

# ***Report to the Council***

**Subject:** Asset Management and Economic Development Portfolio

**Date:** 17 December 2013

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor A Grigg

---

## **Recommending:**

**That the report of the Asset Management and Economic Development Portfolio Holder be noted.**

---

## **North Weald Airfield**

The newly named Asset Management and Economic Development Cabinet Committee met on 5 December, when it considered some complex issues around the condition of the runway at North Weald Airfield. Since that issue was considered in private session I cannot set out the details in this report, but I can inform Members that it has become necessary to commission a further detailed assessment of the condition of the main runway. This work will be helpful in determining both the future approach to continued aviation at the Airfield as well as informing the work which is being done in developing options for further income generation.

## **Estates & Valuation**

The Council currently has three vacant industrial units at Oakwood Hill all of which are now under offer. This leaves just two other properties that are currently vacant at 548 Limes Avenue, Chigwell and 144 Brooker Road, Waltham Abbey. It is encouraging that the Council are continuing to maintain a very high occupancy rate in the commercial property portfolio.

The refurbishment of the Bakers Lane, Epping public toilets is on schedule with a target handover date of Monday 16 December 2013.

The planning application for the redevelopment of the Sir Winston Churchill public house site will be considered at the District Development Control Committee on 11 December 2013.

## **Economic Development**

The Council continues to increase its work to support the local economy

A senior party of members and officers, (supported by the manager of Jobcentre Plus) recently met with the new Chief Executive of Stansted Airport. The meeting discussed the future of the airport, plans for investment, and opportunities for joint working, increasing the number jobs at the airport gained by local residents and

ensuring local companies in the supply chain side can access current and emerging opportunities.

One Shops Local now has over 320 registrations from businesses in the area. Visit Epping Forest has been running advertising campaigns to support tourism in the district over the Autumn and many of our local attractions are showing more referrals from our own site than the Visit Essex site. The district was host a few weeks ago to a major conference on Tourism organised by Visit Essex, with key national speakers attending.

Both Essex County Council and the South East LEP are developing their funding proposal packages for the next several years and district members are representing the needs of Epping Forest and the wider West Essex corridor at LEP meetings.

The newly established District Council Town Centres Fund has finished its second round of bids with the majority of Town Centre Partnerships receiving funding, together with a bid from the Chamber of Commerce. Regular collective meetings of the partnerships will now be held to enable sharing of information and best practice and joint action on common problems.

The Portas Town Team in Waltham Abbey are close to launching a Smartphone App to promote the town, and are also looking at developing a meridian festival, and marker, and also hosting a High Street Summit.

The co-location project, bringing funded officers from a variety of organisations with a role in supporting economic development in the district, is continuing. Officers from both ECC and the Department of Work and Pensions now operate from the district council offices, working on joint projects and coordinating activity. A new Youth Employment Taskforce, designed to work with local employers to tackle problems specific to this age range will soon be launched, supported by these officers.

The Christmas edition of the Business Bulletin will shortly be produced highlighting the work of partners and the District Council in this area.