indicator (KPI). It is still a statutory requirement for the Council to process planning applications within eight weeks of receiving them, and reinstating this indicator as a KPI will aid the Council in meeting this target.

8.7.3 Local Performance Indicator (LPI) 39, Rent Arrears (Commercial and Industrial Property), and LPI 40, Occupation Rate (Commercial & Industrial Property), provide a complete picture of the performance of the Council's commercial property and have therefore been retained as KPI's. LPI 41, Rental Value (Commercial and Industrial Property), was no longer considered particularly meaningful as it was too dependent upon the total asset value of the properties, and consequently was deleted as a KPI.

8.8 Other Issues

8.8.1 Other issues dealt with under this portfolio included:

- Council Plan 2006/10 and Key Priority Objectives 2009/10 – Outturn
- Essential User Car Allowance – Part-time staff
- Key Objectives 2010/11 – Progress Report

9. ENVIRONMENT

9.1 Pest Control Contract

9.1.1 Following the previous contractor carrying out the Council's Pest Control Service having been placed into administration, the business was acquired by and moved to Rentokil for the remainder of the contract, expiring in June 2011. At that stage various options will be considered in respect of future provision, including through a normal service contract, or an alternative approach such as the preferred contractor service sharing with another local authority, or the re-provision of an in-house service.

9.2 Monitoring and Assessment of Private Water Supplies.

9.2.1 The Private Water Supplies (PWS) (England) Regulations 2009 were implemented in 2010 to meet the UK's obligations under a revised European Union Directive. They replace earlier regulations with respect to water supplies, enforced by the Council. The new regulations place a number of additional requirements on the Council and allow for

a local authority to charge for services provided, suggesting a maximum fee structure for certain activities.

9.2.2 Approval was given to the implementation of the charging regime at the maximum level permitted by the Regulations. This will assist the Council in meeting the increased financial burden imposed and the new regime will, in any event, be reviewed in due course.

9.3 Processing of Organic Waste

9.3.1 The County Council is at a critical stage in its procurement of organic waste processing facilities. It needs to be certain of the tonnages to be processed to ensure best value for the taxpayer is achieved. The District Council therefore had to make a decision on how, in the future, it was to process organic waste collected from within the District.

9.3.2 Accordingly, the District Council agreed to utilise the Essex Waste Partnership, through the Inter Authority Agreement, for the processing of organic waste after October 2014, the time at which the current waste contract is due to expire. It was considered that this option provided the greater certainty in terms of financial benefits accruing, access to processing facilities and transfer stations, certainly for future service providers in the tender process and a reduction in the environmental footprint through reduced travelling times for the District Council's and contractor's fleet.

9.4 Furniture Exchange Scheme

9.4.1 A Furniture Exchange/Recycling Scheme for the District ran for a period between February 2007 and July 2008, operating from the District Council's Depot in Town Mead, Waltham Abbey. The scheme was run in partnership with the Lighthouse Project, a 'not for profit' organisation which had experience of running a similar scheme in Brentwood. The closure of the original scheme came about as a consequence of safety issues on site, primarily concerned with vehicular movements and public access.

9.4.2 The individuals involved in setting up the initial scheme felt there was enough impetus and encouragement to look at the establishment of a scheme elsewhere in the District and had continued to look at other options. An assessment of organisations and service outlets in the District, revealed a number of larger reputable charities which had a number of outlets which might be used. The indications are that one of these has several shops at various locations in the District as well as the level of operation required to carry a furniture scheme as originally envisaged. Further in-depth discussions on the scheme were ongoing but, in the meantime, approval was given to the £20,000 originally agreed as a District council contribution towards the setting up costs to be retained within the budget.

9.4.3 Through such a scheme, disadvantaged people are able to source good quality essential furniture at minimal cost. A scheme also offers people who wish to dispose of unwanted furniture, the opportunity to contribute positively to the local community by enhancing the quality of life of others and improving the environment through reducing the amount of waste destined directly for landfill, thus helping to meet recycling targets.

Moreover, it provides an excellent job opportunity for those with learning disabilities, or other specialist employment needs associated with health or social problems.

9.4.4 A furniture recycling scheme represents good value for money. The cost of sourcing, collecting, supplying and delivering furniture to each household requesting assistance is an average of £100, although it is recognised that current operational costs are minimal and this figure excludes reconditioned white goods. Given this sum to spend, households would be able to source, through the second-hand market, only a fraction of the items supplied through the scheme.

9.4.5 In terms of potential demand in the District, the indications are that approximately 300 residents each year move into its accommodation, seeking furniture, because they have become homeless, are fleeing domestic violence or are allocated a home for the first time.

