

**Epping Forest District Council**  
**Information for Prospective Councillors**

## **FOREWORD AND INTRODUCTION**

As potential Councillors, standing for election is an exciting but sometimes daunting experience. We believe that our Council is only as effective as our Councillors. We have put together this hopefully comprehensive guide that is designed for anybody considering standing for election as a District Councillor.

We have put together information about what it is like being a Councillor for the authority. This guide gives you information:

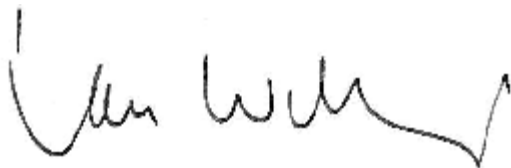
- About being a candidate.
- And an idea of the commitment required from you.
- On what happens immediately after winning the election.
- About the history and structure of local government.
- Background to the District and the Council.

The Guide is split into Sections, the subject matter of which is shown on the contents page.

Sections 1 to 3 should be considered essential reading before the election.

The role of District Councillor can be rewarding. As representatives of the electorate, Councillors determine the direction of the local authority and its policies on the basis of the wishes and needs of their constituents. Although elected to represent a particular ward, the overriding duty of the councillor is to the District as a whole.

We hope that you find the guide useful. Please give us feedback.



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Returning Officer for Epping Forest District Council

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# Section 1

## **STANDING FOR ELECTION**

To qualify as a candidate for election to the District Council you must be 18 years of age and a Commonwealth citizen, a citizen of the Republic of Ireland or a citizen of another Member State of the European Community. In addition you must also meet one of the following qualifications during the whole of the 12 months before the day you are nominated and on polling day:-

- You must be a local government elector for Epping Forest; or
- You must have had, during the whole of the twelve months preceding the day on which you are nominated, occupied as owner or tenant any land or premises in the District; or
- Your principal or only place of work in the twelve months preceding that day must have been in the District; or
- You must have resided in the District during the whole of the twelve months preceding that day.
- You cannot stand if:-
- You hold a paid office or employment with the Council, or, in certain circumstances, are employed by another Council; or
- You are an un-discharged bankrupt; or
- You have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment (whether suspended or not) of not less than three months without the option of a fine during the five years preceding the election; or
- You have been convicted or reported guilty of a corrupt or illegal practice by an election court, or you have been disqualified from standing for election to a local authority following a decision of the Adjudication Panel for England; or
- You hold any employment in a company which is under the control of the local authority.
- Your nomination paper has to be signed by a proposer and seconder and eight other signatories whose names are on the current Electoral Register for the Ward in which you are standing. You should also submit with your nomination paper a completed Consent to Nomination form.

Once nominated, you will be allowed to incur election expenses. These must not exceed the sum of £600 plus 5 pence for every elector on the Electoral Register as published for your Ward. Election expenses detailing all money spent on the campaign must be returned within 35 days after the day the result of the election is declared. They will be available for public inspection.

Full details of the timetable for the delivery of nomination papers, including withdrawal dates, will be forwarded with the nomination paper. Details relating to the appointment of agents, the poll (where necessary) and election count will be forwarded separately. Further information on becoming a candidate is available from the Electoral Commission:

<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance/those-we-regulate/candidates-and-agents>

## Section 2

### ***ELECTIONS 2011***

The Elections this year will be held on 5 May 2011. Not all parts of the district are up for election this year as we elect by 'thirds'. That means that for three years out of four, a third of the seats are up for election (or re-election). The election will be held during the hours of 7.00 a.m. to 10.00 p.m. on 5 May 2010 with the District Count being held on 6 May 2010 at Theydon Bois Village Hall, Coppice Row, Theydon Bois, CM16 7ER.

Please note that entry to the Count is restricted and is by ticket only. You or your agent should contact Electoral Services prior to the Count to ensure your admittance.

The Council provides a results service which will be updated during the day of the Count. Full results can be found at:

[http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local\\_democracy/elections/default.asp](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local_democracy/elections/default.asp)

## Section 3

### ***SO WHAT HAPPENS AFTER I'M ELECTED?***

There are a number of things that you should attend to **immediately** after being elected.

