

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 26 September 2017

Subject: Assets & Economic Development

Portfolio Holder: Councillor A Grigg

Recommending:

That the report of the Assets & Economic Development Portfolio Holder be noted.

1. Visitor Economy

2017 Tourism Conference - I am pleased to report that Friday 20th October has been booked for the 2017 Tourism Conference which is once again hosted and sponsored by the Marriott Hotel Waltham Abbey. The conference will see the official launch of the new Visit Epping Forest website together with a presentation of the conclusions of the Visitor Accommodation Study. Presentations to members on the study have taken place and it is hoped that the final report will be received shortly.

2. Town Centres

Waltham Abbey Wayfinding Project – With land ownership and directional issues addressed, the wayfinding project has now moved closer to its manufacture and installation stage. An application was submitted in late August to Essex Highways for permits to install those signs which will be located on public highway land. An indication of when the work will be permitted, subject to any clarification the highways authority might seek, is now awaited.

3. Business Support

LoCase - In partnership with LoCASE, businesses on Langston Road and Oakwood Hill were visited to promote the funding. Economic Development officers have followed up with LoCASE to identify the numbers of collated contacts, numbers of businesses visited etc. It is planned to use this data to determine the impact of the visit and consider the value in conducting further visits if they are shown to have impact.

One Business Briefing – The latest, summer, edition of the One Business Briefing magazine for businesses was published in August. With a centrepiece eight page pull-out on social enterprises and a wide range of articles on business support, funding programmes, town centre initiatives, local digital award successes and innovative local businesses it was the biggest edition to date. It involved direct contributions from over twenty different organisations, many of whom have featured and shared details of the magazine via their social media outlets. This collaborative effort has seen the edition circulated to over 2000 direct contacts and, at the time of writing, downloaded from the council's website in excess of 490 times.

Meet The Buyer – Two 'meet the buyer' events will be taking place in the coming months providing local businesses with the opportunity to directly engage with the council and discuss opportunities to work for and supply the council with goods and services. First of all

Epping Forest DC will be represented at the Stansted Airport 'Meet the Buyer' day on 3rd November and then the council will be hosting its own event on November 23rd at the Marriott Hotel Waltham Abbey.

Major Development Projects

Since practical completion of the Epping Forest Shopping Park in July tenants have been undertaking their fit outs. A number of stores have successfully opened to include Hobbycraft, Smyths Toys and TK Maxx. Initial feedback is that they are trading well. After this 'soft' opening period it is hoped to have an official launch at the Shopping Park in early December when the major anchor stores of Next and Aldi should be open. The shopping park is 80% let and negotiations are concluding with tenants for the final units. The Highways 278 works have encountered a number of issues with utility services leading to delays. However, the majority of the improvements are now in place with full completion estimated by the end of October.

Heads of Agreement have been negotiated with a number of tenants for all of the Council's retail units on the ground floor of the Landmark Building. It is hoped to have all businesses trading by Christmas. However, handover from the builders has been later than envisaged with the Council not achieving full access until the end of September.