

Council



Forest Heath
District Council

Title of Report:	Schedule of Referrals from Cabinet and Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee	
Report No:	COU/FH/15/xxx [to be completed by Democratic Services]	
Report to and date/s:	Council	10 December 2014
Documents attached:	None	

(A) **Referrals from Cabinet: 28 October 2014** (click [here](#) for minutes)

1. Proposed Development of 11 Industrial Units: Sam Alper Court, Newmarket

Decisions Plan Reference: Oct14/10
Cabinet Member: Cllr Stephen Edwards

Report [CAB14/174](#)

RECOMMENDED that:

- (1) **the business case outlining the proposed development at Sam Alper Court, Newmarket, attached at [Appendix A \(Exempt\)](#) to Report CAB14/174 be approved; and**
- (2) **£1.67M is allocated from capital reserves to fund the construction of industrial units.**

This report seeks an 'in principle' approval of the release of capital funding in the region of £1.67million for the construction of circa 11 new industrial units, with associated photovoltaic provisions, at Sam Alper Court, Newmarket. The business case for the proposal can be found at Appendix A (Exempt) to Report CAB14/174.

This proposal aims to provide an annual income stream for Forest Heath District Council of up to £111,000 in rent, £21,000 in business rates and £14,000 from PV feed-in tariffs and energy sales, whilst providing an additional 15,000 sq.ft of industrial space and aiding economic growth.

2. Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership: Enforcement Agency

Decisions Plan Reference: ARP/SEP14/01
and OCT14/11

Cabinet Member: Cllr Stephen Edwards

**Report [CAB14/175](#) and
[Appendix A](#)
(Anglia Revenues and
Benefits Partnership
Joint Committee
exempt report – 11
September 2014)**

RECOMMENDED:

That, one of the two Directors, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, be given delegated authority to introduce a shared Enforcement Agency for the Anglia Revenues Partnership (St Edmundsbury Borough Council, Forest Heath District Council, Fenland District Council, Breckland Council and East Cambridgeshire District Council) Waveney District Council and Suffolk Coastal District Council through discussion via the ARP Operational Improvement Board, as outlined in Appendix A to Report No CAB14/175, and detailed in the full business case appraisal presented to the Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee.

Part 3 of the Tribunals, Courts and Enforcement Act 2007 was introduced in April 2013 which has changed the basis of enforcement fees (previously known as bailiff fees) to mean that debtors incur far greater fees if their debts are passed to enforcement agencies; rising from £42.50 after two visits to £310.00 if a first visit is needed.

The Anglia Revenue and Benefits Partnership Joint Committee's proposal to establish an in-house Enforcement Agency, as outlined in Appendix A to Report CAB14/175, will provide the potential to ensure that residents are treated fairly where enforcement is necessary, and fees are kept as low as possible, whilst retaining the income generated by enforcement actions for the Council Tax payers of the partner authorities.

A detailed analysis has assessed the potential benefits of a shared in-house Enforcement Agency, which will offer the potential of a shared income in excess of £150,000 per annum from fees. The full business case, presented to the Joint Committee, is deliberately cautious and so the potential income could be significantly greater than forecast.

(B) Referrals from Cabinet: 9 December 2014**1. Local Council tax Reduction Scheme and Council Tax Technical Changes 2015/2016****Cabinet Member:** Cllr Stephen Edwards**Report No:**[CAB/FH/14/007](#)**RECOMMENDED:****That, Council:**

- (a) the 1st year review for 2013/2014 be noted; and**
- (b) that no change be made to the current Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2015/2016; and**
- (c) that the 5% second home discount be removed from 1 April 2015.**

Report CAB/FH/14/007 will be presented to Cabinet on 9 December 2014. Any comments arising from the Cabinet will be reported verbally to the Council meeting.

A short summary of the report to be taken to Cabinet would be included here.

2. Council Tax Base for Tax Setting Purposes 2015/2016**Cabinet Member:** Cllr Stephen Edwards**Report No:**[CAB/FH/14/008](#)**RECOMMENDED:****That, Council:**

- (1) the tax base for 2015/2016, for the whole of Forest Heath is 16,557.34 equivalent Band 'D' dwellings , as detailed in paragraph 1.4 of Report CAB/FH/14/008 is approved; and**
- (2) the tax base for 2015/2016 for the different part of its area, as defined by Parish or special expense area boundaries are as shown in Appendix 2 to Report CAB/FH/14/008.**

Report CAB/FH/14/008 will be presented to Cabinet on 9 December 2014. Any comments arising from the Cabinet will be reported verbally to the Council meeting.

A short summary of the report to be taken to Cabinet would be included here.

