

Cabinet



Forest Heath
District Council

Title of Report:	West Suffolk Operational Hub	
Report No:	CAB/FH/15/040	
Report to and dates:	Cabinet	15 September 2015
	Council	14 October 2015
Portfolio holder:	David Bowman Portfolio Holder for Operations Tel: 07711 593737 Email: david.bowman@forest-heath.gov.uk	
Lead officer:	Mark Walsh Head of Operations Tel: 01284 757300 Email: mark.walsh@westsuffolk.gov.uk	
Purpose of report:	<p>To provide an update on the progress of the joint Forest Heath District, Suffolk County and St Edmundsbury Borough Councils development, including feasibility and deliverability, of a West Suffolk Operational Hub near Bury St Edmunds, to deliver a combined depot, waste transfer station and Household Waste Recycling Centre for West Suffolk.</p> <p>For Members to note that further community engagement across West Suffolk to give information, invite scrutiny and seek credible alternatives will take place before any planning application is made.</p> <p>For Members to recommend to full Council the allocation of funding to allow the project to progress.</p>	
Recommendation:	It is <u>RECOMMENDED</u> that: (1) the contents of Report No: CAB/FH/15/040, be noted; (2) approval is given for a further six-week period of public pre-application consultation that will give an opportunity for suggestions for alternative sites and provide information for public scrutiny including the:	

	<p>(i) case for a shared waste hub; (ii) site selection criteria; (iii) process of site selection; (iv) sustainability appraisal; and</p> <p>(3) subject to the approval of full Council, funding of £220,000 (£112,000 FHDC and £108,000 SEBC), as detailed in Section 3 of Report No: CAB/FH/15/040, be approved, and for this to be allocated from the respective Council's Strategic Priorities and Medium Term Financial Strategy reserve to enable the project to progress.</p>		
Key Decision:	<p>Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition? Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/> No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>As approval for the funding element of the project is a full Council decision and not a Cabinet decision.</p>		
<p>The decisions made as a result of this report will usually be published within 48 hours and cannot be actioned until five clear working days of the publication of the decision have elapsed. This item is included on the Decisions Plan.</p>			
Consultation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through pre-application consultation and any subsequent planning application. 		
Alternative option(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Covered in previous reports. 		
Implications:			
Are there any financial implications? If yes, please give details	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outlined in section 4. 		
Are there any staffing implications? If yes, please give details	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Are there any ICT implications? If yes, please give details	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Are there any legal and/or policy implications? If yes, please give details	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land transactions, procurement and planning process. 		
Are there any equality implications? If yes, please give details	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Risk/opportunity assessment:			
<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>			
Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
Planning consent or environmental permitting for the site is refused or significantly delayed and / or leads to high mitigation costs.	Medium	Develop a detailed planning strategy with supporting evidence. Engage early with stakeholders through pre-application consultation.	Medium
Ground and environmental elements (inc archaeology) leading to extra cost and delay.	Medium	Initial surveys of site undertaken. Engaging with appropriate experts to manage risk.	Medium

Escalating project costs.	Medium	Land costs fixed. Elemental cost plan developed to manage budget moving forward.	Medium
Lack of resource, skills and capacity to deliver project.	Medium	External support engaged and further support will be called upon as required. Sharing officer resources with SCC.	Low
Ward(s) affected:		All Wards	
Background papers: <i>(all background papers are to be published on the website and a link included)</i>		<p>St Edmundsbury Borough Council report F51 dated 30 June 2014 - Hyperlink to report</p> <p>Forest Heath District Council report CAB/FH/15/001 dated 17 February 2015 - Hyperlink to reports pack</p> <p>St Edmundsbury Borough Council report CAB/SE/15/015 dated 10 February 2015 - Hyperlink to reports pack</p> <p>Suffolk County Council report to Cabinet dated 24 February 2015 agenda item 8 - Hyperlink to report</p> <p>St Edmundsbury Borough Council report CAB/SE/15/040 dated 23 June 2015 - Hyperlink to report</p> <p>Forest Heath District Council report CAB/FH/15/030 dated 14 July 2015 - Hyperlink to report</p>	
Documents attached:		None	

1. Background

1.1 The West Suffolk Operational Hub is one of a number of linked West Suffolk projects which aim to support the councils' strategic priorities through increasing public sector efficiency, making savings or generating income in order to continue providing services for people who live or work in West Suffolk. The previous Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Cabinet reports on this matter (CAB/FH/15/001 dated 17 February 2015 and CAB/SE/15/015 dated 10 February 2015 respectively) provided information about the key drivers and benefits for a West Suffolk Operational Hub. These included:

- a) the changing nature of waste collection and disposal in Suffolk;
- b) relocating St Edmundsbury's ageing fleet depot from Western Way in Bury and enabling development on that site;
- c) relocating Forest Heath's Mildenhall depot and enabling that facility to be put to alternative commercial use;
- d) co-locating with Suffolk County Council's waste transfer station and Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) increasing operational efficiencies;
- e) meeting the objectives of the Government's 'One Public Estate Programme';
- f) reducing fleet mileage and increasing capacity; and
- g) reducing running costs through using modern, efficient facilities on a combined site.

Further background can be found through links to the previous reports referenced in the 'Background Papers' section of this report above.

