

## ***Report to the Council***

**Committee:** Cabinet

**Date:** 3 November 2015

**Subject:** Asset & Economic Development

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor A Grigg

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### **Recommending:**

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

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### Business Support / One Business Briefing

We have recently published the Autumn edition of our One Business Briefing magazine for businesses. This built on the developments from the previous edition and again sought to engage with a wide range of organisations to ensure the magazine is both informative and useful to businesses whether they are just starting out or established and looking to grow. It included contributions from 14 external sources and the working relationship developed with these organisations also enabled us to both widen the scope of the distribution for the magazine and increase awareness through encouraging them to feature the briefing on their social media outlets. This has seen, in addition to the almost 700 direct recipients of the magazine, over 800 additional downloads of the magazine from the council's website at the present time.

### Partner and Stakeholder Engagement

The Economic Development Team held a District Town Centre Teams meeting on 13 October. These quarterly update meetings are a valuable opportunity to discuss partner activities in each of our centres and to discuss projects within the Town and Villages Opportunities Fund. At the October meeting we were fortunate to also welcome a fabulous guest speaker on behalf of Braintree Town Team (one of Government's 27 Portas Pilots) who shared valuable experience and has hopefully provided inspiration. The Team is also having discussions with equivalents across West Essex with regard to the strengthening of EFDC business contacts and a system to better manage and interrogate details going forward. A meeting has been held between key Officers and Members at EFDC and ECC regarding economic development matters.

### Superfast Broadband

A more detailed breakdown of the current position has been included within the Technology & Support Services Portfolio Holder's report. The key development has been the commencement of community engagement events with the first of these held at Moreton Village Hall on 15<sup>th</sup> October for the Moreton, Bobbingworth and Bovingner area.

### St John's Road, Epping

We are still awaiting the necessary State Aid Approval in respect of this site. The contract has now largely been agreed and the only remaining point of negotiation with the sale is that Essex County Council have asked for a clause to protect themselves should the St John's

Road redevelopment change substantially from the mixed use scheme.

#### North Weald Airfield

The Council has over time commissioned a number of studies in relation to the future of North Weald Airfield. As a result of the most recent review, undertaken by Deloitte in July 2013, Cabinet resolved that the preferred option was that the Council pursue a mixed aviation/development option, subject to the outcome of the Local Plan. As part of the consideration of the future of North Weald Airfield, Members also requested that pro-active steps be taken to maximise aviation activity on the site. Cabinet agreed to seek an operational partner to promote aviation and associated uses, and Officers were asked to appoint marketing arrangements. Two days of well attended Airfield site visits were held in order to provide the opportunity for potential bidders to understand in greater detail, the condition of the site, how it is currently managed and the current mix of tenants and uses.

Three Expressions of Interest were received and these parties were asked to provide details of their Company Structure, their Skills and Experience, their Financial Standing and their Vision for the Airfield. These proposals have been analysed and each party has been interviewed by our Consultants and Officers in order to seek clarification and a greater level of understanding of their submissions.

Although the marketing exercise is not a formal procurement process the proposals contain information that is commercially sensitive and contain details of business planning and financial modelling that each party would not wish to be shared in public. This is particularly true as they have expressed a desire, to be included in any future formal procurement process.

Following a presentation by our Consultants on the three Expressions of Interest, the Asset Management and Economic Cabinet Committee considered a number of Key Considerations and the outcome of this evaluation and recommendations will be reported to Cabinet on 5<sup>th</sup> November.

#### Epping Forest Shopping Park

It has been agreed that the Asset Management Cabinet Committee will take on the more detailed monitoring role in respect of the Epping Forest Shopping Park and Monitoring reports will be received from the lead consultants. Cabinet will continue to receive on an ongoing basis the regular high level reports and these can be supplemented by input from the Cabinet Committee.

#### Ongar Academy

The new secondary school opened for the first intake of 126 Year Seven Pupils at the beginning of September. Temporary classroom facilities have been provided on the redundant tennis courts to the rear of the Leisure Centre under Licence from the Council. Pre application discussions have commenced on the new permanent school. Heads of Terms have been agreed for the sale of the playing fields to accommodate the new school, subject to planning approval.

#### Pyrles Lane Nursery

A revised application has been submitted for planning approval on the site which seeks to address the previous grounds for refusal. Following the necessary period of consultation, it is anticipated that the matter will be considered by the District Development Management Committee in December 2015.