

## **EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL COMMITTEE MINUTES**

**Committee:** Local Plan Cabinet Committee      **Date:** 26 November 2012

**Place:** Council Chamber, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping      **Time:** 8.00 - 8.50 pm

**Members Present:** R Bassett (Chairman), Mrs A Grigg, D Stallan and C Whitbread

**Other Councillors:** K Avey, G Chambers, A Lion, J Philip, Mrs C Pond, Ms S Stavrou, G Waller, Mrs E Webster, J M Whitehouse, D Wixley and N Wright

**Apologies:** W Breare-Hall

**Officers Present:** G Chipp (Chief Executive), I White (Forward Planning Manager), T Carne (Public Relations and Marketing Officer), P Seager (Chairman's Secretary) and G J Woodhall (Democratic Services Officer)

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### **16. WEBCASTING INTRODUCTION**

The Chairman reminded everyone present that the meeting would be broadcast live to the Internet, and that the Council had adopted a protocol for the webcasting of its meetings.

### **17. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct.

### **18. MINUTES**

**Resolved:**

(1) That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2012 be taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

### **19. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Cabinet Committee noted its terms of reference, as amended by the Leader of the Council.

### **20. PORTFOLIO HOLDER DECISION AGREED SINCE THE LAST MEETING**

The Cabinet Committee noted that there had been no Portfolio Holder decisions in relation to the Local Plan signed since the last meeting.

### **21. LOCAL PLAN ISSUES AND OPTIONS – BRIEFING FOLLOWING CONSULTATION PERIOD**

The Forward Planning Manager presented an update report on the Local Plan

process following the conclusion of the Issues & Options consultation.

The Forward Planning Manager stated that the Issues & Options consultation had started on 30 July and concluded on 15 October 2012. There had been much local interest generated over the consultation and a large number of representations had been submitted as a result. The Drop-In sessions had been well attended and public engagement was generally constructive. The total number of representations received had been 5,773 of which 124 were from statutory bodies, 275 from landowners, 3,158 from residents, and 2,216 signatories from local groups. The information from the consultation would be used to inform a series of Member workshops aimed at District, Town and Parish Councillors. These had been scheduled for 26 January, 9 February and 2 March 2013.

The Forward Planning Manager reported that the Council was now focused on processing and analysing the representations in order to progress to the next stage of the Local Plan process, the Preferred Options. The Forward Planning team was also focusing on commissioning, progressing and completing key pieces of evidence work that would inform the Local Plan:

- (i) A final draft copy of the Carbon Reduction and Renewable Energy Assessment report had now been received;
- (ii) An update of the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment would be discussed at the December meetings of the Essex Planning Officers Association and the Essex Housing Officers Group;
- (iii) Officers had been in discussions with the Glasshouse Industry to identify suitable areas for land for future Glasshouse development;
- (iv) Officers were interviewing three consultants to deliver the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 2 for the preferred sites;
- (v) A Transport Assessment for the preferred sites;
- (vi) URS (Scott Wilson) had been approached to be the Council's 'Critical Friend' for the Sustainability Appraisal; and
- (vii) Delivery of the DVD's to the local Traveller community was expected to begin next week, and the DVD would be published on the Council's website.

In addition, Officers were considering commissioning a study of the brownfield sites within the District to identify further areas for development, a Dispersion Modelling Assessment of Air Quality at the identified preferred sites, and possibly further work on Economic Development within the District.

The Chairman stated that all the identified brownfield sites would be highlighted in one document to see if any had been missed. Any brownfield sites that were too small to accommodate at least six properties would be classed as 'windfall' sites. Harlow District Council had received 4,000 responses to their Issues & Options consultation, but 75% of these had come from the Stop Harlow North pressure group. This Council's responses had been more widespread and constructive. Preliminary meetings had taken place with Harlow District Council about potential developments that could impact upon the District, as well as Uttlesford District Council concerning potential developments at Stansted Airport. A strategic review of North Weald Airfield was being undertaken, and the Council was in discussions with One Epping Forest about the Food for London initiative and the development of the Lea Valley Regional

Park. The Council had worked hard to ensure that the Local Plan would be sound and consensus-led.

A number of the Members present reported problems in responding to the consultation via the Council's website, and ultimately had to resort to using hardcopies of the documents. The Chairman stated that he would be one of the testers for future website consultation exercises, and that if he was not happy with the ease of use of the website then it would not be released for public use.

The Chairman reported that the Member workshops had been arranged to take place on Saturdays with a 10.00am start. The representative from the Town and Parish Councils would be an elected member, and the invitation would be extended to the local council Chairman in the first instance. It was expected that modelling data from the 2011 census would be available for the workshops; if any further data subsequently became available that would impact upon the Local Plan then the Council would utilise it.

The Leader of the Council commented that it was important for the Council to learn lessons from the consultation just completed, including making residents aware well in advance. It was highlighted that North Weald Bassett Parish Council heavily advertised the consultation to their residents. The Leader congratulated the Officers for their organisation and running of the 'Drop-In' sessions, and thanked the residents for their involvement as the Council had a good number of responses. It was important for the local Members of Parliament, County Councillors, District Councillors, Town and Parish Councillors to be involved in the forthcoming Member workshops planned for the new year.

The Forward Planning Manager emphasised that the definition of brownfield sites excluded agricultural land, including former nursery sites, but the Council could make an argument for the development of such land, especially if it prevented the use of other greenfield sites. It was confirmed that any development on Council-owned garage sites would be regarded as brownfield development. Various studies would be performed on the identified sites, including a Transport Assessment, before their inclusion on the final list of preferred sites. With regards to the vacant posts within the Forward Planning team, the Cabinet Committee noted that one internal appointment had already been made. Candidates were being shortlisted for two currently vacant posts, and arrangements were in hand for a third post which would become vacant at the end of January.

The Forward Planning Manager informed the Cabinet Committee that the priority for the Council was to prepare a new Local Plan for the District. The Forward Planning team simply did not have sufficient resources to assist Town or Parish Councils in compiling Neighbourhood Plans for their settlements until the Local Plan process was complete. The Chairman added that the Council would be keen to work with local councils on their Plans and Design Statements in the future, and local councils would be encouraged to play an active part in the Local Plan process. Hence, their invitations to the forthcoming workshops.

The Cabinet Committee was informed that the results of the Issues & Options consultation would be reported to the Member Workshops, and more detailed results about individual sites would be published later in the process. It was acknowledged that some sort of leaflet delivery mechanism might have to be retained for the northern areas of the District due to its remoteness and lack of town centres.

In respect of St John's Road in Epping, the Chairman stated that the Council's Solicitor had been in discussions with the County Council about the disputed

ownership of the land that the school was built on. The County Council had assured the Council's Solicitor that they did in fact own the land, but were not prepared to share their legal opinion as they considered it to be privileged.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That the outcome of the Local Plan Issues & Options consultation be noted; and
- (2) That the on-going work for the Local Plan Evidence Base be noted.

**22. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chairman reported that the Government planned to extend Permitted Development rights for residential and business premises. The technical consultation was now underway, due to finish on 24 December, and the Planning Services Scrutiny Panel would consider the Council's response.

**CHAIRMAN**