

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 16 December 2014

Subject: Assets and Economic Development

Portfolio Holder: Councillor A Grigg

Recommending:

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

Estates and Valuation

North Weald Airfield

Following Cabinet approval last month, agents have been appointed to seek a commercial partner for the operational management of the airfield. Marketing will commence in January next year.

Leader Lodge, North Weald

Following a successful marketing exercise, I am very pleased to report that the exchange of contracts has taken place for the sale of Leader Lodge for £652,001 and that completion is set for 11th December. Proceeds from the sale of this residential property will be used to help fund the Council House Building Programme.

Epping Forest Shopping Park, Langston Rd, Debden

Progress continues on the redevelopment of Langston Rd Depot. The full consultants' team has now been appointed to work up the design and render the construction. The structure of the joint venture development with the adjoining owner will have been considered by Cabinet on the 15th December 2014.

New Depot - Oakwood Hill, Loughton

The specification for the new depot is now agreed and again a report will be brought before Cabinet this month to approve the scheme, funding and proceeding to tender for its construction. Completion of the new building is scheduled for autumn 2015.

Pyrles Lane Nursery, Loughton

We are aiming to re-submit an amended planning application for residential redevelopment later this month in order to sell this site, which will be vacated when the new depot is complete.

St John's Road Site Epping

Discussions are on going with the County Council and I will give an oral update if possible

Public Conveniences

The old facilities in Bakers Lane car park, Epping have been refurbished and transferred to the Town Council, allowing the automatic conveniences to be relocated to Buckhurst Hill Station to replace the outdated model, saving the Council £19,000 p.a. paid to the convenience operator

Waltham Abbey Town Hall

After many years of failure to reach agreement, I am pleased to say the ownership of the Town Hall has transferred to the Town Council, who are now responsible for its upkeep.

Economic Development

Economic Development Priorities and Plans - The studies of Waltham Abbey looking at the Town Centre, transport connections, tourism and unemployment are nearing completion. It is intended to identify the main areas of concern and what will be possible to address them. We will move forward in this work on to Epping and Ongar initially and then more widely, as well as district wide plans such as food production and industry.

In response to a question raised at the last meeting of the Asset Management & Economic Development cabinet Committee, an overarching document has been developed to set out the framework in which we are developing our Economic Development Plans and how these will contribute towards the development of an Economic Development Strategy.

Heritage Lottery Funding - An officer visit to a HLF presentation was undertaken by an Economic Development Officer and the Conservation Officer. This enabled the team to learn some best practice on submitting a successful bid but also to talk to both HLF and Bedford Borough Council about their projects and get advice on the submission of a bid for Waltham Abbey. HLF positively encouraged us to submit a pre-application enquiry, which is hand. Another officer working group meeting is planned to discuss where we are in the light of the advice received and what will be the most effective steps to take next.

Tourism - A Tourism Development Manager has now been appointed and the Economic Development Team will work with him wherever possible to promote the District's visitor economy.

Access To Funding Roadshow - In conjunction with the Essex Innovation Programme, we hosted an Access to Funding Roadshow at the Civic offices on November 17th. This brought together a number of key funding exhibitors, including Eastern Plateau, NWES, Growth Accelerator, Foundation East, UKTI, MAS and DWP as well as a number of further and higher education establishments to present some of the funding opportunities which exist for businesses in our district. The event attracted a range of businesses from the district and many useful introductions, conversations and links were made.

Business support – At the time of writing this report a further edition of the One Business Briefing is being produced and it is hoped that it will have been published and distributed by the time of the meeting. It will be promoting current sources of funding for businesses, events, news and updates from EFDC and partners. We are supporting a business needs survey being conducted by ECC across the County

funded through SELEP. We are expecting results in December 2014, including a report focused on Epping Forest district alone. This work will then help to inform the Growth Hub business support service that is set to be operational in the new financial year. The results of the survey will be reported to Committee for discussion. We are pleased to be providing support, largely in marketing terms, to a series of business briefing events in the New Year being delivered by Epping Forest College and Productions, a business improvement specialist.

Working with Essex County Council – We have agreed to establish a quarterly meeting schedule with key members and officers at EFDC and ECC to discuss economic development matters. The first of these meetings is scheduled for mid January 2015. ECC has recently briefed us on its Economic Growth Fund for 2015/16 which in outline provides funding for early stage schemes which have the potential to create significant jobs and/or houses and we are raising this with EFDC officers as appropriate to take forward.