



Epping Forest District Council
Information for prospective councillors

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SECTION 1

Introduction

This guide is designed for anybody considering standing for election as a District Councillor and is intended to give information:

- About being a candidate
- On what happens immediately after winning the election
- About the history and structure of local government
- Background to the District and the Council,
- And an idea of the commitment required from you.

The Guide is split into Sections, the subject matter of which is shown on the contents page.

As representatives of the electorate, councillors determine the direction of the local authority and its policies on the basis of the wishes and needs of their constituents. Although elected to represent a particular ward, the overriding duty of the councillor is to the District as a whole.

SECTION 2

Standing for Election

To qualify as a candidate for election to the District Council you must be 21 years of age (a proposed reduction to 18 is included in the Electoral Administration Bill going through Parliament) and a Commonwealth citizen, a citizen of the Republic of Ireland or a citizen of another Member State of the European Community. In addition you must also meet one of the following qualifications during the whole of the 12 months before the day you are nominated and on polling day:-

- You must be a local government elector for Epping Forest; or
- You must have had, during the whole of the twelve months preceding the day on which you are nominated, occupied as owner or tenant any land or premises in the District; or
- Your principal or only place of work in the twelve months preceding that day must have been in the District; or
- You must have resided in the District during the whole of the twelve months preceding that day.

You cannot stand if:-

- You hold a paid office or employment with the Council, or, in certain circumstances, are employed by another Council; or
- You are an un-discharged bankrupt; or
- You have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) of not less than three months without the option of a fine during the five years preceding the election; or
- You have been convicted or reported guilty of a corrupt or illegal practice by an election court, or you have been disqualified from standing for election to a local authority following a decision of the Adjudication Panel for England; or
- You hold any employment in a company which is under the control of the local authority.

Your nomination paper has to be signed by a proposer and seconder and eight other signatories whose names are on the current Electoral Register for the Ward in which you are standing. You should also submit with your nomination paper a completed Consent to Nomination form.

Once nominated, you will be allowed to incur election expenses, which you must meet yourself. These must not exceed the sum £600 plus 5 pence for every elector on the Electoral Register as published for your Ward. Election expenses detailing all money spent on the campaign must be returned within 35 days after the day the result of the election is declared. They will be available for public inspection.

Full details of the timetable for the delivery of nomination papers, including withdrawal dates, will be forwarded with the nomination paper. Details relating to the appointment of agents, the poll (where necessary) and election count will be forwarded separately. Further information on becoming a candidate is available from the Electoral Commission:

<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/toolkit/audience-listing.cfm/21>

SECTION 3

What happens after I'm elected?

Once elected, it is important that you make a Declaration of Acceptance of Office at the earliest opportunity. This declaration must be made within two months from the day of election and you cannot act as a councillor or attend meetings until it is signed. The Declaration can be signed before either one of the Joint Chief Executives, a serving Justice of the Peace or another Councillor and is in the form of a register.

To make the declaration you should contact: XXXX to make an arrangement to come in and sign the register.

Equally important is that you attend training sessions designed to inform you about the many roles that a Councillor will perform. Some of these Training Sessions are designated "obligatory". This means that, for relevant Councillors, attendance is a necessary pre-requisite to becoming involved in a specific activity or serving on a particular member body. In other words, members will be unable to undertake those roles without this training.

Some of the courses, including an Induction Evening will be held between the Election and the Annual Council Meeting (normally about two weeks after the election). You should not arrange holidays immediately after the election so that you are available to attend these courses.

What you will also need:

- (i) A Security Identity badge (for which your photograph will be taken);
- (ii) An access card (the Civic Offices building can only be accessed using a proximity card which will be issued to you).

To obtain these contact: XXXX

- (iii) You will also be expected to have access to a Computer connected to the internet using a Broadband connection to enable the Council to keep you up to date with publication of agenda and minutes and for email. More information on the Members Connectivity Scheme can be found in Section 10.

Councillor 'Buddies'

Some of the political groups will pair you with a more experienced Councillor in order to 'show you the ropes'. You should contact your Group Leader to check whether your group run this scheme.

Expectations of being a Councillor

You should have a general idea of what it takes to be a local Councillor from your discussions with your political party when you applied to be a Candidate. Being an elected representative brings a responsibility to represent your ward and to be available to your electorate to help them with their problems. These may be something you can assist in but may also not affect the District Council's responsibilities at all. It will take time to become familiar with the systems within the Council. Your fellow Councillor and Officers are a good source of information and advice.

How many meetings will I have to attend?

As of right you will sit on the Full Council which meets six or seven times a year. In addition, if you are elected to a ward outside Loughton, Buckhurst Hill or Chigwell, you will also be appointed to an

Area Plans Subcommittee automatically. These meet every four weeks throughout the year. In the southern area of the District only some of the Councillors will sit on their Area Plans Subcommittee.

You may also be appointed to any of the quasi-judicial panels (See Section 7) or one or more Scrutiny Panels. These meet as and when required. You should speak to your Group Leader soon after the election about the Committees where you think you have expertise or wish to sit on. Seats on Committee are allocated at the Annual Council meeting and allocated on the basis of *pro rata* (i.e. reflecting the percentage strength of your group on the Council as a whole).

It would not be unreasonable for you to assume that you would have one Council meeting to attend per week. On average there are meetings of the Authority's Committees, Subcommittees or Panels three or four times a week, only some of which you will be a member of or you will want to attend.

