

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



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Report reference: AMED-001-2018/19

Date of meeting: 19 July 2018

Portfolio: Asset Management and Economic Development

Subject: Economic Development Report

**Responsible Officer: John Houston / Mike Warr / Vicki Willis
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Democratic Services: Jackie Leither (01992 564756)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) To note the progress and work programme of the Council's Economic Development Section and provide feedback if Members wish;

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 2018 Tourism and Visitor Summit is being planned for the end of October and once again the Marriott Hotel Waltham Abbey is being approached as host and sponsor.

A meeting is being organised with Harlow, East Herts and Uttlesford Councils to join with Broxbourne and Epping Forest District to explore joint marketing and promotion opportunities.

The proposed 2019 Food Fair for Waltham Abbey is moving forward. Sunday 5 May and Monday 6 May have been proposed. Expressions of interest are being sought from potential stall holders and other participants. Those making up the organising committee include Waltham Abbey Town Council, Waltham Abbey Church, Waltham Abbey Town Partnership, Vibrant Partnerships, Epping Forest District Museum, Abbey View Produce, P A Sparks and Sons Ltd and One Epping Forest. Funders are being sought and links explored with a

number of organisations including the local schools, Town Twinning Association and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The Visit Epping Forest website continues to grow. May 2018 saw the highest monthly visitors with a 26% increase over the previous highest month. 'Users' are being used as a KPI measurement with a target for the next quarter of 24,744.

Following a series of discussions a locally based company is progressing its planning for a major destination event to be held at North Weald Airfield during the summer of 2019. Once final details have been agreed, a date for July 2019 will be announced and the event will be formally launched to the public.

An expression of interest has been made to Ville de Compiègne, a mid-sized town 80km north of Paris which is looking to lead on an EU Interreg bid for 2,500,000 € – 4,000,000 €. The bid requires other partners from countries within the EU and was referred to Visit Epping Forest by Invest Essex. The project seeks to link together visitor areas that fall just outside capital cities with a view to improving economic growth through branding, upskilling tourism staff and building visitor traffic between the participating locations and countries. In order to fulfil the geographic, population and diversity of attractions on offer, an area covering Waltham Abbey and Broxbourne, with the Lee Valley between, has been proposed for the bid. This bid is at an early stage with the bid lead currently talking to all those who have expressed interest, with a view to the selected participants developing a bid for submission in 2019.

2. Economic Development Strategy

The Team is focusing on the delivery of a new long term Economic Development Strategy as outlined at the April meeting. A more detailed update will be provided at the next AMED meeting and Members will be invited to input into the strategy process in the Autumn.

3. Business Support

Business contacts and GDPR

The Team is working to ensure that its database which includes approximately 2,000 contacts is fit for purpose going forward in terms of the requirements of GDPR. This also extends to ensuring that the Team is collecting and managing new details in the correct manner.

External Funding

The Team continues to work to attract external grant funding for businesses within the District. A few examples of this work are highlighted below:

South East Business Boost (SEBB) – as reported previously, SEBB is a grants scheme for business growth that is offering grants of £1,000 to £10,000 for up to 30% of total project costs. The Economic Development Team is working closely with SEBB in promoting the Fund and as at last reporting (May 2018) six grants have so far been awarded in the District. A couple of recent approvals are Connaught Farm Nurseries (£10,000) and Allen Watson Ltd (£10,000). Very recently the scheme has been extended to cover revenue as well as capital expenditure which is positive and the Team will be disseminating this message locally.

Low Carbon Across the South East (LoCASE) - The Team continues to help in the promotion of this scheme which assists SMEs in reducing business costs by cutting emissions and seeks to increase awareness of opportunities in the low carbon market. A total of 11 awards have now been made locally in the District; the total value of which being c £86,000.

5. Epping Forest District Skills Board

The Skills Board met in April and presentations were made by Princess Alexandra Hospital, the LSCC and the Harlow Enterprise Zone. Partners outlined their skills needs going forward and the role schools and colleges need to play. As a result of the meeting, further meetings were agreed between PAH and Epping Forest College to create joint training opportunities and work experience for Care Students.

6. Digital Innovation Programme

A successful symposium to discuss the development of the Digital Innovation Strategy for the West Essex and Eastern Hertfordshire Digital Innovation Zone was held on 15 June at Harlow College. With around 60 guests gathered including local, county and central government plus representatives from the health, education and voluntary sectors and a number of private sector and business representatives, the symposium examined the opportunities for the DIZ that consultants Arup Consulting has identified as part of its strategy development. It also broke down into a number of workshops where the delegates examined in detail subjects such as how to digitally future-proof our local economic prosperity, how to ensure digital inclusion and participation, and how to ensure digital technology and approaches are built in to new developments and communities from the beginning. Arup will now take away the feedback from the workshops and main symposium and use this insight in developing the draft Digital innovation Strategy. It is hoped to launch the strategy at a major event in September.

A team lead by Epping Forest DC on behalf of the DIZ Board and in conjunction with Princess Alexandra Hospital, West Essex CCG and Essex partnership University Trust had been successful in gaining a place on the LGA / The Design Council programme 'Design in the Public Sector' and have been examining options to use digital approaches to reduce A&E attendance amongst Over-75s. That programme has concluded but the work continues and the team is currently prototyping laptop technology for ambulance crews to improve the flow of patient information. The LGA have approached Epping Forest DC to feature the project in 'first' magazine and the article should be published in late July.

7. Superfast Broadband

The Rural Challenge Project was completed in early July. The project has seen in excess of 4,300 properties connected up to the fibre broadband network installed by Gigaclear and more than 235km of physical infrastructure installed in the ground across the district. Attention will now focus on encouraging take-up of the service. This will deliver world class speeds to the areas served.

Following agreement by Cabinet to contribute a further £350,000 of council funding towards further broadband infrastructure, the contract for the rollout of fibre broadband to a further 2,188 properties has been signed by Superfast Essex and the installation of these connections will bring the district's level of superfast broadband coverage up to 99.67% by December 2019. This will leave just 207 properties without superfast broadband in the district; however the Team is actively exploring options to bring coverage to these few remaining properties.

7. Food Sector

Closing the Gap: State of the area's food industry

The Team coordinated a launch event for the final report of the Lea Valley Food Board. This took place at the House of Commons hosted by the Rt. Hon. Dame Eleanor Laing M.P. on 23 May 2018. This report sets out the findings on local productivity and opportunities and set out

a series of recommendations to expand and sustain future growth. The report was successfully launched; 50 partners attended, representing businesses, colleges and universities and enterprise partnerships. One of the report's key recommendations was the establishment of a new food partnership across the South East between government, business and academia.

South East Food Board

In its current format the Food Board will hold its final meeting in September. It will hopefully then become part of a wider regional partnership between local authorities and food industry representatives. A number of key partners from across the South East have indicated a willingness to become part of the South East Strategic Food board. The Vice Chairman of SELEP has agreed to host initial meeting; officers are making preparations for this.

BioBoost Project

The Team continues to work with the Food Board on this EU Programme. In June the project partners met in Belgium to review progress in the workstreams being led in each country around recycling and carbon reduction in the glasshouse industry. A series of events locally are being prepared and it is hoped that the food festival can be part funded for this service.

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)
- London Stansted Cambridge Consortium (LSCC)
- Invest Essex and Essex Innovation Programme
- Lea Valley Food Board
- Co-op Officer Group/ workstreams of Harlow and Gilston Garden Town
- 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
- Superfast Essex
- Princess Alexandra Hospital
- West Essex CCG
- Essex Partnership University Trust
- Rainbow Services, Harlow
- Anglia Ruskin University

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