

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



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Report reference: AMED-010-2014/15

Date of meeting: 12 February 2015

Portfolio: Asset Management and Economic Development

Subject: Economic Development Report

Responsible Officer: Mike Warr/Vicki Willis (01992 56 4472 / 2799)

Democratic Services: Jackie Leither (01992 56 4756)

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. **Staffing** - Management of Economic Development is set to revert to Kassandra Polyzoides, Assistant Director Planning Policy & Economic Development as per corporate restructure implemented April 2014. The recruitment of two Assistant Asset Management & Economic Development Assistants is currently underway with intention to appoint to these posts by mid/late March 2015.

2. **Waltham Abbey studies** - Officers are finalising several studies addressing Waltham Abbey with external consultants. These commissions are appraising the current position of the town (e.g. in terms of unemployment, role and function of the town centre) and will then tackle potential for change including, scoping commercial development opportunities, analysing the potential for growth in town centre uses and opportunities for tourism development locally. We will be collating findings shortly and will report and discuss with Members and partners in the coming months. In conducting this work we are working closely with Forward Planning colleagues to ensure it feeds into the Local Plan process and similarly we are aware of the evidence base work being conducted by Forward Planning to appreciate how this can feed into our wider activities.

3. **Essex Superfast Broadband** - Councillor Lion and Economic Development are continuing to work closely with Essex County Council on phase 2 of its Superfast Essex broadband programme which has the target of making superfast broadband available to 95% of home and business premises in Essex. Such is the cooperation between EFDC and ECC that the Rural Challenge element of the County Council's programme is to focus on the north east of Epping Forest district.

4. **Tourism development** - As noted at the last meeting, Quentin Buller is now in post as Tourism Development Manager for Visit Epping Forest and works closely with Economic Development. It is intended that Quentin will attend the meeting and provide more detail on current activities. These include securing a Visit Epping Forest presence at various trade shows, coordination of a Tourism Conference at the Waltham Abbey Marriott Hotel on 20 March, work to establish a Jazz Festival locally in 2015 and improving communication with tourist-related businesses in the area.

5. **The Lea Valley Food Taskforce** - The Taskforce was established by local businesses and councils to explore opportunities for sector support, employment, skills development and relocation of Research and Development capacity in the area. It is led by EFDC and supported by councils including Essex CC, Harlow, Uttlesford, London Borough of Enfield and Broxbourne Borough Council. It also includes, NFU locally and regionally, major local business leaders in the sector, LVRPA, Capel Manor College and other local stakeholders. It is the lead delivery body for the LSCC, and food has just been adopted as one of its key priorities.

The Taskforce produced an interim report setting out the key issues and potential future work streams and these are currently being pursued, including:

- Feasibility Study on Institute for Food Security, funded by West Essex POD, supported by University of East Anglia/adap+
- Planning Policy report, setting out potential new approaches to how planning policy might support the industry, led previously by LB Enfield
- Employment Bridge Project, previously supported by DWP
- Skills/NVQ project funded by ECC and undertaken by Epping Forest College
- LSCC Food Sector study is being compiled looking at prevalence and opportunities for sector development along the corridor
- A joint EU Bid is in preparation with partners in Holland and Belgium, supported by ECC, around opportunities for carbon reduction/recycling in the industry.

6. **Business support** - We have not received sufficient results from the ECC business needs survey to report as yet but we will do at the next meeting. There is also little to update on the new Growth Hub business support service that is to be implemented and so similarly we will report next time. We are helping in the marketing of a series of business briefing events being delivered by Epping Forest College and Pro-actions. The first held in mid January had just under 30 attendees and positive feedback. We are working hard to cascade other information of interest to our local business community whether events, funding sources or other support e.g. the Essex Means Business: Project Europe Conference on 26 February 2015 in Chelmsford. This event will provide businesses with details of all major European Funding programmes.

7. **Working with Essex County Council** – Input is being provided into the Essex County Council Economic Growth Story/Strategy. This work will identify a pipeline of projects to help deliver growth aspirations across the County and will ensure Essex's aspirations and 'wants' are clearly articulated at a SELEP level. The first quarterly meeting of key members and officers at EFDC and ECC to discuss economic development matters was unfortunately postponed but we are seeking to reschedule.

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)
- 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

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.