If you want to get a better feel for the number of meetings taking place at the Council, visit our webpage on:

http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local_democracy/

SECTION 4

Local Government: A Brief History

The structure of local government is based on administrative areas which existed in Saxon times. The country was divided into counties or shires in 1066 at the time of the Norman Conquest, governed initially by Sheriffs and later Justices of the Peace. Local government during the 17th and 18th century was largely parish government, parishes being responsible for dealing with the poor, keeping the peace and highway maintenance.

Before the industrial revolution, Parliament established bodies of Trustees or Commissioners to administer special services in a locality - greater numbers of these bodies became necessary as towns grew in size, to deal with such things as the relief of destitution, repair of roads, paving, lighting and street cleansing.

As the numbers of different bodies, or boards, expanded and the government extended the vote to ordinary householders, this paved the way for the creation of county councils and county boroughs in 1888. Six years later, the Local Government Act 1894 created urban and rural district councils, parish councils and parish meetings. That system largely continued until the Local Government Act 1972, when district councils were formed, through the combination of other types of authority, or sometimes based on former county boroughs, to give the system which largely prevails in the shires today. Thus Epping Forest District was formed from an amalgamation of the Epping Urban District Council, Epping and Ongar and Rural District Council, Chigwell Urban District Council, and Waltham Holy Cross Urban District Council.

The Local Government Act of 1972 which brought Epping Forest District into existence reformed completely the structure of local government and made important changes to the distribution of local authority functions and other matters such as elections, membership of councils, financial administration, the admission of the press and public to committee meetings and the appointment of staff. The Act reduced the number of major local authorities in the country from 1,400 to 450.

Since 1974, there have been three levels of local government in Essex and other shire counties - the County Council itself, District Councils and Parish and Town Councils.

The system in more densely populated areas differs. In London, there is at present just one tier of local government operated by some 32 London Boroughs, ranging in population from approximately 133,000 (Kingston-upon-Thames) to about 314,000 (Croydon). The other conurbations, i.e. Tyne & Wear, the West Midlands, South Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside originally had two tiers, i.e. county council and metropolitan borough, when set up in 1974, but the county councils for these areas have since been abolished.

Another type of authority has now emerged, following the review of local government which began in 1992, this being the "unitary authority". Where government has been convinced that one tier would function better than two, this has replaced other systems. Examples of this new type of authority include the Isle of Wight and Peterborough. Some larger unitary authorities based on former county council areas, e.g. Berkshire, the East Riding of Yorkshire, still have parish councils within their areas.

The Essex Situation

When the Local Government Commission looked at Essex as part of the overall review, Thurrock and Southend on Sea were made Unitary Councils. However, over the next few years, in the context of strengthened regional assemblies further reviews may be undertaken and may have consequences for local government.

As part of its programme to modernise Councils, the Government has introduced legislation to enable local authorities to bring in new systems of decision making to replace the traditional committee system which had been in place for a hundred years.

In May 2002 Epping Forest adopted a Cabinet and Leader system and new constitution under the Local Government Act 2000. The system balances the concentration of powers in the executive, collectively and individually, by:

- Reserving certain powers to the full Council, such as setting the Council tax and budget (A Policy Framework);
- The Cabinet and Individual Portfolio Holders taking decisions within that framework
- Designating some powers as non-executive, for example development control;
- Providing mechanisms for scrutiny and overview of executive decisions by other members;

SECTION 5

History of the District

The Epping Forest District covers a part of England where history runs deep, a part of England that is crowded with reminders of that history of prehistoric encampments; of Iceni and Trinobante warriors; of Roman battles, Saxon saints and Norman builders; of Tudor huntsmen; of infamous highwaymen; of labourers who fought for their rights in the forest. Through hundreds of years the forest lands then known as Waltham were owned and ruled by the monarch and administered by the monks of the great abbey built on the banks of the Lea.

Thus, Waltham Abbey throughout the earlier years exerted enormous influence over the whole forest area and the later decline of the abbey coincided with the shrinking of the forest. Although a settlement existed in the very earliest times in the Lea Valley it was Earl Tovi, standard bearer to King Canute, who founded the town. He formed a community here and built a church to serve it a church that was said to have housed a fragment of the True Cross of Christ, a sacred relic that drew pilgrims from far and wide. After Tovi's death, the Waltham property went to the crown and Edward the Confessor bestowed it on Harold who built a minster church served by a dean and eleven canons and supported by tithes from manors throughout Essex and East Anglia. Legend has it that following the death of King Harold at the Battle of Hastings, his body was brought here and buried in the choir of his beloved church a part of the building now gone but the spot where his body supposedly lays is clearly marked.

The Normans gave the manors supporting Waltham to followers of William and the church itself went to the see of Durham. But in 1177 this was changed when the secular canons were dissolved and Henry II re-vested the tithes of the manors in the Abbey and re-established it as a house of Augustinian canons a house that officially became an abbey seven years later. The church was divided into two the nave being used by local parishioners as their parish church, the east end and transepts belonging to the abbot and monks. Extensive new buildings were erected at the eastern end in a contrasting style to the great Norman nave and for many decades the Abbey exerted a powerful influence, had many noble associations and was often visited by monarchs who came to hunt in the Royal Forest. One of the most distinguished guests was Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury who here originated one of the main movements that led to the Reformation.