### ***MAKING A DECLARATION OF OFFICE***

It is important that you make a Declaration of Acceptance of Office at the earliest opportunity. This declaration must be made within two months from the day of election and **you cannot act as a councillor or attend meetings** until it is signed. The Declaration can be signed before the Chief Executive, a serving Justice of the Peace or two other members of the Council and is in the form of a register.

To make the declaration please contact: Shirley Hawkins, the Acting Chief Executives Secretary (01992 564051) to make an arrangement to come in and sign the register.

### ***WHAT YOU WILL ALSO NEED:***

In order to gain access to the Civic Centre you will require:

- (i) A Security Identity badge (for which your photograph will be taken);
- (ii) An access card (the Civic Offices building can only be accessed using a proximity card which will be issued to you).

To obtain these, contact: G Lunnun (Assistant Director Democratic Services Tel 01992 564244)

- (iii) You will also be expected to have access to a Computer connected to the Internet using a Broadband connection to enable the Council to keep you up to date with publication of agenda and minutes and for email. More information on the Members Connectivity Scheme can be found in Section 8.

## **Section 4**

### ***THE IMPORTANCE OF MEMBER TRAINING AND INDUCTION***

Equally important is that you attend training sessions designed to inform you about the many roles that a Councillor will perform. Some of these Training Sessions are designated “obligatory”. This means that, for relevant Councillors, attendance is a necessary pre-requisite to becoming involved in a specific activity or serving on a particular member body. In other words, members (councillors) will be unable to undertake those roles without this training.

The Council, through a review of its member training on an annual basis, attempts to bring together a number of training courses for members showing its commitment to achieving a core number of competencies for its elected members.

Some of the courses, including an Induction Evening will be held between the Election and the Annual Council Meeting (normally about two weeks after the election). **You should not arrange holidays immediately after the election so that you are available to attend these courses.**

At the time of drafting this guidance, the programme for the year 2011/12 was still in preparation and could not be included here. It will be published during April and will be available on request.

Other courses are designated “desirable”, this recognises that established members may have already attended the course. However, regular repeats will often help to refresh members’ knowledge.

### ***OPTIONAL COURSES***

“Optional” courses are those which may not be a direct requirement but which might be of interest and increase your background knowledge of the Council.

## **Section 5**

### ***EXPECTATIONS OF BEING A COUNCILLOR***

You should have a general idea of what it takes to be a local Councillor from your discussions with your political party when you applied to be a Candidate. Being an elected representative brings a responsibility to represent your ward and to be available to your electorate to help them with their problems. These issues may be something you can assist in but may also not be the District Council’s responsibility at all. It will take time to become familiar with the systems within the Council. Your fellow Councillors and Officers are a good source of information and advice.

## **COUNCILLOR 'BUDDIES'**

Some of the political groups will pair you with a more experienced Councillor in order to 'show you the ropes'. You should contact your Group Leader to check whether your group runs this scheme.

## **WHATS A COUNCILLORS WORKLOAD LIKE?**

As of right you will sit on the Full Council which meets six or seven times a year. In addition, you will also be appointed to an Area Plans Subcommittee. These meet every four weeks throughout the year. In the southern area of the District, Councillors will sit on their Area Plans Subcommittee only if they opt into membership at the beginning of the year.

You may also be appointed to any of the quasi-judicial panels or one or more Scrutiny Panels. These meet as and when required. You should speak to your Group Leader soon after the election about the Committees where you think you have expertise or wish to sit on. Seats on Committees are allocated at the Annual Council meeting and allocated on the basis of *pro rata* (i.e. reflecting the percentage strength of your group on the Council as a whole).

It would not be unreasonable for you to assume that you may have two or more Council meetings to attend per month. The level of meetings you will need to attend depends upon your Committee appointments. Members will also need to spend time reading the agendas and minutes sent to them.

On average there are meetings of the Authority's Committees, Subcommittees or Panels three or four times a week, only some of which you will be a member of or you will want to attend.

