

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 27 September 2016

Subject: Assets and Economic Development

Portfolio Holder: Councillor A Grigg

Recommending:

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

1. Town Centres

The Town and Village Centres Opportunities Fund has been launched for 2016/17 accompanied by a new policy document for the current year which will hopefully enable a wider range of organisations to apply and access the funding, generating a wider range of initiatives to support our local economic centres. A number of bids and proposals have already been received or discussed in draft outline and it is hoped that further publicity over the coming weeks and months will further widen its reach in terms of the organisations getting involved.

2. Business Support

Pop Up Business Café

On 13th July the newly refurbished Epping Forest District Museum hosted the district's first ever Pop-Up Business Café.

Co-ordinated by Epping Forest District Council in partnership with BEST Growth Hub, the aim of the session was to provide established and start-up businesses with the opportunity to access informal advice on a wide range of subjects vital to a business's success, from marketing to HR and finance to law, as well as more holistic overall business support and management development.

It brought more than 30 local businesses and start-ups from across the district together for a morning of informal advice and networking.

One Business Briefing

The latest edition of our business magazine One Business Briefing was published at the beginning of September and, as in previous issues, featured a wide range of articles providing advice, sharing information and publicising key business events and initiatives around the district and region. Using the business contact database built up over the last few months the Briefing was directly circulated to over 1900 business contacts and was also made more widely available via the council's website and its social media streams.

The magazine again drew in numerous articles and features supported by external partners and organisations, a number of whom also publicised the magazine through their own social media streams, further widening its audience.

Database

Work continues to refine the business contact database purchased by the economic development team but it has now evolved into a stable contact list through which we are able

to effectively disseminate regular news updates and share details of upcoming business support events.

3. Visitor Economy

Accommodation Needs Study

Economic Development along with colleagues in Planning has commissioned Hotel Solutions to undertake a Visitor Accommodation Needs Assessment for the district. The first phase of this study took place in August 2016 with work informing the visitor accommodation policy in the draft Local Plan. This stage of work comprised an audit of current visitor accommodation supply; a review of past and current proposals for visitor accommodation; a review of national trends in hotel and visitor accommodation development; initial consultation with Officers, Members and key stakeholders and review of approaches to tourist accommodation planning policies elsewhere. Phase 2 will be undertaken later in 2016 and will provide more evidence around the need and potential for the development of visitor accommodation with the District.