Throughout the Middle Ages Waltham Abbey continued in favour and both it and the settlement clustered around it were places of importance. Rights to hold a market and fairs were granted during the reign of Richard I and the fairs became great trading events with the September fair the annual time for hiring servants. Monarchs were frequent visitors to both town and abbey and their visits became more numerous. The Dissolution, however, saw the first major changes in forest life, for the Abbey lands passed to Sir Anthony Denny and the monastic buildings were pulled down leaving only the original Norman nave. Denny later built Abbey House on the north side of the churchyard and this was a feature of the town until it too was demolished in the 18th Century. The constant passing of monarchs to and from hunting forays in the forest ceased at the time of the Commonwealth and great inroads were made into the forest itself, trees being felled in great numbers to provide timber for ships.

Although Waltham Abbey may have been in these earlier years the most important place in this corner of Essex, other places too were growing. At the northern end of the forest, on a high windy ridge was the village of Eppingheth, later called Epping Street. Here Elizabeth I granted the institution of a market previously held at Epping Upland and this became a meeting place for the villagers from settlements for miles around.

Epping, however, traces its story back to even earlier times long before the Romans, several of whose villas have been excavated near the town. Legend has it that in AD 61 Queen Boudicca made a gallant last stand against the Romans at Ambresbury Banks, an ancient British camp. The Saxons first settled the area and gave the place its name or rather, variations of names that

included, at different times, Ippying, Ipping, Eppingheth and Eppingthorpe. The parish was then divided into eight manors and the church was at Epping Upland, and it was here, in Henry III's reign, that the market first functioned.

Throughout its history Epping has been important as a market and fair town and as a place of importance on one of the main routes from London into East Anglia.

As a main road town Epping had many coaching inns 16 at one time saw many travellers (Samuel Pepys in 1660; Charles II in 1684 and Queen Anne in 1705 and 1707) - and was also a haunt for highwaymen. Dick Turpin supposedly operated here (he is said to have shot a forest keeper in 1737) but was unflatteringly described as a male of only average height and much marked by smallpox. The last recorded highway robbery took place in 1837 when a local solicitor was robbed by three men. The coming of the Great Eastern Railway in 1865 virtually put an end to both main road prosperity and thoughts of highway robbery and the road itself was toll-free in 1870. Epping gradually grew as a favoured town of residence for those who worked in London.

Waltham Abbey was close to a station on the Great Eastern Railway main line to Cambridge (Waltham Cross station, opened in 1840) and the building of branches of the GER saw the development of Epping, Chigwell, Loughton and Buckhurst Hill, places that not only grew up as residential areas but eventually formed one administrative area. Yet here too, history traces a long story, for the Iron Age people had a hill-top camp at Loughton. The Romans chose the fertile Roding Valley in which to settle and build their Suffolk Way, the main road from London through Chigwell to Dunmow. Near Woolston Hall at Chigwell a large Romano-British cemetery still remains to be excavated.

Loughton first appeared, as 'Lukintone' in a charter of 1062 and was 'Lochetuna' in the Domesday Book in which Chigwell also found mention as 'Cinghvella'. In 1135 reference was made to 'La Bocherste' (Buckhurst Hill), an area referred to in much later years as Bucket Hill, meaning a hill covered with beech trees. The three communities remained as small forest clearings through the centuries, but with only Chigwell and Loughton having churches, the former certainly being in existence as far back as the 12th Century. In the great days of the forest as a Royal hunting ground, visits from monarchs were frequent. Henry VIII often stayed at a hunting lodge known as Poteles at Buckhurst Hill and Kings Avenue today perpetuates the memory of his visits with Anne Boleyn. James I was entertained at Loughton Hall in 1605.

As well as monarchs, this part of the forest perhaps because of its proximity to London drew numerous literary and military figures during the 17th to 19th Centuries. Tennyson, John Clare and Edward Thomas are associated with High Beach; Sotheby rented a house called Fairmead Lodge. Loughton was quite an artistic and literary area in the late 19th Century and early 20th Century. Amongst those who have lived there were writers Arthur Morrison and W.W. Jacobs, lexicographer Robert Hunter and sculptor Sir Jacob Epstein; Kipling was also a visitor. Admiral George Cockburn who ferried Napoleon into exile on St Helena, lived at High Beach where, ironically, that emperor's nephew, Prince Louis Lucien Bonaparte also lived in a house less than three hundred yards distant! Another famous admiral, Sir Elias Harvey, who fought alongside Nelson on the Temeraire at Trafalgar, had his home at Chigwell. The town's famous grammar school also had celebrated pupils and visitors William Penn, the quaker, was a scholar here and James Smith, the poet, wrote about the District when revisiting Chigwell in later years. The famous cartoonist F. Carruthers Gould lived at Buckhurst Hill.

Although this part of the District has seen great changes since 1920, there are plenty of reminders of the past. Victorian taverns such as the Robin Hood, The Royal Standard and The Plume of Feathers remain in Loughton, along with numerous weatherboarded cottages. Chigwell has a number of fine Georgian houses and Loughton the 17th Century North Farm and Alderton Hall. Buckhurst Hill development dates from the coming of the railway in 1856 and returns some superb stucco and brick Victorian villas. The King's Head at Chigwell stands to remind us of what a great Tudor coaching inn looked like.

Chipping Ongar dates back to Saxon and Norman times and in its church are to be found Roman bricks, reminders that the Roman road from London to Dunmow passed nearby.

William the Conqueror granted the manor here to Count Eustace of Boulogne with other extensive lands of which Ongar became the governing centre under a feudal lord. He built a fortified house here on a site that had been used by the Saxons for defensive purposes. In 1162 Richard de Lucy, Chief Justice of England, built a 'great' castle here and 14 years later after the barons' rebellion, Henry II seized and held it to prevent a repetition of this uprising. The castle was eventually demolished in the 16th Century and the mansion built on the site suffered a similar fate in 1744. Little is known of the castle's story but it is recorded that Edward II stayed there for some days in 1321.

