

# ***Report to the Council***

**Committee: Cabinet**

**Date: 30 July 2013**

**Portfolio Holder: Councillor Richard Bassett**

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## **SUPPLEMENTARY DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT FUND (DDF) ESTIMATES – LOCAL PLAN AND MATERNITY COVER**

### **Recommending:**

- (1) That a supplementary District Development Fund estimate in the sum of £331,933 be approved for the Local Plan budget to cover:**
  - (a) further evidence base work;**
  - (b) extension of existing temporary staff contracts within the Forward Planning team; and**
  - (c) additional project management support;**
  
- (2) That a supplementary District Development Fund estimate in the sum of £51,937 be approved to allow for appropriate maternity cover for the three posts connected to the delivery of the Local Plan.**

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### **Introduction**

1. We are seeking additional DDF to secure continued progress on the Local Plan preparation process, and to ensure that sound and robust evidence is obtained to support the emerging document.

### **2012/13 Financial Year – Total Spend**

2. A total of £303,033 was spent from the Local Plan budget during 2012/13, compared to the total amount available within the District Development Fund (DDF) of £620,000 for the financial year. To reflect the revised timescale for the preparation of the Local Plan the associated budget has been re-profiled.

### **2013/14 Financial Year – Spend to 31 May 2013, Known Commitments and Additional Funds**

3. In the first two months of this financial year, £14,976 has been spent.
  
4. Existing commitments are in place, or funds are allocated for a number of studies and other work including:
  - (a) Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment;
  - (b) Strategic Housing Market Assessment update;
  - (c) Sustainability Appraisal support;

- (d) Habitat Regulations Assessment work; and
- (e) District wide Transport Assessment (partial funding available).

5. Due to additional pieces of evidence base work being required, it is necessary to seek an addition to the Local Plan DDF to ensure sufficient funds are available for these.

6. Population and household demographic information has been delivered by Edge Analytics, and was completed on an Essex-wide basis and also included a number of adjoining authorities from the surrounding counties. This has provided useful information, but concerns have been raised around the seemingly inflated projections for the district described in the 2010 sub-national population projections (particularly with regard to net internal migration). We also have concerns over the number of Local Plans which are failing at Examination in Public stage, due to challenges over population and growth figures. The Council must establish a position on population growth and housing which is defensible at Examination in Public, both against a higher target than is reasonable (which could damage environmental and other aspects of the district's character) and a lower target than is reasonable (which would risk the Plan being found unsound through non-compliance with the NPPF). We believe it is necessary, therefore, to obtain the most up to date assessment of future population growth in the district, which can then be balanced against other pertinent issues such as planning constraints and land availability.

7. Edge Analytics has been commissioned to prepare an additional set of population forecasts, and related household and housing forecasts, using detailed 2011 Census results, and newly released data comprising revised mid-year population estimates for the period 2001 to 2011 (ONS) and a new set of household projections (Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG)). Some of this work will look at population and housing changes at ward level between the two most recent Censuses as well. This additional work was not anticipated at the time the budget was last fully reviewed (June 2012), and we are requesting that a supplementary amount £46,400 added to the Local Plan DDF to allow for this work, and further forecasting work that may be needed.

8. The Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) was undertaken during 2012 but as a result of the Issues & Options consultation exercise, further sites and additional information have come forward which now need to be included within this study. We propose that consultants (Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners) undertake this work on behalf of the Council, and we are seeking a further £10,280 to cover this additional update.

9. We have established that further funding is also required for several other projects. The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment needs to be updated to reflect new guidance published alongside the National Planning Policy Framework, to ensure that any new policies are drafted on the basis of the best available information. This project is being conducted across Essex, and is being led by Uttlesford District Council. The Essex Planning Officers' Association (EPOA) and the Essex Housing Officers' Group (EHOG) are to pay for the majority of this work from existing pooled funds, but a small additional contribution per local authority will be required. The entire cost of the project is £64,000, with £50,000 coming from EPOA/EHOG funds. The Council's contribution at this stage is £1,000, but further work by, and/or in support of, the consultants may be needed as Local Plan preparation progresses. We anticipated that this will not be more than an additional £4,000 (i.e. £5,000 in total).