If you want to get a better feel for the number of meetings taking place at the Council, visit our web page on: [http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local\\_democracy/](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local_democracy/)

or our webcast service on: <http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/Webcasts>

## **Section 6**

### **HOW SERVICES ARE PROVIDED WITHIN THE CURRENT SYSTEM**

Local authorities are statutory bodies and their powers and functions are limited to those permitted by law. They cannot do whatever they choose. The activities that can be undertaken by a particular type of Council are thereby closely controlled. In addition, many aspects of Council activity are controlled or influenced by central government, in particular through numerous rules on the way in which money is raised and spent. However, within these limitations, councils are autonomous bodies with freedom to decide most questions of local policy. It is important to understand the division of functions between the different tiers of local government and the limitations within which the different types of authority operate. Considerable satisfaction can, however, be derived from influencing policy and ensuring that the provision of services, introduction of new projects or control of development reflects the wishes of their electorate.

### **MAIN FUNCTIONS OF DISTRICT COUNCILS**

The list below gives an indication of the main responsibilities of the District Council.

- Council Tax Collection (on behalf of all tiers)
- Housing\* - strategic housing service, maintenance and letting of Council houses, improvement grants
- Housing Benefits

- Planning (Local Plans, development control, building regulations, conservation)
- Economic development
- Tourism
- Refuse collection
- Environmental health
- Recreation provision (leisure facilities, museums, art galleries, parks and open spaces)
- Car parking (on street enforcement of restrictions and off street pay and display of district parking places)

## ***THE ROLE OF OFFICERS***

The officers are the paid officials employed by the Council to advise members and to implement the policies that they decide upon and it is clearly important that there is mutual trust and respect to ensure that the partnership between members and officers works successfully. Our Constitution section on these roles amplifies the expectation made of members in this regard.

## **Section 7**

### ***POLITICAL MAKE-UP***

In Epping Forest District there are currently four recognised political groups: Conservative, British National Party, Liberal Democrats and Loughton Residents Association. The Conservative Group hold more than 50% of the seats on the Council. The Cabinet membership is currently made up of Conservative Councillors.

The Pre-May 2011 position was:

Group	Number of Seats on the Council
Conservative (inc Chigwell Resident)	37
Labour	1
Liberal Democrat	7
Loughton Residents Association	10
Independents (non affiliated)	2
British National Party	1

## ***BUDGET AND POLICY FRAMEWORK AND THE ROLE OF THE COUNCIL***

58 Councillors form 'The Council' which meets six or seven times a year. The Council remains the primary body of the Authority. The full Council remains responsible for setting the budget and Council tax, major policy changes, decisions on changes of powers or new powers (This is known as the Budget and Policy Framework).

### ***HOW WE MAKE DECISIONS***

Obviously, the Council itself could not take every single decision down to who sweeps the road and there are many decisions that need to be taken on a daily or indeed hourly basis. Decisions are, therefore, made by smaller groups of Councillors called 'committees', 'subcommittees' or 'panels' or by delegating (or giving the power to decide) to officers of the Council.

The way in which the Council is run is governed by its Constitution. This Constitution was adopted by the Council in May 2002 and sets out how we make decisions and governs procedure. The Council's aim is to be efficient, open and accountable to local people. It contains the rules by which the council operates and also a number of locally agreed protocols. It is important that members

act within its operational rules that reflect the current legislative position. The Constitution of the Council can be viewed on-line by following the link to reports and publications in the Local Democracy section of our website.

## ***CABINET STRUCTURE***

The Council has a 'Cabinet', which is a group of nine Councillors with strategic responsibility for running the Council. This arm of the Council is generically known as 'The Executive'. Each councillor on the Cabinet is responsible for a number of the Council's services (a Portfolio). The Cabinet meets regularly to discuss and decide on how the Council is run. The Executive Members also have delegated powers to take decisions on prescribed matters within their following portfolio areas. These portfolios are reviewed each year by the Council at their Annual meeting.

A chart illustrating the new Cabinet structure, which contains some Committees, is attached at Appendix 1. Under the "Cabinet and Leader" system, individual members can personally take executive decisions in a system where responsibility for the decision is clear.

Councillors not on the Cabinet play a vital role to local democracy and community leadership. Non-Cabinet Councillors have a role in scrutinising decisions and holding the executive to account, as well as leaving more time for a higher profile in being responsible for the well-being of their community and dealing with issues raised by their constituents through their ward representation role. There are many opportunities to get involved in the Scrutiny arm of the Council and its policy development role.