The town itself takes its prefix from the Saxon words 'cheape' or 'cheppyng' meaning a market, and this suggests it was quite important from earliest times. It became the 'capit' of the Hundred to which it gave its name and served a wide area as a market town through many hundreds of years. Today it still retains the air of an ancient town.

In later years Chipping Ongar became one of the parishes of Epping and Ongar Rural District and the Urban areas to the west were formed into four Urban Districts Epping, Loughton, Buckhurst Hill and Waltham Holy Cross. Chigwell, Loughton and Buckhurst Hill were merged in 1933 and since 1974 all boundaries have gone and the area is sited in the present Epping Forest District.

Profile of Epping Forest

Epping Forest is named after the Epping Forest, which is situated at the heart of the district. The Forest is ancient woodland of nearly 2700 hectares, owned and managed by the Corporation of London in accordance with the Epping Forest Act of 1878, as an open space for recreation and enjoyment. The district is a contrasting mixture of urban and rural life, covering 34,500 hectares, and stretching from outer London in the south to rural Essex in the North.

The district has six main centres of population (Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell, Epping, Loughton, Chipping Ongar and Waltham Abbey) and a number of picturesque villages and hamlets, and comprises approximately 50,000 homes and businesses. We have no natural centre and the majority of the district lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt.

The district is home to a number of places of special interest, including the world's oldest timber-framed church at Greensted, the former Royal Gunpowder Mills site at Waltham Abbey now a centre for leisure and tourism, and an historic wartime airfield at North Weald. North Weald Airfield, once home to the famous Treble One Squadron known as the 'Black Arrows', has been owned and managed by the Council for recreation since 1980, and is our most significant land asset and the venue of the largest regular outdoor market in Europe. The Council owns leisure facilities in four of our main population centres, the newest of which is Loughton Leisure Centre. The management of these were contracted out in January 2006.

Within the district we have twenty-five conservation areas and over fifteen hundred listed buildings, which is the fourth highest total in Essex. Our countryside management service, Epping Forest Countryside, maintains the natural environment of the district for the benefit of local people and wildlife, by creating habitats, improving public access, and increasing awareness of our rural heritage. Areas of parkland and natural beauty such as the Lea Valley Regional Park (a river and lake leisure area of 4000 hectares stretching 35 kilometres along the River Lea), the Roding Valley (which includes a unique ancient flood-plain meadow nature reserve) and Epping Forest itself, provide a plentiful supply of sites for informal sport and leisure.

The district currently has a population of 120,896 (2001 Census), compared with 116,000 (1991 Census) twelve years ago. Over 40% of the population live in the south-west of the district

(Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell and Loughton). The population is ageing, with the profile showing a reduction of under fives and an increase in over seventy-fives (2001 Census).

The Council is the second largest employer in the district. The largest is Sainsbury's plc, which has recently built a major regional distribution centre adjacent to M25 at Waltham Abbey.

SECTION 6

How Services Are Provided Within the Current System

Local authorities are statutory bodies and their powers and functions are limited to those permitted by law. They do not have a general power of competence; they cannot do whatever they choose. The activities which can be undertaken by a particular type of Council are thereby closely controlled. In addition, many aspects of Council activity are controlled or influenced by central government, in particular through numerous controls on the way in which money is raised and spent. However, within these limitations, councils are autonomous bodies with freedom to decide most questions of local policy. It is important to understand the division of functions between the different tiers of local government and the limitations within which the different types of authority operate - a lack of understanding of this can lead to extreme frustration for a person seeking election and wishing to change certain things which he or she, upon election, finds outside the council's remit. Conversely, where the candidate understands the parameters within which the local authority works, considerable satisfaction can be derived from influencing policy and ensuring that the provision of services, introduction of new projects or control of development reflects the wishes of the electorate.

The main functions of local government are shown below. A number of functions can be exercised concurrently by county and district councils. In unitary authorities, county and district functions are combined. All three tiers 'precept' in addition to the emergency services.

Main Functions of County Councils

Education
Social Services
Planning (strategic, including Structure Plan)
Highways (including maintenance, lighting, traffic and transport planning)
Public rights of way (definitive map and statement)
Refuse disposal
Consumer protection
Parks and open spaces (concurrent with district councils)
Museums and art galleries (concurrent with district councils)
Smallholdings

Main Functions of District Councils

Council Tax Collection (on behalf of all tiers)
Housing* - strategic housing service, maintenance and letting of Council houses, improvement grants
Planning (Local Plans, development control, building regulations, conservation)
Economic development
Tourism
Refuse collection
Environmental health
Recreation provision (leisure facilities, museums, art galleries, parks and open spaces)
Car parking (on street enforcement of restrictions and off street pay and display of district parking places)

Main Functions of Town and Parish Councils

Provision and administration of allotments
Cemeteries, cremation and burial grounds (concurrent with district councils)
Bus shelters

Receiving the accounts of parochial charities
Commons and village greens
Village halls
Various aspects of recreation and open space
A statutory right to be consulted on applications for planning permission.

The Role of Officers

The officers are the paid officials employed by the Council to advise members and to implement the policies that they decide upon and it is clearly important that there is mutual trust and respect to ensure that the partnership between members and officers works successfully.

