

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



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Report reference: AMED-001-2015/16**

**Date of meeting: 9 July 2015**

**Portfolio: Asset Management and Economic Development**

**Subject: Economic Development Report**

**Responsible Officer: Mike Warr / Vicki Willis (01992 564042 / 564593)**

**Democratic Services: Jackie 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 appraise 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:**

1. **Staffing** – Alexandra Cramp started in the Economic Development Team as Assistant Asset Management & Economic Development officer in mid-May.

2. **Superfast Broadband** – The procurement process for the SuperfastEssex Broadband (Phase 2b) Rural Challenge Project has now been concluded and a contract for the project has been awarded to Gigaclear, a fibre broadband provider that specialises in rural networks. The project represents a £7.5m investment in the district (part-funded by UK Government, Essex County Council, Epping Forest District Council and Gigaclear) and will bring ultrafast broadband capability to 100% of the 4,545 home and business premises within the Rural Challenge Project intervention area.

A map is attached as Appendix 1 showing the extent of the area.

Essex County Council Cabinet signed off the award of the contract on 23<sup>rd</sup> June and the contracts are due to be signed on 29<sup>th</sup> June. Gigaclear plans to begin work in November 2015, with the first customers expected to gain access to the new broadband services a

month later. The deployment is expected to be completed by December 2016. Once this project is completed, and subject to further funding being identified, Superfast Essex will consider expanding this approach to other rural areas in Essex not yet included in current plans.

The Rural Challenge Project sits alongside the ongoing Phase 1 and Phase 2a elements of the Superfast Broadband project which, in partnership with BT, are aiming to deliver 95% superfast broadband to the whole of Essex.

3. **Eastern Plateau** – The Eastern Plateau has now been officially confirmed as one of the Local Action Groups (LAG) to receive EU LEADER funding via Defra / Rural Payments Agency and is beginning its marketing to ensure rural businesses are aware of its existence and the opportunities they offer for businesses to access funding for growth. The programme is part of the Rural Development Program for England (RDPE) and will be managed by East Hertfordshire Council on behalf of the Eastern Plateau Local Action Group (LAG) which is made up of local rural sector representatives including Epping Forest District Council.

The Eastern Plateau LAG have been awarded approx. £1.8m (subject to £/€ exchange rates) and the aim of the funding is to create jobs and promote business growth in rural areas. It will focus on projects covering farm productivity, rural tourism, the provision of rural services, culture and heritage forest/woodland productivity and small business growth.

The Economic Development team have already met with a potential project located within the district that is interested in securing LEADER funding and it is hoped that many more of our existing and potential local rural businesses will look into this scheme and access vital funding.

4. **One Business Briefing** – The Economic Development Team has launched a new 'look and feel' business newsletter. The bumper Spring 2015 edition provides information on the Eastern Plateau scheme; an update of the rollout of Superfast broadband across Essex and Epping Forest district; a top 10 tips feature for creative businesses; details of award schemes and competitions that our district's businesses might want to enter; and a host of other interesting information and articles. The Briefing is sent to hundreds of local businesses and partners with circulation increasing with each edition. Early feedback on the Spring edition has been very positive.

5. **District Centres Economic Development Fund** – The Economic Development Team is working with colleagues in the Communities Directorate to finalise and launch this fund for 2015/16. In previous years a similar fund has existed to enable partners to bid to undertake projects to support the local main high streets. This year's scheme is to be widened to enable smaller centres to bid as well as Economic Development Officers to propose projects. The scheme aims to encourage partners to think creatively about how they can sustainably promote their own town centres and create initiatives that have a lasting impact on their town / village centre economy.

6. **Business Survey** – As reported previously, Essex County Council has now completed its business survey. The Economic Development Team has recently received the raw data for Epping Forest District and is analysing this and will report further.

7. **Tourism Development** – As a result of the recent Tourism Conference, a number of local visitor-related businesses have asked to become more involved in the work of the tourism board. The conference also put a number of local businesses in contact with Eastern Plateau with a view to gaining funding for tourism-related business expansion projects.

The [visiteppingforest.org](http://visiteppingforest.org) website continues to be a major source of information for those

interested in the district and the number of information requests continues to grow in line with the hits on the site.

Work is being carried out on a proposal to stage a major event at North Weald Airfield in 2016 to celebrate its centenary. This would combine an air and vehicle show with a major event on the Epping Ongar Railway.

A stand has been booked for the important Excursions Show at Alexandra Palace, early next year.

Branding and awareness will be the focus of a leaflet push starting this summer, which will see branded leaflet holders sited in heavy foot-fall outlets across the district.

Other projects at an early stage include a Jazz Festival and a resident's summer offer reward card / voucher.

**8. Partner Liaison** - 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)
- Invest Essex and Essex Innovation Programme
- Lea Valley Food Taskforce
- Essex Economic Development Officer group
- Essex Tourism Officer Group
- Epping Forest Town Team
- Eastern Plateau Local Action Group
- Stansted Airport Local Authority Forum
- Tourism & Visitor Board
- West Essex Skills & Learning Forum
- Waltham Abbey Town Partnership

The Team has been busy with enquiries from individuals looking to set up in business locally and existing businesses looking to invest in the district. Team members have also attended the following key events in recent weeks - Harlow Business Exhibition, the launch of the SELEP Rural Strategy, workshops at Essex level on European Funding and Inward Investment and a visit (with Planning Policy colleagues) to Abbey View Produce glasshouses and packhouse to understand more about its operation.

**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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Not applicable as this is a progress report on work already undertaken.