

**Report to the Asset Management and  
Economic Development Cabinet  
Committee**



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Report reference: AMED-013-2016/17**

**Date of meeting: 13 April 2017**

**Portfolio:** Asset Management and Economic Development

**Subject:** Economic Development – Progress Report

**Responsible Officer:** M. Warr/V. Willis (01992 564472/564593)

**Democratic Services:** J. Leither (01992 564756)

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**Recommendations/Decisions Required:**

**(1) To note the progress and work programme of the Council's Economic Development Section;**

**Executive Summary:**

This report updates the Cabinet Committee on a number of projects, themes and issues being explored by the Economic Development Team.

**Reasons for Proposed Decision:**

To apprise the Committee on progress made with regard to Economic Development issues.

**Other Options for Action:**

None, as this monitoring report is for information not action.

**Report:**

**Visitor Economy**

**Tourism Website**

1. The new website went live during English Tourism Week with an initial 65 pages and 320 images. This compares with the previous site's 16 pages and 22 images. The new site's configuration allows smart searches based on options in every area for editorial, and the events function contains far more detailed and searchable information. The current task is to expand the businesses and attractions listed and to regularly update the editorial content.
2. The Tourism and Visitor Board continues to meet on a regular basis and a working group is currently looking at a draft Tourism Strategy to include a vision statement and targets in line with the timescale of the Local Plan. Currently the working group has had one

initial meeting and will develop ideas further before taking them back to the board for comment and discussion.

### **Accommodation Study**

3. Phase 2 of this work is well advanced and a review meeting with consultants, Hotel Solutions, to explore findings is scheduled for late April.

### **Town Centres**

#### **Town & Village Centres/District Economic Opportunities Fund**

4. Work has continued to develop bids to the fund from a number of organisations. Funding for a floral town centre enhancement scheme has been approved as well as funding to support a young traders initiative which will see school-based teams forming trading businesses to compete against each other and will create a vibrant street market attraction in Summer 2017. Funding has also been approved for a project connecting primary schools with town centre businesses in order to raise awareness of the shops and services available in one of the district's town centres.

### **Waltham Abbey Wayfinding Project**

5. The proposed fingerpost wayfinding scheme in Waltham Abbey has now moved into the beginnings of the Planning and Delivery Stage with the final design, locations and destinations having been agreed and signed off. The scheme aims to provide visitors to the town centre with an effective navigational system that will enable them to explore the town's attractions and encourage them to dwell longer within the town centre. The scheme is centred around the key town centre attractions such as the museum and the Abbey church and gardens and on movement between the town centre car parks. At the same time it has also referenced attractions which sit outside the immediate town centre area such as Lee Valley White Water Centre, Royal Gunpowder Mills and the Cornmill Meadows wildlife area as well as the Town Mead site which was highlighted by local stakeholders as a key town attraction.

### **Business Support**

#### **One Business Briefing**

6. The Spring edition of One Business Briefing was published in March and issued to the Team's expanding business and partner contacts database of 2000-plus and shared via social media channels. As always, it contained a rich mix of articles and contributions from the Team and external partners, ranging from success stories to details on business funding and support programmes and initiatives such as the area's new tourism website, the ongoing delivery of ultrafast rural broadband and a new young traders market project.

### **Eastern Plateau**

7. It was reported at the last meeting that it is now business as usual for this Fund which is supporting business growth in some rural areas of Epping Forest District as well as East Herts, North Herts and Uttlesford. At a meeting of the Panel in late March it was reported that the Local Action Group should be seeking to spend all of its funding allocation by March 2019 and so that effectively means being in a position to enter contracts for all funding by around September 2018. It is premature to give further details but the Team is hopeful that a particular project in Epping Forest District will be supported very shortly and we are also aware of a couple of further projects in the pipeline. It is a priority within the Team to give maximum exposure to Eastern Plateau locally and to encourage

uptake.

