

## ***Report to the Cabinet***

**Report reference:** C-075-2011/12

**Date of meeting:** 23 April 2012



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Portfolio:** Planning and Technology

**Subject:** Authority to carry forward £25 000 underspend to 2012/13.

**Responsible Officer:** Peter Millward (01992 564 338).

**Democratic Services Officer:** Gary Woodhall (01992 564470).

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### **Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

- (1) That authority be granted to carry forward £25 000, underspend from 2011/12 to 2012/13 from the Planning Support Budget 37 100 – 3342 Document Scanning as a DDF Saving;
- (2) That the underspend carried forward is to be spent in 2012/13 for the use in the development of document and microfiche scanning as detailed in the Electronic Records Management Progress Plan in Appendix Two (attached) of the 2012/13 Business Plan; and
- (3) That the need to recruit a relevant member of staff to support this is noted, and that if a third attempt at internal recruitment is unsuccessful, that external recruitment is allowed for this specific role.

### **Executive Summary:**

The progress of electronic records development slowed substantially in 2011/12 due to staffing and resource difficulties and it is proposed that the unspent CSB Planning Support Budget of £25 000 (Document Scanning) be carried forward as a DDF saving to be spent in 2012/13.

Planning and Economic Development has made significant progress in moving away from paper based office systems to Electronic Record and Document Management Systems ERDMS. The benefits of electronic record keeping have produced a range of benefits such as savings on the cost of paper and file storage, aiding residents of Epping to access information online and helping with the production of the Local Plan.

However there is a considerable amount of work still to be carried out to build on these gains to move the Directorate into better and faster ways of working. There is a need to make more information available electronically as well as enabling the electronic submission of Building Control Plans to compete for additional work and increase income as detailed in the Appendix 2 of the Business Plan 2012/13 and attached.

### **Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

The proposed carry forward of the unspent budget of £25 000 will facilitate progression of the Electronic Records Management Progress Plan identified in the Directorate Business Plan 2012/13. This is a key element in moving away from paper based office systems to Electronic

Record and Document Management Systems ERDMS.

**Other Options for Action:**

To do nothing will mean that the Directorate will lose twelve months progress in the scanning of essential records as well as delay the progression of Electronic Record and Document Management Systems (ERDMS) development for Building Control.

**Report:**

1. The progress of electronic records development slowed down substantially in 2011/12 due to staffing and resource difficulties in the Planning Support Team. This was created by the loss of some key staff members in Planning Support who moved from their posts in response to Corporate Internal recruitment. This created a serious gap in service provision for iPlan and Records and Scanning which needed to be addressed as a priority issue. As a result the focus was on maintaining the existing level of electronic records management at the expense of electronic records development (as detailed in the attached Electronic Records Management Progress Plan - Appendix Two Business Plan 2012/13).

2. The position has now stabilised in the Planning Support Team and it is now proposed that the Planning Support Budget of £25 000 which will remain unspent at the end of this financial year be carried forward as a DDF saving to be spent in 2012/13. Appendix Two (attached) details the Electronic Records Management Progress plan and use of this funding will enable significant progress to be made in sections 7, 8 and 9 during the course of the 2012/13 year.

3. Over a period of several years the Directorate of Planning and Economic Development has made significant progress in moving away from paper based office systems to Electronic Record and Document Management Systems ERDMS. The Implementation of electronic records has provided numerous benefits by making information available electronically combined with savings from increased speed of work and reductions in the costs of printing, post and file storage. Continuing to improve the amount of information being held on i-Plan is part of the Directorate strategy of continuously improving efficiency. The aim is to make more information available electronically on the corporate website, rather than via individual letters or individual meetings which in turn reduces the costs of dealing with enquiries.

4. Given the rural nature of Epping Forest District Council the placement of planning information online has potentially saved a considerable amount of long journeys to Epping Civic Offices along with parking difficulties during office hours. With Electronic Planning records now available online we are now able to provide this information on a 24 hour basis, retrievable by members of the public from our website at any location that has access to a PC and the Internet. This has been a major transformation for Planning and Economic Development, previously one of the most one of the most paper dependent directorates.

5. However there is a significant amount of records that still need to be converted to electronic format across the directorate from paper based Building Control records to Microfiche Planning and Building records. In order to build on these gains it is necessary to increase the amount of records accessible electronically for residents as well as enabling the submission of electronic Building Control applications to compete for additional work and increase income.

6. The carry forward will principally be used to undertake an audit of microfiche, and measures to assist Building Control being able to accept electronic submissions. Clearly some staff support is necessary, and there are existing budgets for staff which can be used. Two attempts were made to make an internal staff appointment to a role within the last year but these were unsuccessful. A further attempt will now be made internally at a reduced grade. If that is not successful then it is requested that authority is given to exempt the post from the present external

recruitment restrictions.

**Resource Implications:**

This refers to the Budget provision for Document Scanning Planning Support 37 100 – 3342.

**Legal and Governance Implications:**

The legal & governance implications have been taken into account by integrating this with actions as part of the Business Plan 2012/13.

**Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

The development of the Electronic Record and Document Management System ERDMS supports carbon friendly sustainable development and will assist us in our responsibilities to protect the special character of the District and retain the existing rural character of the Green Belt.

**Consultation Undertaken:**

No external consultation undertaken.

**Background Papers:**

Planning and Economic Development Business Plan 2012/13.

**Impact Assessments:**

Risk Management

The implications of the Electronic Record and Document Management System ERDMS are covered in the Business Plan 2012/13 Appendix 8 and 9.

Equality and Diversity

*Did the initial assessment of the proposals contained in this report for relevance to the Council's general equality duties, reveal any potentially adverse equality implications?* No

*Where equality implications were identified through the initial assessment process, has a formal Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken?* No

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

*How have the equality implications identified through the Equality Impact Assessment been addressed in this report in order to avoid discrimination against any particular group?*  
N/A.