

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 19 December 2006

Portfolio Holder: Councillor S Metcalfe

Item: 14

ONLINE ANNUAL REPORT

Recommendations:

- (1) That the online publication of the E-Annual Report for 2005/6 be noted; and,**
- (2) That a report be submitted to Council in 2007 on the outcome of public consultation on the long- term demand for publication of future Annual Reports.**

Report:

1. Local Authorities may publish annual reports under the provisions of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 – Publication of Annual Reports and Financial Statements by Local Authorities - Code of Practice: Reports and Statements 1981
2. Following a period of years in which a range of different publications have fulfilled the role, the Council has reintroduced the concept of a corporate Annual Report. Members received draft text of the report in the Members Bulletin issued on 15 September with a request for comments prior to publication.
3. Unlike traditional publications the new Annual Report has been written and designed as an online document. It utilises information and a range of other reports already available online and brings them together under the umbrella of a summary. In so doing, heavy design and print costs associated with conventional publication techniques have been avoided and a great deal more information has been made available than would otherwise have been possible.
4. Principal documents supporting the publication online are:
 - (a) Financial Position Statement
 - (b) Annual Statement of Accounts
 - (c) Budget
 - (d) Annual Report of the Cabinet
 - (e) Annual Report of Overview and Scrutiny
 - (f) Annual Report of the Remuneration Panel
 - (g) Annual Report of the Standards Committee
5. It is intended that the Annual Report be viewed online although individual copies can be printed on request for members of the public. Guidance from the Audit Commission suggests that publication is desirable where a proven public demand can be shown. An online form invites residents to express their views or comments on this new publication format. It is proposed to bring forward a further report to Council reviewing the future publication of the Annual Report following an analysis of responses. This will be coupled with direct consultation with key stakeholders.
6. To view the Annual Report, Members should go to www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk and follow the links from the home page.