1.2 An initial round of community engagement in the form of a six-week pre-application public consultation took place from 6 March 2015 to 20 April 2015. The National Planning Policy Framework places particular emphasis on developers and prospective applicants engaging with the communities who lie close to or may be affected by their development proposals. Used in this way community engagement usually takes place at some point prior to the submission of a planning application.

1.3 There are many reasons for undertaking pre-application public consultation, including to:

- inform people about a proposed development prior to a planning application being submitted;
- engage communities and stakeholders in the planning process;
- give interested parties the chance to express their views on the proposed development;
- gain particular insight or detailed information which is relevant to the scheme;
- gauge local opinion; and
- identify ways in which a proposed development could be improved.

1.4 Pre-application public consultation is not a statutory requirement or a referendum and does not bind the developer to any particular course of action. However, whether the developer observes the findings of the process or not, they remain a material consideration in the determination of any related

planning application, as to the extent to which the developer has observed them.

- 1.5 Details of the initial phase of pre-application consultation and public feedback are available through the links in the 'background papers' section above.
- 1.6 Concerns raised included environmental impact issues like highways and traffic impact, noise, odour, landscape and visual impact. There were also questions raised concerning planning policy, the justification for a single site option, the site selection criteria and the process of site selection itself including understanding the locations considered and dismissed in favour of the current preferred option at Hollow Road Farm.

2. Next Steps

- 2.1 A second six-week pre-application consultation is planned and a consultation plan will be published before it starts to enable people to understand what it will cover and relevant dates.
- 2.2 This second phase will make further documents available for public scrutiny including a sustainability appraisal, the case for co-locating facilities into a single site, site selection criteria and the process of site review and selection which identified the currently preferred location at Hollow Road Farm. This background detail will enable people to consider putting forward credible alternative sites.
- 2.3 It is important to stress that this would still be pre-application consultation and not a planning application for a specific site. Any planning application would only come forward from the partnership of developers (Forest Heath, Suffolk County and St Edmundsbury councils) after the results of this second phase of consultation have been analysed. A planning application would also trigger further public consultation by the Planning Authority which in this case would be the Development Control Committee of St Edmundsbury Borough Council.
- 2.4 The consultation plan is being prepared along similar lines to those used for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP). Although not a national project, the West Suffolk Operational Hub is of high local significance to the nearby communities and also needs to ensure that all West Suffolk residents have the opportunity to make comments and suggestions. It will be published on the website (www.westsuffolk.gov.uk/wsoh) and will set out the background of the project and previous consultation, what is being consulted on, where people can get information, how people can provide feedback and timescales for the consultation and next steps. It will also help to ensure that questions can be answered in a timely way and with clarity.
- 2.5 Regardless of whatever site is ultimately selected, design work (much of it generic) will need to continue to develop in order to bring further clarity to our proposals, address some of the issues raised during pre-application consultation, provide further accuracy to cost estimates and develop a package of information for any planning and procurement process.

2.6 There are three distinct phases to this project:

1. feasibility (including planning)
2. procurement
3. construction

2.7 We are still in the feasibility phase of the project which includes site selection, developing a business case and seeking a planning consent. In order to prepare a business case and have the necessary information to make a detailed planning application, design will need to progress at the appropriate time and sufficiently to inform these elements of the project. The funding requested in this report will allow more detailed iterations of design and work on the required planning information to progress as and when the council is ready to do so. It is anticipated that elements of the design work could be replicated elsewhere if an alternative site is subsequently selected although it is worth noting that some site-specific, detailed and specialist work would always be required for any site before a planning decision could be taken.

3. Finance

3.1 To date, all costs during the feasibility and deliverability phases of this project have been shared equally with Suffolk County Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council. St Edmundsbury provided initial funding of £100,000 (report F51 dated 30 June 2014). A further £20,000 of funding has been made available through the Cabinet Office under the One Public Estate Programme (OPEP) which aims to support projects to co-locate public sector assets.

3.2 In order for the project to progress, funding, in line with other equivalent projects, will be required to finalise a business case in the autumn. Estimated elements of further cost required are:

Project Management / Concertus	£40,000
Planning advice	£35,000
BREEAM advisors	£4,000
Images and visual impact studies	£6,000
Planning application and land option	£52,000
Legal advice	£13,000
Direct costs	£30,000
Communications	£30,000
Consulting engineers (surveys / design)	£180,000
Other / contingency	£50,000
Total	£440,000

3.3 The share of these costs for West Suffolk is anticipated to be £220,000. Appropriate arrangements need to be made to share these costs between Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council. An accurate basis on which to share these costs between the West Suffolk councils will be made for the business case. Until then it is recommended that they be shared on the standard 35:65 ratio and reconciled at a later date.

3.4 In order to reflect a 35:65 cost share between the West Suffolk authorities on both the current and future expenditure for this project, Forest Heath DC will be requested to make budget provision for £112,000 (35% of West Suffolk's

£320,000 share – net of £20,000 OPEP funding) and St Edmundsbury will be requested to make a further budget provision of £108,000 (65% of West Suffolk's £320,000 share – net of £20,000 OPEP funding, minus the £100,000 already approved report F51). Both amounts to be funded from each authority's Strategic Priorities and Medium Term Financial Strategy reserve.