## ***OTHER COMMITTEES***

Other Panels and Committees look after specific functions that are not the responsibility of the Executive. These fall into a group called 'regulatory'. The Council now has three Area Planning Sub-committees that look after planning applications made in that area. You will have a seat on your local Area Subcommittee as of right. These Subcommittees report to the District Development Control Committee on applications contrary to policy and it also determines strategic planning applications.

In addition there are a number of other regulatory Committees including Licensing, Housing Appeals and Review Panel and a Complaints Panel.

## ***SCRUTINY***

Overview and scrutiny is potentially the most exciting and powerful element. It places members at the heart of policy-making and at the heart of the way in which councils respond to new Legislation and proposals for change. Its central role is that of holding the Executive to account for the decisions it makes. Additionally it provides a check on policy and budget development and undertakes a policy development role through a series of Panels that report to the main Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Our new arrangements for Scrutiny are set in the Constitution and are available from our website together with our main review report at:

[http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local\\_democracy/Scrutiny\\_home.asp](http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/local_democracy/Scrutiny_home.asp)

## ***CODE OF CONDUCT AND OTHER ETHICAL ISSUES OR 'HOW DO YOU CHANGE THINGS ROUND HERE?'***

In giving the Declaration of Acceptance of Office, the councillor undertakes to abide by the Code of Conduct. A copy of the Code can be found on our website (under Local Democracy/Reports and Publications/ Constitution). The Code provides guidance on recommended standards of conduct expected of councillors in carrying out their duties and represents the standard against which the conduct of members will be judged, both by the public and by their fellow councillors. The Code makes it clear that your overriding duty as a councillor is to the whole local community and that you have a special duty to your constituents, including those who did not vote for you.

If you have an interest in a matter under discussion which might prejudice your ability to judge the matter impartially you shouldn't take any part in the decision. You should never do anything as a councillor which you could not justify to the public; it is not enough to avoid actual impropriety - you should at all times avoid any occasion for suspicion and any appearance of improper conduct.

The Code of Conduct gives guidance on the declaration and disclosure of interests and explains the requirement to register financial and other interests. Where you have a financial interest in any issue or business being discussed or considered in any shape or form by the Council, you must declare this and take no part in any discussion. Forms for your declarations will be given to you upon election to the Council.

These forms also ask you to declare the source of your funding for election expenses, your property ownership, any gifts which might be relevant to your role as an elected member and your membership of other public bodies.

The Government is in the process of changing the interests system and moving toward the option to have a voluntary local code of conduct but this is subject to passage of legislation. Until that process is completed, you will still be required to abide by our Code of Conduct.

Advice on interest matters is available from the Office of the Chief Executive.

### ***CONSTRAINTS AND DUTIES***

It is important to be aware of the constraints and duties that go with being elected as a councillor. Bearing in mind the advice in the Code of Conduct, there will occasionally be difficulty in deciding whether a matter seen as beneficial to the District as a whole should be supported against the wishes of the inhabitants of your Ward who may ask you to speak and vote against the proposal.

Also, whilst it is normal for residents to turn to their ward representative for help and advice, it should be borne in mind that a member of the public could contact any councillor of his or her choice. Where this happens, it is the usual practice for the councillor who has been contacted either to refer the person to the ward representative or advise the appropriate ward representative, as a courtesy, of any action taken or advice given.

You may be seeking to achieve certain objectives in being elected to the Council. As suggested in the introduction, it is important that your expectations are realistic. A local authority cannot go beyond what is prescribed in law, although it may be able to influence others, through public opinion or through its representation on other bodies, in areas where it has no direct jurisdiction.

Furthermore, to achieve anything, you will need the support of a majority of your fellow councillors. You should be aware that the individual non-executive councillor has no decision-making power - the power only comes from being part of a collective body, i.e. the Council or one of its committees

exercising functions on its behalf. Only executive members have individual decision-making powers, exercisable through delegation to them.

If you do not attend any meetings for six consecutive months, you will automatically cease to be a member of the Council unless your absence has been authorised within that period by the Council.

On being elected, you will receive a copy of the Constitution that contains the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. These govern the conduct of the Council and committee meetings and transactions with other parties. It will take time to familiarise yourself with the rules set out in this document, but you will soon see why it is necessary to have them.