10. Further work may be required to consider whether suitable sites may exist for additional glasshouse development across the District. An additional amount to commission consultants could be needed and we are seeking an additional sum of £10,000 for this work.

11. A consultant is currently working within Economic Development/Forward Planning to provide updated and detailed economic information for the District. Additional work will be needed to supplement this, and further input to an Economic Development Strategy will also be required. It is not clear whether the current consultant will undertake this work, and this decision is linked to the need for maternity cover for the Economic Development Officer detailed below. We estimate the cost of this further support to be £10,000.

12. The initial stage of Transport Assessment is currently underway. It has proven necessary to test a larger number of potential sites at this stage than originally anticipated, and therefore the cost of work at this point is greater. An initial estimate of £35,000 was set aside for this work. Essex County Council's costed brief now indicates this work will cost £59,000 for this stage alone. Some funding may become available from the County to contribute to the cost, but it is not yet clear how much this may amount to, although it has been made clear that most of the cost will fall to funding from EFDC. We are therefore seeking an additional £50,000 to cover this area of evidence work. In a similar vein, the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (Level 2) has already been commissioned, but given the larger number of sites than originally anticipated, we are seeking an additional £3,500.

13. In recognition of some of the issues faced during the last round of consultation around design and distribution of information leaflets, we are of the opinion that any leaflets used for subsequent consultation exercises will need to be larger, and more detailed methods of distribution may need to be considered. As such we are seeking an additional £7,000 for each of the next two consultation periods (i.e. a total of £14,000). The number of public drop-in sessions held during the Community Choices consultation was doubled over that originally allowed for. Accordingly, an additional £1,500 is requested to ensure that sufficient funds are available for venue hire etc (i.e. an additional £3,000). An additional £25,000 per consultation period (a total of £50,000) is requested to allow external data entry to take place, in order that consultation responses can be processed and analysed quickly and efficiently. Taking account of all of the above, a further £67,000 is required across both forthcoming consultation periods to ensure appropriate resources are available for public engagement.

14. In recognition of the proposed extended timetable for the Local Plan we believe that the three temporary posts within the Forward Planning team need to be extended to 31 December 2015 to ensure the necessary staff resources are in place to deliver this new timetable. We are seeking an amount of £99,740 to cover the additional costs.

15. Fortismere Associates are currently working with the Forward Planning team to provide essential project management support. The existing contract extends to September 2013, and allows for a total spend of £72,000. As of the end of May 2013, only £4,861 remains available within the current contract. The committed funding has been used earlier than anticipated as Fortismere Associates have been required to provide additional support beyond their original brief. We are seeking an additional £20,000 to fulfil the last four months of the existing contract.

16. We are also requesting that funds be made available to extend the contract with Fortismere Associates to September 2014, to ensure their continued support in the delivery of the Local Plan. It is suggested that this is capped at a maximum of £5,000 per calendar month. Accordingly, an additional £60,000 is required.

17. In summary, the total amount required as a supplementary District Development Fund for the Local Plan budget at this stage is:

<b>Item</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Population/Household forecasting work	£46,400
Strategic Land Availability Assessment update	£10,280

Contribution to Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment	£5,000
Consideration of land for the Glasshouse Industry	£10,000
Economic Development support	£10,000
Transport Assessment	£50,000
Additional Strategic Flood Risk Assessment work	£3,500
Consultation arrangements and data entry	£67,000
Extension of contracts for temporary posts	£99,740
Fortismere Associates (existing contract to Sept 2013)	£20,000
Fortismere Associates (extend contract to Sept 2014)	£60,000
<b>Amount required</b>	<b>£381,920</b>
<b>Surplus amounts identified from agreed budget June 2012</b>	<b>-£49,987</b>
<b>TOTAL REQUIRED</b>	<b>£331,933</b>

18. As indicated earlier in this report it has been necessary to re-profile the Local Plan to indicate likely expenditure over the coming financial years. At this point in time based on the best available information we envisage the position as follows;