SECTION 7

Political Make-up

In Epping Forest District there are currently six recognised political groups: Conservative (Tories), Labour, Liberal Democrats, Loughton Residents Association, Independent Group and British National Party. None of these groups hold more than 50% of the seats (i.e. 30 seats) and no two parties have a formal agreement to run the Council (called a Coalition or Administration). The Council is what is called in 'no overall control', 'hung' or 'balanced'.

The Pre-May 2006 position was:

Group	Number of Seats on the Council
Conservative	26
Labour	4
Independent	4
Liberal Democrat	14
Loughton Residents Association	6
Independent Socialist	1
British National Party	3

Budget and Policy Framework and the Role of the Council

58 Councillors form 'The Council' which meets six times a year. The Council remains the primary body of the Authority. The full Council remains responsible for setting the budget and Council tax, major policy changes, decisions on changes of powers or new powers (This is known as the Budget and Policy Framework).

How we make decisions

Obviously, the Council itself could not take every single decision down to who sweeps the road and there are many decisions that need to be taken on a daily or indeed hourly basis. Decisions are, therefore, made by smaller groups of Councillors called a 'committee' or by delegating (or giving the power to decide) to officers of the Council.

The way in which the Council is run is governed by its Constitution. This Constitution was adopted by the Council in May 2002 and sets out how we make decisions and governs procedure. The Council's aim is to be efficient, open and accountable to local people. It contains the rules by which the council operates and also a number of locally agreed protocols. It is important that members act within its operational rules which reflect the current legislative position. The constitution of the Council can be viewed on-line at:

www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local_democracy/reports_publications_poli/constitution.asp

Cabinet Structure,

The Council has a 'Cabinet', which is group of nine Councillors from all the political groups with strategic responsibility for running the Council. This arm of the Council is generically known as 'The Executive'. Each councillor on the Cabinet is responsible for a number of the Council's services (a Portfolio). The Cabinet meets regularly to discuss and decide on how the Council is run. The Executive Members also have delegated powers to take decisions on prescribed matters within the following portfolio areas:-

1. **People First** - External Business Relations, Media, Members' Remuneration (Liaison with Independent Panel), Public Relations, Constitutional Issues, Community Plan.
2. **Community Wellbeing** - Complaints Policy, Concessionary Fares, Crime and Disorder, Day Clubs for the Elderly, Emergency Planning, External Funding, Grant Aid, Health Service (including Epping Forest Primary Care Trust, P A Hospital Trust, UCWC Hospital Trust, Community Health Providers, Mental Health providers), Licensing Act 2003 – Policy (all other matters of licensing policy are dealt with by the Licensing Committee), Social Inclusion.
3. **Finance and Performance Management** - Accountancy, Asset Management, Audit, Benefits, Best Value, Business Rates, Cashiers, Council Tax/NNDR, Financial Management, Insurance, Internal Audit, Invoices, Land acquisition/Sales, North Weald Airfield (Operational – Estates Management), Property Management (excluding Housing), Superannuation and Pensions.
4. **Housing** - Adaptations for the Disabled, Caravan Sites, Careline, Emergency Alarm System, Care and Repair (CARE), Council House Sales, Council Housing Management, Elderly Persons Garden Maintenance for Council Tenants, Estate Management (Council Estates), Garages (Council-owned), Homelessness, Housing Needs Advice, Housing Investment Programme, Leasehold Enquiries (Council Housing), National Mobility Scheme, Private Sector Housing Stock Repairs (Council Housing) (and DSO), Right to Buy, Social Housing Applications, Supporting People Initiative, Tenancy Matters (Council Housing), Transfers and Mutual Exchanges (Council Housing), Warden Assisted/Sheltered Housing.
5. **Environmental Protection** - Abandoned Vehicles, Air Quality, Animal Welfare (excluding licensing aspects), Asbestos, Contaminated Land, Corporate Sustainability, Dangerous Waste, Energy Conservation, Environmental Co-ordination, Environmental Health, Food, Home and Water Safety, Infectious Diseases, Pest Control, Pollution (Noise and other), Public Conveniences, Recycling, Refuse Collection and Disposal, Statutory and other Nuisances, Skips, Street Cleansing.
6. **Leisure** – Arts, Community Development, Holiday Schemes, Health Improvement Programme, Leisure Centres, Museum, North Weald Airfield (Operational Activities – Leisure including market), Play Provision, Roding Valley Nature Reserve, Swimming Pools, Young People.
7. **Planning and Economic Development** - Building Control, Business Prosperity, Conservation, Countrycare, Design Advice, Economic Development, Forward Planning, Local Plan, North Weald Airfield (Planning), Public Transport, Rural Issues, Town Centre Enhancement Schemes, Town Centre Management (Strategy and Overall Co-ordination), Town Centre Partnerships.
8. **Civil Engineering and Maintenance** - Car Parking, Dangerous Buildings, Grounds Maintenance, Fleet Management, Highways and Roads (NB no Agency now exists), Land Drainage (including flooding issues in the District), Road Safety, Sewerage.
9. **Communications, 'E' Government and Corporate Support Services** - Information Technology, IEG programme (Development and Operations), Administrative Services, Council Buildings, Democratic Services, Depots, Health and Safety (Employer Responsibilities), Human Resources (including Payroll), Legal Services, Telephones, Local Land Charges.