## ***KEEPING YOURSELF INFORMED***

Although the Council generally conducts its business in open session which can be attended by both press and public, there are occasions when statutory provisions have to be used to enable matters to be considered in private, e.g. those of a personal nature, discussing possible Court proceedings or financial information which could be advantageous to a particular party.

As a Councillor, you acquire much information that has not yet been made public and is still confidential. This information will be clearly marked as being confidential and if sent in paper form will be on pink paper. You should dispose of this paper carefully, either through shredding or by returning it to Democratic Services at the Council.

Keeping members informed of Council business and matters of interest, through agenda for Council and committee meetings and other publications, involves the regular issue of information both electronically and in paper form. A member who hopes to influence the course of discussion (and also avoid extending the meeting by asking questions which were answered in the circulated papers) must be prepared to devote time to preparing for the meeting and to ensure that he or she is aware of what is going on and how this affects the residents who elected them.

All committee papers are available electronically. See Section 8 about the expectation of your connectivity to the Council. The Council also operates a 'Virtual Private Network' or VPN which allows members to view restricted papers relating to meetings of the authority electronically.

The Council, Cabinet and committee meetings are generally held during the evenings. The next Section deals with the Scheme of Allowances which are payable and you will see from this that each member receives a basic allowance, in addition to travelling and subsistence allowances.

Experienced and conscientious councillors will tell you that this should not necessarily be seen as full compensation for the considerable amount of time that you will need to spend on preparation for meetings and your constituency work: this is borne out by Government guidance on schemes of allowances, which says that a proportion of a member's public service should be voluntary.

## ***SEEKING ADVICE – THE ROLE OF THE OFFICE OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE***

There is much to take in on becoming a councillor and, especially in the early days, you will be inundated with information. Nobody expects you to be able to digest all of this at once - it will take some time - so please do not hesitate to seek advice from experienced members or officers. We know from feedback from members that in some cases they felt reticent, or even embarrassed, to ask for advice on joining the Council. It would be unrealistic to expect somebody with no previous experience in this role to take up his or her duties smoothly and with no assistance, so when in doubt about anything please ask!

The Office of the Chief Executive provides support to members of the Council and is often a good place to start your search for information or advice.

Email: [democraticservices@eppingforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@eppingforestdc.gov.uk)

Or call:

Graham Lunnun, Assistant Director Democratic Services on 01992 564244 or

Simon Hill, Senior Democratic Services Officer on 01992 564249 for further information

## **Section 8**

### ***SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES***

The main local authorities in England and Wales are bound by the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) Regulations 1991, as amended. The Regulations enable authorities to set their own levels of allowance in the light of local circumstances, without any reference to ceilings set by the Secretary of State. Regulations subsequently introduced under the Local Government Act 2000 required a scheme to be made having regard to the advice of an independent panel, which must then make recommendations annually on levels of allowance.

The following types of allowances may be paid:-

- (a) Basic Allowance - A basic, flat rate allowance payable to all councillors of the authority.

Since April 2009 the basic allowance is £3150. In addition a supplementary basic allowance payment of £500 is also made in your first year after election then £250 for each year subsequently for the member connectivity project. These allowances are paid quarterly in arrears

- (b) Special Responsibility Allowances – These are paid to reflect additional responsibilities such as Group Leaders, Cabinet Members, and Committee Chairmen. The level varies and is set out within the scheme. Details of the current scheme can be obtained from the Democratic Services Section on 01992 564244.

Travel and Subsistence Allowances are payable as a way of recompensing councillors for expenditure on travel and subsistence necessarily incurred when performing an approved duty. It is a condition of payment that the duty has been approved before it is performed. Approved duties for travel and subsistence are specified in the Council's scheme.

## **Section 9**

### ***MEMBER CONNECTIVITY SCHEME***

Introduction

The Connectivity Scheme has been introduced to enable members to receive electronic notification of and Internet access to papers for Council meetings and associated information. The scheme has been made possible following the introduction of the Committee Management System (CoMS) which publishes our publicly available agenda to the Internet via the Council's website. The Connectivity Scheme will, however, provide members with access to a wider range of information including agenda planning, up to date notification of publication, call-in and portfolio holder decision-making.

The Agreed Scheme:

The Connectivity Scheme provides members with an additional allowance (payable as part of the existing Scheme of Members Allowances) towards acquiring computer equipment and to use this equipment to access information on the Council's Agendas and Minutes via the Internet.

