

Report to the Cabinet

Report reference: C-002-2013/14

Date of meeting: 10 June 2013



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Planning

Subject: Planning & Economic Development Document Scanning - Budget Underspends and Funding of Additional Post

Responsible Officer: Peter Millward (01992 564 338)

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) That authority be granted to carry forward £11 600, underspend from 2012/13 to 2013/14 from the Planning Support Budget 37 100 – 3342 Document Scanning as a DDF Saving; and

(2) That this underspend be combined with a smaller salary underspend to fund one scale 3 Administration Assistant post to scan the large site paper planning files which are considered too complex and detailed to be sent to Northgate for scanning as part of the standard 'backscanning' of records process.

Executive Summary:

Planning and Economic Development has in place long term plans to progressively reduce its dependency on paper records and at the same time seeks to improve both the quality and quantity of historic planning records available online. Appendix Two - Electronic Records Management Progress Plan of the 2013/14 Directorate Business Plan details the requirement to convert to electronic format large site development control files, conservation files and contaminated land files.

There is a high level of interest in these records by members of the public/professionals within the District and in addition it is considered that this will reduce number of Freedom of Information requests. These records are only available during office hours at Epping Forest Council Offices in paper format. This will also assist Directorate plans to move away from paper records to electronic format to reduce the need for file storage space.

This will enable Planning and Economic Development to appoint for a fixed term of ten months one scale 3 Administration Assistant to carry out the scanning of large site development control files, conservation files and contaminated land files.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

The proposed carry forward of the unspent budget of £11,000 will facilitate the reduction and dependency on paper records as part of the Electronic Records Management Progress Plan identified in the Directorate Business Plan 2013/14. 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 take longer to complete the changeover from paper based records and delay the progression of Electronic Record and Document Management Systems (ERDMS) development combined with extended use of relatively costly filing storage space.

Report:

1. The progress of electronic records development slowed down substantially in 2011 and 2012 due to staffing and resource difficulties in the Planning Support Team.
2. There is a need to support business processes within Planning and Economic Development to promote better ways of working. This has resulted in the identification in the Directorate Business Plan 2013 – 2014 (Appendix Two) of an Electronic Records Management Progress Plan which details the requirement to progress EDRMS (Electronic Document Records Management Systems).
3. This proposal will assist in taking steps to convert to electronic format a significant element of paper records for large site development control files, conservation files and contaminated land files.
4. This underspend will be combined with a two month salary underspend for post PST11 to fund one scale 3 Administration Assistant for ten months to scan the large site planning files which are currently in paper format and are considered to complex and detailed to be sent to Northgate for scanning as part of our standard 'backscanning' of paper records process.
5. 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.
6. The details identified and listed in Appendix Two of the Business Plan 2013 – 2014, the Electronic Records Management Progress Plan indicate that there is still much work to be carried out regarding Large Site Files, Microfiche Records and Building Control Files.

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 2013/14.

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 2013/14.

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

The implications of the Electronic Record and Document Management System ERDMS are covered in the Business Plan 2013/14 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.