9.5 Other Issues

9.5.1 Other issues dealt with under this portfolio included:

- Bobbingworth former Landfill Site
- Relocation of Depot facilities from Langston Road, Loughton

10. HOUSING

10.1 Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy

10.1.1 An updated Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy was adopted. The new policy covered the role of the private sector housing functions within the Housing Directorate. This ensures that service users are fully aware of what to expect, from the Council, in terms of that service and that they are treated fairly and proportionally. The Council is already a signatory to the Government Cabinet Office Enforcement Concordat which requires it to demonstrate openness and fairness in its approach to enforcement.

10.2 Home Ownership Grants Scheme

10.2.1 The Council's Home Ownership Grants Scheme was introduced in 2008/09. The Scheme offers secure tenants £28,000 to buy another property in England and vacate their current Council property. It is aimed at first time buyers and allows the Council to regain properties to let under the Allocations Scheme. While initially it proved extremely popular, with the change in the financial market it became increasingly difficult for applicants to obtain a mortgage. As a result, a number of applicants withdrew and alternative applicants were offered the chance to take up the scheme.

10.2.2 The benefits of the scheme, in particular the release of housing for applicants on the housing list are well recognised. However, given the financial climate and the continuing lack of mortgage availability, it was agreed that it would be beneficial to suspend the scheme for one year in 2011/12, and review the scheme again for 2012/13 to ascertain whether the housing market has recovered. The funding availability for four grants approved under the scheme earlier in 2010/11 was reaffirmed.

10.3 Housing Strategy 2009/12 – Key Action Plan 2010/11

10.3.1 The Council adopted the current Housing Strategy in September 2009. The strategy assesses the District's current and future housing needs, and details the Council's approach to meeting those needs. The strategy also links to other Council and non-Council strategies, which both influence and are influenced by the Housing Strategy. The original Key Action Plan set out the proposed actions to be taken by the Council for the first year to contribute towards the achievement of the objectives within the Strategy with progress monitored by the Housing Scrutiny Panel. An updated Key Action Plan for 2010/11 was approved by the Cabinet during the year.

10.4 Open Market Shared Ownership Scheme

10.4.1 Previously, the Council had agreed to pilot an innovative Open Market Shared Ownership Scheme to enable housing applicants on the Council's Housing Register to get on the home ownership ladder, and select a property on the open market that they would like to purchase on a shared ownership basis. The Housing Association previously interested in the Scheme no longer wished to do so. However, following discussions with a number of other housing associations, Broxbourne Housing Association expressed an interest to work in partnership with the Council to introduce the Scheme. A small number of changes to the previously-agreed scheme, to enlarge its scope and make it more attractive to applicants, were agreed and, following a capital receipt from a developer under a Section 106 Agreement, it was agreed to fund a pilot scheme for a year from this capital receipt to assist eight applicants. Under the scheme, the Council provides an interest-free loan to Broxbourne Housing Association to assist with the purchase of properties off the open market, chosen by applicants who are then given a shared ownership ('part rent- part buy') lease for the chosen property. The shared owners are then able to purchase additional equity shares until they eventually own the freehold of the whole property. The Council's loan is repaid by the Housing Association as additional shares in the property are sold, plus any increase in the property's value since the time the loan was given.

10.4.2 On completion of the Pilot Scheme, it was agreed that consideration would be given to extending the scheme, funded from the further budget provision within the Capital Programme for this purpose. Where successful applicants for the scheme are existing Council tenants, they will vacate Council properties, which will then be available for subsequent release to other applicants on the Council's housing waiting list, in accordance with the terms of the Housing Allocations Scheme.

10.5 Review of the Housing Allocations Scheme

10.5.1 The Council is legally required to have a Housing Allocations Scheme setting out the procedures for allocating its housing accommodation and making nominations to Registered Social Landlords. The review of the Scheme was delayed in 2010/11 to enable the Council to meet a number of conditions under the Government's new statutory guidance on Social Housing Allocations for Local Authorities in England ('Fair and Flexible'), received late in January 2010.

10.5.2 Approval was given to an amended scheme incorporating a revision concerning a Penalty for Refusal of Offers of Accommodation, whereby any applicant who refused two

offers of suitable accommodation would be demoted to Band 6 of the Allocations Scheme for a period of six months.

10.5.3 The late receipt of the new guidance resulted in a delay in the review and consequent introduction of the agreed revisions. Accordingly, the deadline for completion of the next review was put back to 1 April 2012.

10.6 Construction of Off Street Parking on Housing Land

10.6.1 A list of sites most in need of off-street parking had previously been drawn up and then assessed to create a priority order. Six sites at Colebrook Gardens, School Lane, Hillcroft, Chester Close, Harvey Gardens and Audley Gardens had already been prioritised as being in the most urgent need of and these would be the locations for the first schemes to be undertaken.

10.6.2 A ranking table for future off-street parking schemes was approved. The carrying out of those future schemes was subject to funding being available and no further feasibility or design works would be undertaken prior to the outcome of the review of the Capital Programme in late 2011.