A chart illustrating the new Cabinet structure, which contains some Committees, is attached at Appendix 1. The "Cabinet and Leader" system, introduced in May 2002 is a departure from previous structures; for the first time individual members can personally take executive decisions in a system where responsibility for the decision is clear and where the Overview and Scrutiny procedure enables the members of the Council to review executive action and hold the decision-maker to account.

Why do we have a Cabinet?

The 2000 Act followed a Government White Paper entitled "Modern Local Government: In Touch With The People", which concluded that traditional committee structures led to inefficient and opaque decision making, with many decisions taken behind closed doors and many councillors therefore having little influence over Council decisions. This meant that time spent in committee meetings, especially where decisions had already effectively been taken, was unproductive. Councillors attended too many meetings and the evidence was that many wished to spend more time in direct contact with those that they represented. The Government wished to place the emphasis on bringing the view of the community to bear on the Council's decisions and on scrutinising the Council's performance.

The White Paper went on to explain how both the executive and "back bench" roles of councillors were vital to the health of local democracy and community leadership and that each role could only be fully effective when separated from the other. The separation of the executive increases efficiency, particularly where individuals have executive powers can act more quickly whilst maintaining transparency, in that it is clear to the public and non-Cabinet Councillors who is responsible for decisions and accountability. Members not involved in the executive function have a role in scrutinising decisions and holding the executive to account, as well as leaving more time for a higher profile in being responsible for the wellbeing of their community.

Other Committees

Other Panels and Committees look after specific functions that are not the responsibility of the Executive. These fall into a group called 'regulatory'. The Council has four Area Planning Sub-committees which look after planning applications made in that area. These Subcommittees report to the District Development Control Committee on applications contrary to policy and it also determines strategic planning applications.

In addition there are a number of other regulatory Committees including Licensing, Housing Appeals and a Complaints Panel.

Scrutiny

Overview and scrutiny is potentially the most exciting and powerful element of the entire local government modernisation process. It places members at the heart of policy-making and at the heart of the way in which councils respond to the demands of modernisation. In addition, overview and scrutiny is the mechanism by which councils can achieve active community leadership, good governance.

Its central role is that of holding the Executive to account for the decisions it makes. Additionally it provides a check on policy and budget development and undertakes a policy development role through a series of Panels that report to the main Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Our new arrangements for Scrutiny are set in the constitution and are available from our website together with our main review report at:

http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local_democracy/Scrutiny_home.asp

Officer Structure

Inserts required:
Senior Management Structure
Roles of S 151 officer
Monitoring Officer
How to deal with officers

SECTION 8

Philosophy and Plans

The principles and priorities to which the Council works are set out in the Council Plan for the years 2003-2007, and we are currently in the process of updating this document in consultation with our community partners. The priorities and stated objectives in the Plan are re-affirmed in the Best Value Performance Plan, which is published annually and issued to every household in summary form. The Best Value Performance Plan also shows how the Council has performed against previous years and Government standards.

The Council's Medium Term Priorities Are:

A safe, healthy and attractive place

- maintain the special character and advantage of the District, and address local environmental issues;
- address key housing need;
- create safer communities;
- encourage sustainable economic development;
- address leisure need.

An organisation that listens and leads to resolve local issues

- political leaders give clear direction;
- communicate with the public about service delivery;
- prioritise objectives and services;
- co-operate and plan with partners.

Accessible, affordable and improving services

- identify and target resources, realise capacity and manage performance;
- procure services in the most beneficial and cost effective way;
- develop services, staff and the working environment.

The Community Strategy addresses the key challenges facing the district up to 2021, including significant housing growth in the area and its potential impact on the environment, social facilities and issues such as local transport provision, and was drawn up by a Local Strategic Partnership of the statutory and voluntary agencies that work in the district. Copies of these documents are available from Epping Forest District Council Performance Management Unit and on the website at www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk.

Code of Conduct and other Ethical Issues or 'How do you change things round here?'

In giving the Declaration of Acceptance of Office, the councillor undertakes to abide by the Code of Conduct. A copy of the Code is attached at Appendix 2. The Code provides guidance on recommended standards of conduct expected of councillors in carrying out their duties and represents the standard against which the conduct of members will be judged, both by the public and by their fellow councillors. The Code makes it clear that your overriding duty as a councillor is to the whole local community and that you have a special duty to your constituents, including those who did not vote for you.

If you have a private or personal interest in a question you should never take any part in the decision, except in certain special circumstances and, even in those cases, you should not let your interest influence the decision. You should never do anything as a councillor which you could not

justify to the public; it is not enough to avoid actual impropriety - you should at all times avoid any occasion for suspicion and any appearance of improper conduct.

The Code of Conduct gives guidance on the declaration and disclosure of interests and explains the requirement to register financial and other interests. Where you have a financial interest in any issue or business being discussed or considered in any shape or form by the Council, you must declare this and take no part in any discussion. Failure to do so can result in the committing of a criminal offence.

It is important to be aware of the constraints and duties that go with being elected as a councillor. Bearing in mind the advice in the Code of Conduct, there will occasionally be difficulty in deciding whether a matter seen as beneficial to the District as a whole should be supported against the wishes of the inhabitants of your Ward who may ask you to speak and vote against the proposal. Also, whilst it is normal for residents to turn to their ward representative for help and advice, it should be borne in mind that a member of the public can contact any councillor of his or her choice. Where this happens, it is the usual practice for the councillor who has been contacted either to refer the person to the ward representative or advise the appropriate ward representative, as a courtesy, of any action taken or advice given.