Members would be expected to use this system to access all agenda and minutes information **and** cease to receive hard copy agenda (except for those of which they are a member or required to attend by virtue of a position).

Under the scheme you will receive £500 in your first year after election and £250 for each year subsequently (payable normally quarterly in arrears) from which members will be expected to assist with the cost of a Personal Computer (PC) (if necessary); Internet connection and any consumables. This sum will be subject to tax and National Insurance.

## ***EQUIPMENT SPECIFICATION***

The minimum specification required for PC equipment is:

- (i) A PC that can access the Internet;
- (ii) A broadband connection to your home;
- (iii) A valid email account
- (iv) Internet Browser software; and
- (v) A printer capable of printing A4 pages.

Data and Equipment Security and Use Guidance

The equipment is the individual member's property and can be used for non-council activities. Members must adhere to:

- (i) The User Policy Statement for the CoMS system;
- (ii) Issued Standards Committee Guidance on the Use of IT by Members;
- (iii) The Council's other adopted ICT related policies including the security of any data and remote working policies;
- (iv) The provisions of the Local Government Act 1972 regarding the transmission of Exempt Business as defined in Schedule 12A outside of the Council.

## ***WHAT THE COUNCIL WILL PROVIDE:***

The Council will:

- (i) Provide an 'extranet' (a private intranet) connection using a 'token' scheme to control access and a user name and password for each member;
- (ii) Training on the use of the system;
- (iii) IT helpdesk support relating to (i) above and advice from RDS on (ii) above;

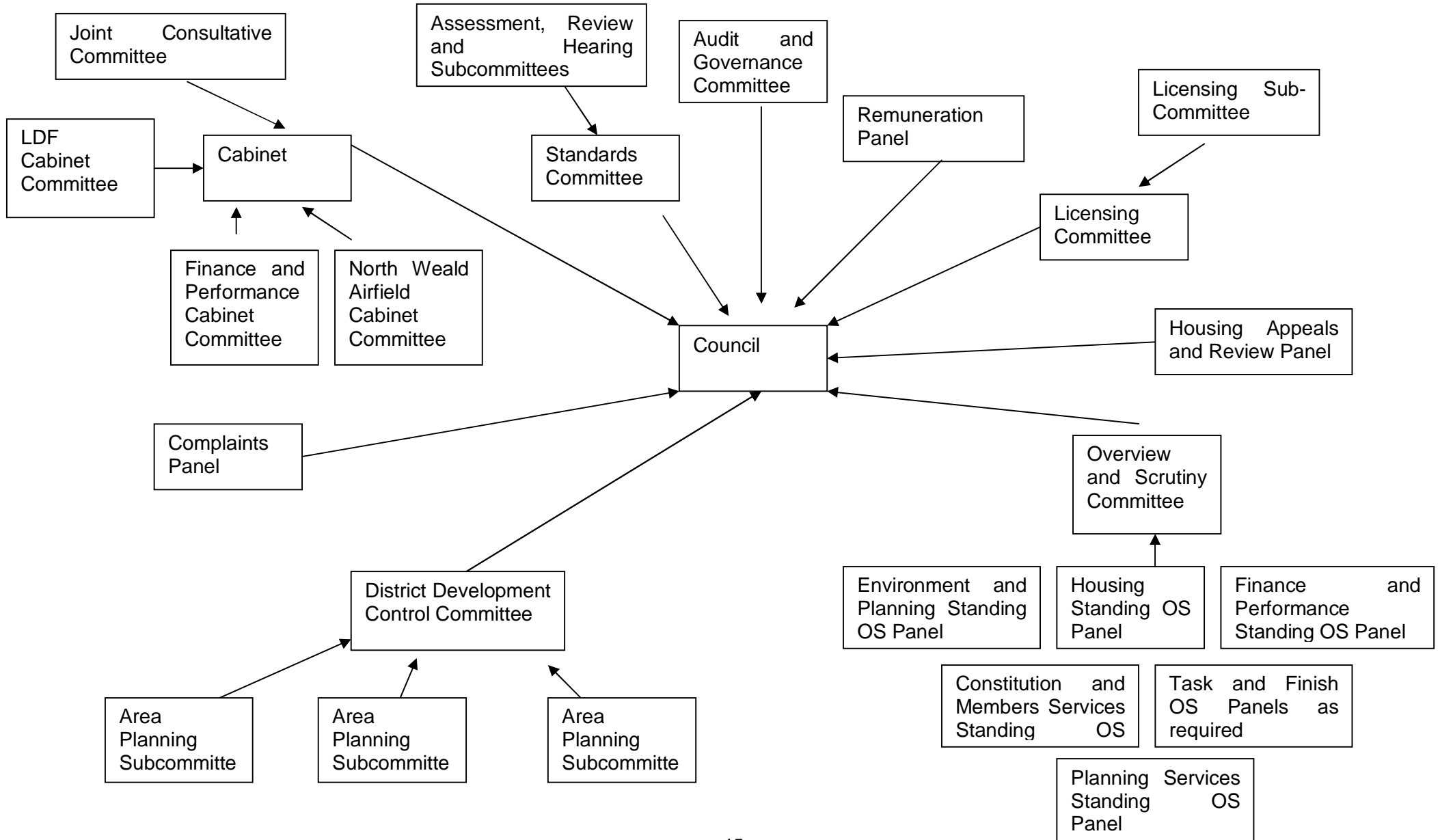
- (iv) A paper copy of the agenda to members of each Committee (unless the member indicates in writing otherwise);
- (v) A system of email notification of publication of agenda and minutes to all members.
- (vi) Headed paper and envelopes for use by members for Councillor correspondence.