3. Developing a Community Energy Plan

Cabinet Member: Cllr Stephen Edwards

Report No:

[CAB/FH/14/010](#)

RECOMMENDED:

That, Council:

- (1) the development of a West Suffolk Community Energy Plan, be supported;**
- (2) appraisal of other energy-related options set out in the report with a view to receiving further investment proposals, be supported;**
- (3) subject to the approval of full Council, the following be allocated:**
 - (a) £15,000 to continue the West Suffolk Greener Business Grant in support of energy efficiency improvements, as outlined in paragraphs 1.1.4 and 1.1.5 of Report No: CAB/FH/14/010;**
 - (b) £500,000 to improve business resource efficiency and install the next phase of solar schemes on Council property (Option 1), as outlined in Appendix A to Report No: CAB/FH/14/010;**
 - (c) as part of the 2015/2016 budget setting process, £1.62 million over three years to develop rent-a-roof solar schemes in partnership with local businesses (Option 3), as outlined in Appendix A to Report No: CAB/FH/14/010; and**
 - (d) as part of the 2015/2016 budget setting process, £50,000 to cover the identification, detailed feasibility and associated community engagement activities in support of potential sites for larger scale solar and renewable energy generation technologies (Options 5 and 8) where supported and/or led by communities in the District, as outlined in paragraph 1.3.5 to Report No: CAB/ FH/14/010.**

Report CAB/FH/14/010 will be presented to Cabinet on 9 December 2014. Any comments arising from the Cabinet will be reported verbally to the Council meeting.

A short summary of the report to be taken to Cabinet would be included here.

(B) Referrals from Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee: 26 November 2014

1. Delivering a Sustainable Budget 2015-2016 and Budget Consultation Results

Cabinet Member: Cllr Stephen Edwards

Report No:
CAB/FH/14/005
**(Performance and
Audit Scrutiny
Committee Report No:
PAS/FH/14/008)**

RECOMMENDED:

That, taking into account the public consultation results outlined in Appendix A to Report No: PAS/FH/14/008:

- (a) the proposals, as detailed in Table 2 at paragraph 1.5.1 of Report No: PAS/FH/14/008, be included; and***
- (b) the proposals, as detailed in paragraph 1.5.2 of Report No: PAS/FH/14/008, be removed.***

Forest Heath continues to face considerable financial challenges as a result of uncertainty in the wider economy and constraints on public sector spending. In this context, and like many other councils, we have to make difficult financial decisions.

The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), approved at Full Council on 26 February 2014 (Report COU14/662), sets out the current and future financial pressures and challenges facing Forest Heath. Our MTFS document also sets out the approach that Forest Heath District Council will take to the sound management of its finances over the next two years.

Report No: PAS/FH/14/008 provided information on the budget gap; budget assumptions and the methodology for securing a balanced budget for 2015/2016.

Following extensive public consultation on a number of proposals for potential inclusion in the budget for 2015/2016, the Cabinet supported the recommendations of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee, as detailed in Report No: CAB/FH/14/005.

2. Accounting for a single West Suffolk staffing structure and the move to a West Suffolk Cost Sharing Model

Cabinet Member: Cllr Stephen Edwards

Report No:

[CAB/FH/14/006](#)

(Performance and Audit Scrutiny

Committee Report No:

[PAS/FH/14/006](#))

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) as part of the 2015/16 budget setting process and subject to external audit support, the proposed cost sharing model for income and employee costs, as detailed in Table 2 and 3 and at paragraph 2.17 of Report No: PAS/FH/14/006, be approved; and**
- (2) the proposed model, as detailed in Tables 2 and 3 and at paragraph 2.17 of Report No: PAS/FH/14/006, be reviewed annually as part of the budget setting process with any necessary amendments to the model (in order to secure delivery against the principles set out in paragraph 2.12 of Report No: PAS/FH/14/006), be reported through to Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee in the autumn.**

The Cabinet considered the recommendations of the Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee arising from Report No: PAS/FH/14/006, which informed Members of the:

- (i) allocation of the single staffing structure across the West Suffolk partnership between Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council has to date been driven by the level of savings generated from the baseline position back in 2012; and
- (ii) a new approach to cost sharing for West Suffolk which recognises the shared nature of much of West Suffolk's service delivery and recognises that the Councils remain separate legal entities. The West Suffolk cost sharing model must therefore be transparent and comply with external audit requirements.

A new cost sharing model will deliver the following benefits to West Suffolk:

- (a) a simpler cost sharing model that is easy to communicate and understand;
- (b) an automated system of recharging for costs that continually gives a true reflection of service demand for both Councils;

- (c) an open and transparent mechanism which more easily enables the cost of a service to be shown for Forest Heath, St Edmundsbury and combined for West Suffolk; and
- (d) real time information available for costs throughout the financial year to allow budgets to be managed and monitored and for faster decisions to be made based on the most accurate and informative data.