You may be seeking to achieve certain objectives in being elected to the Council. As suggested in the introduction, it is important that your expectations are realistic. A local authority cannot go beyond what is prescribed in law, although it may be able to influence others, through public opinion or through its representation on other bodies, in areas where it has no direct jurisdiction. Furthermore, to achieve anything, you will need the support of a majority of your fellow councillors. You should be aware that the individual non-executive councillor has no decision-making power - the power only comes from being part of a collective body, i.e. the Council or one of its committees exercising functions on its behalf. Only executive members have individual decision making powers, exercisable through delegation to them.

On being elected, you will receive a copy of the Constitution which contains the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations, which govern the conduct of Council and committee meetings and transactions with other parties. It will take time to familiarise yourself with the rules set out in this document, but you will soon see why it is necessary to have rules governing debate and proceedings at meetings and ensuring propriety in contractual matters.

Although the Council generally conducts its business in open session which can be attended by both press and public, there are occasions when statutory provisions have to be used to enable matters to be considered in private, e.g. those of a personal nature, discussing possible Court proceedings or financial information which could be advantageous to a particular party. As a Councillor, you acquire much information that has not yet been made public and is still confidential; the use of confidential information for the personal advantage of yourself or anyone known to you is at best a betrayal of trust and at worst could lead to criminal proceedings.

If you fail to attend any meetings for six consecutive months, then by law you will automatically cease to be a member of the Council unless your absence has been authorised within that period by the Council.

When taking part in any debate at a committee or Council meeting, any statement you make may be protected from liability for defamation by qualified privilege. You will not be liable in slander unless actuated by malice provided that the statement is material and pertinent to the matter under discussion. Privilege may not therefore be applicable where you digress from the subject.

Keeping members informed of Council business and matters of interest, through agenda for Council and committee meetings and other publications, involves the regular issue of information both electronically and in paper form. A member who hopes to influence the course of discussion (and also avoid extending the meeting by asking questions which were answered in the circulated

papers) must be prepared to devote an adequate amount of time to prepare for the meeting and to ensure that he or she is aware of what is going on and how this affects the residents who elected them. All committee papers are available electronically. See Section 10 about the expectation of your connectivity to the Council. The Council also operates a 'Virtual Private Network' or VPN which allows members to view restricted papers relating to meetings of the authority.

The Council, Cabinet and committee meetings are generally held during the evenings. . The next Section deals with the Scheme of Allowances which are payable and you will see from this that each member receives a basic allowance, in addition to travelling and subsistence allowances.

Experienced and conscientious councillors will tell you that this should not necessarily be seen as full compensation for the considerable amount of time that you will need to spend on preparation for meetings and your constituency work: this is borne out by Government guidance on schemes of allowances, which says that a proportion of a member's public service should be voluntary.

Seeking Advice – The Role of Research and Democratic Services

There is much to take in on becoming a councillor and, especially in the early days, you will be inundated with information. Nobody expects you to be able to digest all of this at once - it will take some time - so please do not hesitate to seek advice from experienced members or officers. We know from feedback from members that in some cases they felt reticent, or even embarrassed, to ask for advice on joining the Council. It would be unrealistic to expect somebody with no previous experience in this role to take up his or her duties smoothly and with no assistance, so when in doubt about anything please ask! The Research and Democratic Services section provide support to members of the Council and is often a good place to start your search for information or advice.

SECTION 9

Scheme of Allowances

The main local authorities in England and Wales are bound by the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) Regulations 1991, as amended. The Regulations enable authorities to set their own levels of allowance in the light of local circumstances, without any reference to ceilings set by the Secretary of State. Regulations subsequently introduced under the Local Government Act 2000 required a scheme to be made having regard to the advice of an independent panel, which must then make recommendations annually on levels of allowance.

The following types of allowances may be paid:-

(a) Basic Allowance

A basic, flat rate allowance payable to all councillors of the authority.

(b) Special Responsibility Allowance

Each main authority may also make provision for the payment of special responsibility allowances for those councillors such as Leader of the Council or Committee Chairmen. Where one political group is in control, and where an authority has decided to pay special responsibility allowances, the authority must make provision for the payment of special responsibility allowance to at least one member of a minority political group.

Travel and Subsistence Allowances are payable as a way of recompensing councillors for expenditure on travel and subsistence necessarily incurred when performing an approved duty. It is a condition of payment that the duty has been approved before it is performed. Approved duties for travel and subsistence are specified in the Council's scheme.

The current scheme is reproduced at Appendix 3.

SECTION 10

Member Connectivity Scheme

This document provides information on the member connectivity scheme.

Introduction

The Connectivity Scheme has been introduced to enable members to receive electronic notification of and Internet access to papers for Council meetings and associated information. The scheme has been made possible following the introduction of the Committee Management System (CoMS) which publishes our publicly available agenda to the Internet via the Council's website. The Connectivity Scheme will, however, provide members with access to a wider range of information including agenda planning, up to date notification of publication, call-in and portfolio holder decision-making.

The Agreed Scheme:

The Connectivity Scheme provides members with an additional allowance (payable as part of the existing Scheme of Members Allowances) towards acquiring computer equipment and to use this equipment to access information on the Council's Agendas and Minutes via the Internet.

Members would be expected to use this system to access all agenda and minutes information **and** cease to receive hard copy agenda (except for those of which they are a member or required to attend by virtue of a position).

Under the scheme you will receive £500 per annum (payable normally quarterly in arrears) from which members will be expected to assist with the cost of a Personal Computer (PC) (if necessary); Internet connection and any consumables. This sum will be subject to tax and National Insurance.