***WHAT THE COUNCIL WILL NOT PROVIDE:***

The Council will **not**:

- (i) Provide IT helpdesk support for PC's or any peripherals purchased by members under the scheme;
- (ii) Advise on purchase of equipment or choice of ISP.
- (iii) Provide a paper copy of agenda for other Committees if you are not a member. Paper copies of Agenda will be available at the meeting in small quantities.
- (iv) Plain paper and print cartridge consumables.

# Appendix 1 - Cabinet and Committee Structure



## ***PROFILE OF EPPING FOREST***

Epping Forest is named after the Epping Forest, which is situated at the heart of the district. The Forest is ancient woodland of nearly 2700 hectares, owned and managed by the Corporation of London in accordance with the Epping Forest Act of 1878, as an open space for recreation and enjoyment. The district is a contrasting mixture of urban and rural life, covering 34,500 hectares, and stretching from outer London in the south to rural Essex in the North.

The district has six main centres of population (Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell, Epping, Loughton, Chipping Ongar and Waltham Abbey) and a number of picturesque villages and hamlets, and comprises approximately 50,000 homes and businesses. We have no natural centre and the majority of the district lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt.

The district is home to a number of places of special interest, including the world's oldest timber-framed church at Greensted, the former Royal Gunpowder Mills site at Waltham Abbey now a centre for leisure and tourism, and an historic wartime airfield at North Weald. North Weald Airfield, once home to the famous Treble One Squadron known as the 'Black Arrows', has been owned and managed by the Council for recreation since 1980, and is our most significant land asset and the venue of the largest regular outdoor market in Europe. The Council owns leisure facilities in four of our main population centres, the newest of which is Loughton Leisure Centre. The management of these were contracted out in January 2006.

Within the district we have twenty-five conservation areas and over fifteen hundred listed buildings, which is the fourth highest total in Essex. Our countryside management service, Epping Forest Countrycare, maintains the natural environment of the district for the benefit of local people and wildlife, by creating habitats, improving public access, and increasing awareness of our rural heritage. Areas of parkland and natural beauty such as the Lea Valley Regional Park (a river and lake leisure area of 4000 hectares stretching 35 kilometres along the River Lea), the Roding Valley (which includes a unique ancient flood-plain meadow nature reserve) and Epping Forest itself, provide a plentiful supply of sites for informal sport and leisure.

The district currently has a population of 120,896 (2001 Census), compared with 116,000 (1991 Census) twelve years ago. Over 40% of the population live in the south-west of the district (Buckhurst Hill, Chigwell and Loughton). The population is ageing, with the profile showing a reduction of under fives and an increase in over seventy-fives (2001 Census). The Council is the second largest employer in the district. The largest is Sainsbury's plc, which has recently built a major regional distribution centre adjacent to M25 at Waltham Abbey.