

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



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Report reference: AMED-015-2015/16

Date of meeting: 11 February 2016

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. Visitor Economy

The Visit Epping Forest 2016 Tourism Conference is taking place at the Marriott Hotel Waltham Abbey on 4th March at the start of English Tourism Week. Key speakers have been booked including Michael Veasey of Eastern Plateau/ BEST Growth Hub, Del Goddard of Vibrant Partnerships and George Kieffer of Visit Essex. After a soft launch within the winter tourism e-newsletter there are already over 25 delegates booked in and a dedicated campaign will promote the event through January to February.

Two new display banners have been produced for the use of tourism members at events. They have already been used very successfully at the Visit Epping Forest stand at the 2016 Excursions trade show at Alexandra Palace. Work has started on a new website following overwhelming recommendations for an upgraded site as a key outcome from tourism workshops in 2015. The new site will work across all devices and contain information on different areas of the district as well as the key visitor attractions and an improved "What's On" page. Accessibility for easy updating and editorial control will be included via a new Content Management System (CMS). It is planned to have a soft launch for the new site at

the Tourism Conference in March.

An updated general area leaflet is being produced which will also contain information about different areas of the district. Display units for the leaflets are also being ordered to be sited in appropriate outlets locally. We are talking to partners to ensure that opportunities for developing economic benefits from the North Weald Airfield centenary are flagged and supported as appropriate.

2. Town Centres

EDOs, working closely with Waltham Abbey Town Partnership, have been successful in acquiring funding from Essex County Council's Community Initiatives Fund to commission consultancy support to design a wayfinding project for Waltham Abbey town centre.

There are five applications, varying in scale and nature, either under consideration or approved within EFDC's Town & Village Centres Opportunities Fund. We hope to be in a position to report verbally on progress at the meeting. We are aware of at least one further bid that is currently being prepared for submission to the Fund and will be encouraging partners to consider further bids at the District Town Centres Team meeting scheduled for January.

3. Business Support

The Economic Development Team is working with BEST Growth Hub to promote and encourage take-up of its services by our local business community. We are promoting its suite of free workshops for start-up and established businesses across Essex from January to March and it has just been confirmed that four of these sessions will be at Epping Rugby Club and Epping Forest College. BEST will also have presence at the Tourism Conference and we are exploring opportunities for some different format events i.e. drop-in surgery session for businesses or a Pop-up Business Café. The premise of the latter is to secure an informal setting for businesses to come and get some free advice from BEST Growth Hub and the private sector. At a pilot event last week in Southend BEST had an accountant, solicitor, HR consultant, marketing consultant, a bank, the IP office and Companies House. The Economic Development Team is currently appraising options to further enhance its business contacts database in the near future in order to extend positive communication with our local businesses. The Team is compiling a further edition of One Business Briefing to be distributed to business contacts and partners in February.

4. Superfast Essex / Rural Challenge Project

The build phase of the Superfast Essex Rural Challenge Project continues to make progress in the Bobbingworth and Moreton areas of the district. A second fibre cabinet has been built just outside Fyfield and works to connect up this cabinet to the wider network have also begun. The first customer of the Gigaclear ultrafast network was connected and went live just before Christmas, with the event being marked by a visit to Bobbingworth by Ed Vaizey, MP, Minister of State for Culture and the Digital Economy. The next cabinet planned for the network will be located in the Norton Heath area.

As part of the drive to generate more business take-up of the wider Superfast Essex offer, Superfast Essex will shortly be running a series of digital workshops, one of which 'How to stay ahead of competitors online' will be hosted in Ongar on 3rd March at Essex Technology & Innovation Centre. It is planned to promote these workshops and a digital toolkit, also developed by Superfast Essex, in the next edition of our magazine for businesses, One Business Briefing.

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 (SE LEP)
- Invest Essex and Essex Innovation Programme
- Lea Valley Food Taskforce
- 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

The Economic Development Team was represented at a new grouping in January termed the West Essex Economic & Investment Officer Forum. This new group has been well received by partners and has been established to help communication, foster a stronger common understanding of the issues and projects across West Essex and to ensure that West Essex has a joined-up voice (when inputting into LSCC, SE LEP etc.). The meeting was attended by Officers from Epping Forest District, Harlow, Uttlesford and Essex County Council (Economic Regeneration, Inward Investment and Highways).

The Team was also represented at the Essex Economic Development Officers Group in January 2016. As well as being a valuable forum at which we gleaned great information on business funding and support, activity at Essex County Council etc., it was an introduction to the operation of the Hive Enterprise Centre in Southend.

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.