

LEADER AND CHAIR'S STATEMENTS TO COUNCIL

Councillor Neil Dallen

Chair of the Strategy & Resources Committee

Asset Review

EEPIC Properties

Our two “out of borough” properties are performing well financially and providing a welcome gross rental income of £3.3m per annum, a net £1.5m income annually after costs including interest payment, . This is used to help pay for the services we provide to our residents.

Although currently the combined value of the properties is less than we purchased them for, they were always seen as a long-term investment with property prices fluctuating but expected to rise over the 50 year loan period. Indeed, one property is now worth marginally more than it was purchased for.

Selling assets is always something we keep under review. If we were to market, and successfully sell, the EEPIC properties we would probably make an overall loss after sales expenses, and paying back the loan. It's worth noting that loans “related” to EEPIC properties have been fixed for 50 years, and currently have 42 years left to maturity. Therefore, any loan repayment before this date may be subject to an early repayment premium, which can be significant.

In addition, we will lose an annual income of £1.5m which would mean that the Council would need to identify new income streams or make significant cuts to budgets.

Other Properties

The Council own a number of other properties, both residential and commercial. Most of them are providing an income and are on medium to long term leases to provide security of income.

Some of our properties are providing temporary accommodation that is

- a) Providing in borough temporary accommodation
- b) Providing some security of tenure for homeless families
- c) Saving on expensive out of borough hotel bills

As stated above, the sale of these properties would, at best, provide a small capital income but deprive the Council of much needed revenue income and/or savings.

The asset review that is taking place will provide the relevant information so that an informed decision can be made for each property later this year.

Town Hall/East Street

LGR (Local Government Review) has caused us to cancel our plans for the Town Hall move. Instead, we are looking at the best way to minimise expenditure on the Town Hall, one possibility is to move staff to the new part of the Town Hall and 'moth ball' the old part that is likely to need the most money spent on it.

Both the Town Hall and 70 East Street are being looked at as part of the asset review currently taking place as part of the delivery of the agreed Priorities. Once the asset review has been completed, we will have the information that will enable an informed decision to take place. It is worth noting again that loans "related" to East Street property have been fixed. Therefore, any loan repayment before the due date could be subject to early repayment premium.

To make any decision before the review is likely to be challenged on under our best value duty.

<p style="text-align: center;">Councillor Clive Woodbridge</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Chair of the Community & Wellbeing Committee</p>
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Arts Culture and Heritage:

In line with the Arts, Culture and Heritage committee report taken to Community and Wellbeing in January 2025, in which it was set out that opportunities would be explored with regards funding options for delivery in 2025/26, officers have developed a programme of delivery aligned to the Homes for Ukraine Scheme. This work will continue to support social integration and the mental health and wellbeing of Ukrainian guests in the borough and will be delivered in partnership with the Epsom and Ewell Refugee Network.

This will include a regular book club event in partnership with Epsom library; a Creative Minds-run project, to include exploration of the borough's green spaces and using them to inspire creative outputs; a shared project with Ukrainian and British creatives local to the borough; support for the Ukrainian choir, building connections with the local community, while celebrating traditional Ukrainian culture and music, with increased performances within the borough; and a Saturday school, supporting and maintaining the Ukrainian language and connections to their cultural roots.

Surrey Youth Games:

Officers are working on a local programme to replace Surrey Youth Games, which has been discontinued, which they are branding as Epsom and Ewell Young Legends. A new logo has been designed and a media release is being drafted. Confirmed activities include yoga, art, rap therapy, girls rugby, musical theatre, basketball and judo. Options for tennis are being explored. The primary focus will be on 9-11 year olds, to support the move to secondary school. However, we may introduce a younger age for tennis and the option of an older age category for basketball is being explored. We are seeking to open referrals mid-summer holiday to, for example, children's centres and our community and voluntary sector, to allow children who face barriers to activity to apply first. We will then open to the mainstream in September. The plan is to commence the above activities in October, leading to some kind of presentation event before Christmas

Housing:

The spending trend remains worryingly upward, due in part to an increase in approaches for accommodation, but also critically, a year on year drop in social lettings. Net expenditure on nightly paid accommodation in April and May this year was £436,038 against a budget of £245,406. It is a growing crisis facing not just us but all local authorities. Our ongoing focus on homelessness prevention is the best way to mitigate the financial effects in the absence of any immediate improvement in the supply of suitable housing to meet temporary and settled accommodation needs. But it is the biggest single crisis facing local government and we are not immune