10.7 Adoption of Standard Park Home Licence Conditions for Permanent Residential Sites

10.7.1 Following consultation with park home site owners, residents and statutory consultees, the revised Standard Park Home Site Licence Conditions for Permanent Residential Sites in Epping Forest District were adopted, including variations from the Model Standards 2008 for Caravan Sites in England as follows with regard to:

- domestic refuse storage disposal;
- two external doors being allowed if a mains-linked smoke detector was installed as required;
- the height of hedges and fences between park homes on new and existing sites being no more than 2 metres;
- trees not being considered to be hedges and therefore not being subject to any height restriction, provided they did not present any nuisance or health and safety risk;
- sheds not being classed as structures in relation to fire risk;
- timber and combustible sheds being allowed in the separation space between park homes; and
- qualified rather than competent persons being required for any work on gas, oil and electrical installations or appliances, as well as the electrical network within the site.

10.7.2 A number of deviations, as follows, from the conditions were agreed in respect of existing sites in instances when they were in place at the date of the new site licence:

- any park home, or combustible structure, positioned within 3 metres of the boundary of the site;
- any park home that located less than 6 metres from any other park home:

- any park home positioned within 2 metres of any road or communal car park within a site; and
- any porches, larger than 2 metres by 1 metre, unless they pose a fire risk or other danger.

10.7.3 Site licence conditions based on these standard site licence conditions will also be considered for use in respect of Gypsy and Traveller sites that have planning permission as permanent residential sites. Furthermore, in due course, holiday sites will be similarly licensed in accordance with the relevant modal standards.

10.8 Other Issues

10.8.1 Other issues dealt with under this portfolio included:

- Reduction of heating charges – Ninefields, Waltham Abbey
- Non-housing assets in the Housing Revenue Account
- Straw bales affordable housing development – Millfield, High Ongar
- Homelessness Prevention Service – Future funding
- Planning for Real Exercise – Leader Lodge, North Weald
- Affordable housing development – Former Red Cross Hall Site, Waltham Abbey
- Appointment of Private Repairs Management Contractor
- External Repairs and Redecoration – Acceptance of Tender.

11. LEGAL AND ESTATES

11.1 Park and Ride Facilities During 2012 Olympic Games – North Weald Airfield

11.1.1 An approach was received from the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) for the Council to give consent for the use of part of North Weald Airfield, as a park and ride facility, for the five-day duration of the white water canoeing events, scheduled to take place during the Olympics in 2012. After careful consideration of the issues involved, approval was given to the request.

11.1.2 No payment for the use would be forthcoming given the non profit nature of the ODA and the Organising Committee of the London Olympic Games (Locog). The location would be required by ODA/Locog for two to three weeks in total. Whilst there would be no impact on the Saturday market, there would be disruption to sports car activities and Heavy Goods Vehicle training, with some loss of income estimated at £4,000. All other park and ride facilities for the Games were being provided by site owners at no cost to the ODA/Locog who were committed to ensuring that the land use was fully reinstated following its use for park-and-ride.

11.1.3 There would be no clash with the market as the canoeing events were not scheduled for a Saturday, and access to the Airfield to set up the park-and-ride facilities would be via different gates to those used by the market. It was unclear whether low emission vehicles would be used to ferry the spectators between the Airfield and the White Water Centre. The current security arrangements in place will not allow the spectators to stop on the route between the White Water Centre and the Airfield: the benefit to the District, and Waltham Abbey in particular, will be after the Games finishes with the legacy events currently planned.

11.2 Langston Road Depot – Planning Application for Retail Park

11.2.1 Approval was given to enter into negotiations with Polofind Ltd, the owners of the T11 site adjacent to the Langston Road Depot, for a joint development of both sites for the retail park of approximately 10,000 square metres. It was considered that this would achieve best value and most efficient use of Council property assets when compared with the other options of developing the site unilaterally as a retail warehouse or for light industrial use.

11.2.2 The development of the site for retail warehousing will provide a wide range of retail goods not currently available in the District and prevent the high leakage of spend from the District. It will also provide new employment in the District whilst being constructed, with further in employment opportunities for people in the Debden area once completed.

11.2.3 The development should help existing local traders by attracting more customers to the area. A Retail Impact Assessment, involving discussions with local traders, was undertaken. This had indicated that the impact of the development would be positive rather than detrimental to the area, and there had been a generally very positive reaction from local traders, including those in the Broadway area. The likelihood was that the Council would impose restrictions on the type of stores permitted.

11.3 Desktop Hardware Update

11.3.1 The updating and replacement of the Council's desktop hardware over five years was agreed. Prior to the introduction of new hardware, the Council had a large number of personal computer and laptops over 4 years old. The industry recognised lifespan for hardware reliability is 4 years and the units had become unreliable, obsolete and costly to repair and maintain. They had been replaced with thin client terminals.