## **LoCASE**

8. As reported previously, LoCASE (Low Carbon Across the South East) is a new EU funded project set up to help small or medium enterprise businesses across the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) region to tackle and adapt to climate change, aiming to reduce business costs by cutting emissions and to promote the opportunities of the low carbon market. Economic Development Officers put CRATE on Oakwood Hill Industrial Estate in contact with LoCASE last year and they are the first in the district to have had a bid approved and to have implemented measures. A visit is being coordinated to understand more about the CRATE scheme (36 creative workspaces in upcycled shipping containers and a Costa Coffee) which is now complete and an impressive new facility for the district and to capitalise on opportunities for using it to further promote LoCASE in the district.

## **Broadband**

### **Smart Places**

9. Two highly successful smart place events have been held in the last few weeks. First of all, Essex County Council held a Smart Essex event at BT Tower in Central London to launch their work on smart initiatives for Essex. Having engaged the county council at an early stage on this council's own smart place work, Epping Forest District Council members and officers were invited to attend this event and present to the audience on one of the workshop topic areas.
10. Since that event, the Economic Development Team has delivered a very well received Smart Places Seminar at Epping Forest College. This drew together not just key council officers and members but also representatives from county council, three other local district councils, the CCG and Princess Alexandra Hospital, as well as a number of local private sector partners. The event was well attended and saw presentations from Virgin Media, Easel TV and Essex County Council that explored the real opportunities for collaborative applications, initiatives and ongoing partnership working that are being opened up by this district's commitment to delivering greater levels of superfast broadband infrastructure. A commitment to reconvene the gathered partners in the near future to continue this work as a digital taskforce was made at the meeting and the economic development team will be looking to explore a number of digital / smart place strands of work coming out of the seminar.

### **Ultrafast Network**

11. The ongoing network build of ultrafast rural broadband is one enabling element that is making the Smart Place workstream possible and this rollout has continued to reach out into the rural parts of the district. The project remains on track to complete before the end of the calendar year although the last two cabinet areas in Hastingwood / North Weald and Ongar remain in the planning stage and the exact start dates for these areas cannot yet be confirmed. Completion of this Rural Challenge Project coupled with the other phases of the Superfast Essex programme will bring coverage across Epping Forest district to approximately 97% of properties in the district with access to superfast broadband speeds.
12. As a district, we see the importance of taking this level of coverage as close to 100% as is possible and therefore are exploring, with Superfast Essex, the potential for further funding to be made available to be matched by BDUK and to be used to progressively fill

in the areas of non-coverage. As reported to Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2017 by the Portfolio Holder for Technology and Support Services, a letter of intent has been submitted to Superfast Essex and BDUK indicating that the council will provisionally allocate an amount of up to £350,000 as a potential local contribution to a further rollout programme, with the exact amount to be confirmed once bids for the procurement have been received and the size and scope of the local investment can be more clearly defined. It is assumed that BDUK grant will be available to match this additional local contribution and once the details have been established, endorsement of the proposed contribution will be sought through the council's formal governance process. This will be aligned with the contract finalisation process under the new phase.

### **Partner Liaison**

13. The Economic Development Team continues to liaise with, support and attend meetings with a number of Partner Organisations. These include, at varying intervals:

- Essex County Council
- South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP)
- London Stansted Cambridge Consortium (LSCC)
- Invest Essex and Essex Innovation Programme
- Lea Valley Food Board
- Essex Economic Development Officer group
- Essex Tourism Officer Group
- Epping Forest District Town Team
- Eastern Plateau Local Action Group
- Stansted Airport Local Authority Forum
- Tourism & Visitor Board
- West Essex Skills & Learning Forum
- Waltham Abbey Town Partnership
- One Epping Forest
- Superfast Essex
- Princess Alexandra Hospital
- West Essex CCG

### **Resource Implications:**

None as this is a progress report.

### **Legal and Governance Implications:**

None as this is a progress report.

### **Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

None as this is a progress report.

### **Consultation Undertaken:**

None as this is a progress report.

### **Background Papers:**

None

**Risk Management:** N/A

## Due Regard Record

This page shows **which groups of people are affected** by the subject of this report. It sets out **how they are affected** and how any **unlawful discrimination** they experience can be eliminated. It also includes information about how **access to the service(s)** subject to this report can be improved for the different groups of people; and how they can be assisted to **understand each other better** as a result of the subject of this report.

S149 Equality Act 2010 requires that due regard must be paid to this information when considering the subject of this report.

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There are no implications to consider as this report is a progress report.