Equipment Specification

The minimum specification required for PC equipment is:

- (i) A PC that can access the Internet;
- (ii) A broadband connection to your home;
- (iii) A valid email account
- (iv) Internet Browser software; and
- (v) A printer capable of printing A4 pages.

Data and Equipment Security and Use Guidance

The equipment is the individual member's property and can be used for non-council activities. Members must adhere to:

- (i) The User Policy Statement for the CoMS system;
- (ii) Issued Standards Committee Guidance on the Use of IT by Members;
- (iii) The Council's other adopted ICT related policies including the security of any data and remote working policies;

(iv) The provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 regarding the transmission of Exempt Business as defined in Schedule 12A outside of the Council.

What the Council will provide:

The Council will:

- (i) Provide an 'extranet' (a private intranet) connection using a 'token' scheme to control access and a user name and password for each member;
- (ii) Training on the use of the system;
- (iii) IT helpdesk support relating to (i) above and advice from RDS on (ii) above;
- (iv) A paper copy of the agenda to members of each Committee (unless the member indicates in writing otherwise);
- (v) A system of email notification of publication of agenda and minutes to all members.
- (vi) Headed paper and envelopes for use by members for Councillor correspondence.

What the Council will not provide:

The Council will **not**:

- (i) Provide IT helpdesk support for PC's or any peripherals purchased by members under the scheme;
- (ii) Advise on purchase of equipment or choice of ISP.
- (iii) Provide a paper copy of agenda for other Committees if you are not a member. Paper copies of Agenda will be available at the meeting in small quantities.
- (iv) Plain paper and print cartridge consumables.

Glossary of Terms – Member Connectivity

Broadband – a system of connecting to the Internet that allows voice, data, and video to be broadcast over the same medium at the same time. They may also allow multiple data channels to be broadcast simultaneously. It is much faster than traditional dial-up methods of connection.

Browser – Software that allows a computer user to find and view information on the Internet.

Committee Management System – A computer system used by EFDC to publish and archive all Agenda and Minutes of Council's meetings and publish these to the Internet and intranet.

Email account – An account provided by your ISP by which you can receive email. Your current or chosen ISP will be able provide details of how you can set an account up.

Extranet - an extension of the Council's intranet giving authorised people controlled access to the intranet from outside of the Council's network.

Exempt Business – Items of business on an agenda that are confidential to the Council and should not be disclosed to third parties.

Internet – a network that links computer networks all over the world by satellite and telephone, connecting users with service networks such as e-mail and the World Wide Web.

Internet Browser – See Browser

ISP - Internet service provider. A company that provides internet connection services

IT helpdesk – The Council provides a helpdesk to supports its applications. It contact number is 01992 564321

Password – In this case means a word that when entered on the password screen allows access to the extranet

Peripherals – a piece of computer hardware such as a printer or a disk drive that is external to but controlled by a computer's central processing unit.

Personal Computer (PC) – a computer with its own operating system and a wide selection of software, intended to be used by one person

Portfolio holder decision-making – Means a executive decision made by a member of the Cabinet

RDS – Research and Democratic Services at EFDC

Remote working – is another ways of describing someone accessing the Council's network from outside of the building i.e. remotely.

Token – A piece of equipment that provides a secondary form of identification when accessing the Council's extranet.

User name – In this instance means your name on the system. Normally a combination of your initials and your surname.

SECTION 11

Members Training Courses - Councillors' Training Programme 2006/7

The Council, through a review of its member training has brought together a number of training courses for members showing its commitment to achieving a core number of competencies for its elected members.

Attached at Appendix 4 is the Councillors' training programme for 2006/7. In the prospectus you will find a range of courses designed to increase your knowledge and awareness of the Council, both locally and in the national context. **Please note that new member induction will take place in the two weeks following your election. You should not book holidays immediately after the election.**

Some are designed to impart information, others to develop skills and remainder to make you aware of duties which, being a Councillor, are placed on you as an individual.

Some are run by Council staff and others by external specialists. Some are strongly participative, others more traditional in format. All are designed to be informal and to foster exchanges of views and questions.

Some are available to your colleague Councillors from Parish and Town Councils. This is to make the best use of resources and to reflect the fact that in many aspects of local government, all Councillors have common needs.

Obligatory Courses

Some are designated "obligatory". This means that, for relevant Councillors, attendance is a necessary pre-requisite to becoming involved in a specific activity or serving on a particular member body. In other words, members will be unable to undertake those roles without this training. This designation is of particular relevance to newly-elected Councillors.

Desirable Courses

If designated "desirable", this recognises that established members may have already attended the course. However, regular repeats will often help to refresh members' knowledge.

Optional Courses

"Optional" courses are those which may not be a direct requirement but which might be of interest and increase your background knowledge of the Council.

There is a booking form at the end of the prospectus. Please complete this and return it as soon as you can to the address given on the form, remember to book yourself onto the courses which are obligatory.

All qualify for reimbursement of travel and subsistence costs except, in the case of subsistence, where catering is provided by the Council as part of the course.

Once you have submitted your booking form you will receive notification that you have a place on your chosen courses, together with joining instructions. If having booked a course, you are unable to attend, please notify Kim Partridge(ext 4427) (email kpartridge@eppingforestdc.gov.uk). This will enable your place to be offered to someone else.

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 - Cabinet and Committee Structure

Appendix 2 – Members Code of Conduct

Appendix 3 - Scheme of Members Allowances

Appendix 4 - Members Training prospectus 2006-07