

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



**Epping Forest
District Council**

Report reference: AMED-012-2014/15

Date of meeting: 23 April 2015

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. **Staffing** - A new Assistant Asset Management & Economic Development officer has recently been appointed internally to the Economic Development Team and is anticipated to take up the post in late April / early May.

2. **Waltham Abbey Studies** - Reports commissioned on the issues and opportunities facing Waltham Abbey Town centre have now been received from consultants and are being tidied up and refined in liaison with the Economic Development Team. The reports comment in varying degrees of detail on the potential for various interventions or development projects throughout the town. However, each of the reports have been compiled in isolation, not only from each other, but also the ongoing gathering of the Local Plan evidence base and the district-wide study being compiled by Hardisty Jones consultants.

Given this ongoing development of the Council's Local Plan, and the parallel development of an Economic Development Strategy, it is not appropriate that these reports and proposals be taken forward at this point but they will inform future developments in the town in line with the outcomes and policies agreed in the Local Plan.

3. **Superfast Broadband** - The Economic Development Team is working closely with the Essex County Council Superfast Broadband team and supporting the Portfolio Holder for Support Services and Technology on the development of Phase 2b (The Rural Challenge Project or RCP) of the Superfast Broadband rollout programme. The RCP aims to provide solutions to the provision of superfast broadband to a section of the Epping Forest District's rural areas, the area in scope being located entirely within Epping Forest District. The Invitations to Tender have been sent out to a number of bidders and the assessment of those bids is likely to take place during late April / early May.

4. **Business Support / Growth Hub** - A brand new online business support, advice and growth hub has opened for Greater Essex. The BEST (Business Essex, Southend, & Thurrock) Growth Hub is being provided by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership and will act as a portal to enable local businesses to access the support they require. In the initial months, business enquiries will at first be handled by navigators in the Southend Growth Hub who will redirect them to the relevant local council contact.

The online offer is currently a very simple one but this will be developed and enhanced over the next few months as a business support mapping exercise is completed, again supported by SE LEP funding. This mapping exercise will simplify access to the many varied national, regional and local business support initiatives that exist.

5. **Business Survey** - Essex County Council have now completed their business survey. A headline report for Essex has been generated but district level detail is, for the most part, still awaited. Just over 1,000 businesses were interviewed and 105 Epping Forest businesses were contacted. Some top-level (Essex-wide) results showed that although only 11% of businesses employed apprentices, up to 37% were likely to do so in the future. Some 64% were planning to train or upskill their staff in the next 12 months, 29% expected their number of employees to increase in the next 12 months and 77% were aiming to grow their business in the next 2-3 years.

6. **Tourism Development** - Local business people who want to make more from tourism were invited to the One Epping Forest Tourism and Visitor Board Tourism Conference on 20 March. Over ninety delegates registered representing a full range of tourism and visitor based local businesses and including all the area's major attractions. The various speakers and their informative presentations were very well received and the workshop sessions created lively discussions around the themes of growing the local tourism offer, priorities and barriers and expectations of support from Visit Epping Forest.

Delegates remained for networking and a lot of new connections resulted including a local brewery that has numerous leads for new outlets taking their product, a local baker now supplying a local restaurant and a local stables and bike hire business that has enquired about links to Lee Valley to open new customer opportunities.

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.