11.4 Governance Connect Secure Extract

11.4.1 The Council was previously a member of the Essex On-Line Partnership, at a cost of £16,000 per annum. However, following the Council's decision to adopt server virtualisation and thin client desktops, this no longer provided any financial benefit. A decision was taken to connect to the Government Connect Secure Extranet (GCSx) as an alternative, with the budget allocation to be used for that purpose in the 2011/12 financial year.

11.4.2 GCSx provides an accredited, managed network to connect all English and Welsh local authorities, central government, the NHS and the criminal justice communities into a trusted secure facility. Furthermore, it provides a secure email service and enables secure data sharing. Some Government organisations now only communicate data using this network, for example the Department of Work and Pensions and the Council's Benefits Division. It would therefore be impossible for the Council to function effectively without being connected.

11.5 Other Issues

11.5 1 Other issues dealt with under this portfolio included:

- Local Land Charges – Access to Environmental Information
- Roding Valley Agreement with Buckhurst Hill Parish Council
- Purchase of freehold – Car Park to the rear, Black Lion Public House, Epping.

12. SAFER AND GREENER

12.1 Safer Communities

12.1.1 Approval was given to the adoption of the CCTV Service Delivery Plan and Code of Practice. The CCTV Delivery Plan is a strategy for CCTV within the District for the next three to five years outlining a programme of installations and maintenance for systems. It brings together most of the Council's public facing CCTV systems within the Safer Communities Unit in the Environment and Street Scene Directorate. The associated Code of Practice is important as it describes, in accordance with national standards and accepted best practice, how CCTV is to be managed and used to ensure the safety of the data collected and the maintenance of public confidence in the systems.

12.1.2 CCTV footage is relied upon in court as evidence and helps reduce anti-social behaviour.

12.2 Countrycare Service

12.2.1 The District Council's Countrycare Service undertakes a wide variety of community – based activities and co-ordinates a regular programme of practical conservation work. The service, which is fully - funded by the District Council, is a key resource for advice, information and practical assistance on the countryside and nature conservation issues. It involves the local community through 'hands on' involvement of people of all ages in every aspect of its work.

12.2.2 One of the key objectives of the Council's Countrycare Service is to involve local communities in all aspects of their work and extend the already popular volunteering programme. The District already has the Epping Forest Conservation Volunteers, which relies on the existing volunteer resource. However, that resource is already 'stretched' and the emphasis for the future will be on broadening the existing volunteer base for Countrycare projects, engaging more residents and ensuring a minimum of two volunteers hours per week.

12.2.3 The departure of the long-standing manager of Countrycare provided an opportunity to review the structure of the service to reflect the coalition Government's localism agenda and the need to improve work efficiency including consideration of changing service delivery requirements. A restructuring which will achieve the various objectives, whilst achieving savings of £12,700 per annum, was agreed.

12.3 Council Energy Efficiency

12.3.1 The Council is committed to recording a baseline of its energy use and establishing annual targets for reduction in accordance with the Energy Performance of Buildings Regulation 2007, the Climate Change Act 2008, the Nottingham Declaration, the 10:10 Initiative and the Corporate Climate Change Strategy. The Council received an Area Based Grant in the sum of £67,500 originally intended for the implementation of the

actions detailed within the Corporate Climate Change Strategy, but this had remained unallocated in the District Development Fund.

12.3.2 The installation of Smart Meters and additional roof installation as a priority for the Civic Offices and Condor Building had been identified as measures which could improve the performance in this area. The estimated cost of these measures was £15,000. These measures would allow the Council to quickly identify areas where energy and cost savings could be made, as well as to reduce the heat energy that was lost through the roof of the Council Offices. Accordingly, approval was given to the introduction of these measures.

12.4 Jointly funded Police Community Support Officers.

12.4.1 The Council has been jointly funding six Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) with Essex Police since 2005. This has enabled the provision of additional PCSOs over and above those directly funded for the District by Essex Police, with the Council meeting half the costs. Through this arrangement, more PCSOs have been available and, additionally as part of the agreement, officers within the Council's Safer Communities Team are able to task all PCSOs, not just those which were jointly funded.

12.4.2 In view of the financial constraints affecting the Council and Essex Police, the funding of PCSOs needed to be reviewed to ensure that the Council was obtaining value for its annual investment. After detailed consideration of all the options, approval was given to the number of posts being reduced from six to four. This resulted in a revenue saving of £28,848 to the Council, whilst retaining a District-wide service and the value of working in partnership with Essex Police. In addition, the jointly funded PCSOs would be trained and authorised to issue Penalty Charge Notices as per the Council's Environmental Neighbourhood Officers.