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	Total
Required budget (July 2013)	£303,033 (spent)	£416,768	£303,861	£331,771	£30,500	£1,385,933
Available budget (June 2012)	£620,000	£282,000	£152,000	-	-	£1,054,000
Existing budget re-profiled	£303,033 (spent)	£416,768	£303,861	£30,338	-	£1,054,000
<b>Additional funds required</b>	-	-	-	<b>£301,433</b>	<b>£30,500</b>	<b>£331,933</b>

### Maternity Cover Arrangements

19. It will be necessary to cover three posts within the Policy and Conservation section of Planning during 2013/14 - 2014/15, whilst the post holders take maternity leave. These posts are PPC01 (Assistant Director (Policy and Conservation)), PPC03 (Principal Planning Officer) and PPC07 (Economic Development Officer).

20. It is considered that the most appropriate option for PPC01 is to employ an Interim Assistant Director to undertake management of the Forward Planning functions, and preparation of the Local Plan from July 2013. The cost for this arrangement is estimated to be £97,200 for up to 12 months cover, on the basis of 3 days per week. The existing unused salary available can be put towards this amount (£51,473), and using £21,000 from other savings within the Directorate, this leaves £24,727 to be further agreed. The Interim Assistant Director will not perform a management role for the Conservation Team and the Trees and Landscape Team, and this role will be undertaken by the Assistant Director (Development Control). An honorarium payment of £5,000 per annum for the current post holder, paid monthly, is therefore requested for these additional responsibilities whilst they last.

21. The Principal Planning Officer (PPC03) is not due to commence maternity leave until late October/early November 2013, and the possible opportunities for filling this role during her absence have not yet been fully explored. Costs for external cover of this post are currently estimated on the basis of a 6 month initial fixed term contract at current salary rates (including on costs), with a rolling monthly contract thereafter for up to a further 6 months.

This would cost £21,965 for the initial 6 months, and £3,660 per month thereafter. The total cost of 1 year cover would therefore be £43,930. Existing salary available is £37,000, leaving a requirement for an additional £6,930.

22. The Economic Development Officer (PPC07) has commenced maternity leave. Arranging cover on the basis of the approach suggested above for the Principal Planning Officer, would result in costs of £19,140 for the initial 6 full time month fixed term contract, with an additional monthly amount of £3,190 being required. The total cost of 1 year cover for this post is £38,280. The current salary available for this post is £23,000 (reflecting the part time working arrangements of the existing post holder), resulting in an additional £15,280 being required to fill the post on a full time basis.

23. Some savings from the overall salary budget have been identified, and the table below summarises the position and the additional short term growth to the Continuing Services Budget (CSB) salary budget.

Item	Amount
<b>Budget cost</b>	
Assistant Director (Policy & Conservation) (PPC01) – maternity cover for up to 1 year from July 2013	£97,200
Principal Planning Officer (PPC03) – maternity cover for up to 1 year from November 2013	£43,930
Economic Development Officer (PPC07) – maternity cover for up to 1 year from June 2013	£38,280
Honorarium payment – Assistant Director (Development Control) (PDC01) for up to 1 year	£5,000
<b>Total costs</b>	<b>£184,410</b>
<b>Identified budget savings</b>	
Assistant Director (Policy & Conservation) (PPC01) – existing salary available	£51,473
Principal Planning Officer (PPC03) – existing salary available	£37,000
Economic Development Officer (PPC07) – existing salary available	£23,000
Identified savings from retirement of holder of post PBC/01	£21,000
<b>Total savings</b>	<b>£132,473</b>
<b>TOTAL DDF required for maternity cover (salary budget) required</b>	<b>£51,937</b>

## Summary

24. Preparation of the Local Plan is the key priority for the Council, and it is therefore important that sufficient resources are devoted to the process.

25. We recommend therefore that supplementary District Development Fund estimates in the sums of £331,933 for the Local Plan budget and £51,937 addition to the Planning Salary budget be approved.