

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



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Report reference: AMED-003-2015/16

Date of meeting: 15 October 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)

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. Business Support / Growth Hub

The brand new online business support, advice and growth hub has now been launched for businesses in Greater Essex (with an official celebration of launch event to be held in October). The BEST (Business Essex, Southend, & Thurrock) Growth Hub is being provided by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership and acts as a portal to enable local businesses to access the support they require. In late September the Hub appointed a contractor to offer one-to-one business support as part of the Growth Hub package and the Economic Development Team is due to meet with this individual. We have also included a feature on the Growth Hub in the latest edition of One Business Briefing and will be working with partners to capitalise on other opportunities to raise awareness of the Growth Hub's offer. New business enquiries received by the Economic Development team are being directed to the Hub for support.

2. Town Centres

The Economic Development team has been actively engaging with local stakeholders to understand some of the issues they are facing. Meetings have been held with

representatives of Buckhurst Hill and Loughton High Road town partnerships. Economic Development in conjunction with Waltham Abbey Town Partnership, has submitted a full application to the Essex County Council Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF) in respect of a wayfinding project in Waltham Abbey Town Centre after a successful Expression of Interest.

Considerable efforts have also been made to promote the new Town & Village Centres Opportunities Fund and the deadline for bids in the first round is 30 September 2015. At the time of writing the number of submissions is not yet known but detail will be reported at a later date.

3. Superfast Broadband

To sum up, the detailed design stage and subsequent rollout of the Rural Challenge Project has now begun in earnest. The project will begin in November 2015 and last 12-18 months, with the first customers connected to ultrafast broadband by January 2016. The project will be implemented alongside the current Superfast Essex rollout and is designed to test alternative ways of bringing superfast connectivity to rural communities and businesses. The appointed contractor, Gigaclear, will deploy Fibre-to-the-Premise (FTTP) technology to more than 4,500 properties in the pilot area enabling them to gain access to broadband speeds of 50Mbps to 1000Mbps (also known as ultrafast).

4. Business Briefing

Following positive feedback on the last issue, the Economic Development Team is currently distributing a new edition of this publication to a wide audience. The edition boasts a business premises special feature and a number of other key updates. Compilation of this issue has involved a large degree of partner liaison to ensure a variety of articles and features that will be of interest to the district's business community.

5. 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 Economic Development Team continues to work closely with Planning Policy in respect of the Economy areas of the new Local Plan

The Team is receiving a good supply of 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 – The Institute of Employability Professionals South East Group at Epping Forest College, Epping Forest Chamber of Commerce Business Forum and hosted a District Town Centre Teams meeting.

The Team has been working with consultants working on behalf of Essex County Council in relation to The Open Book project at Loughton Library.

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.

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