

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 15 December 2015

Subject: Asset and Economic Development

Portfolio Holder: Councillor A Grigg

Recommending:

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

Economic Development

Business Support / One Business Briefing

The Economic Development Team is managing a good supply of enquiries from individuals looking to set up in business locally and existing businesses looking to invest in the district. BEST Growth Hub is proposing a suite of workshops for start-up and established businesses in West Essex and EDOs will be liaising to ensure these are relevant to local business need and will be promoting locally to hopefully encourage strong take-up.

Town & Village Centres Opportunities Fund

The second round of applications to this fund closes on 2nd December although at the time of writing it is not known what level of applications might be expected. A report will be considered by Cabinet on 3rd December to agree the allocation of funding to this scheme for 2016/17. The same report will outline that a number of initiatives that will be developed by the Economic Development Team and proposed to the Portfolio Holder for consideration in order to maximise the benefits to be achieved by the fund.

Stakeholder Engagement

EDOs have been working closely with colleagues in Planning Policy in respect of the Economy areas of the new Local Plan. Most recently this has included participation in the Economic Strategy workshop on 19th November. Facilitated group discussion provided the opportunity to explore high level preferences in terms of policy approach to the economy in the new Local Plan and to re-appraise EFDC's Economic Development priorities.

Superfast Broadband

The construction phase of the Rural Challenge Project (Phase 2b of the Superfast Essex Rollout) has now begun. The first cabinet has been built in the Bobbingworth and Bovinger area and work is ongoing to build the network connections from that cabinet to the residential premises that it will serve. Community Q&A events have been held in Moreton,

Fyfield, Willingale and the Rodings and have been warmly received by those attending. Rollout of the project is keenly anticipated by residents and businesses. These events will continue throughout the rollout programme and we will advise the local district members for the relevant areas as and when the events are organised.

Tourism

Positive early stage work is underway with partners looking at opportunities to better join-up and package the tourism offer across Epping Forest District, Broxbourne and East Herts. The Tourism and Visitor Board has also confirmed that the Annual Tourism Summit will be held on 4th March 2016.

Asset Management Projects

The Cabinet has been receiving regular high level reports on the Epping Forest Shopping Park project. Now that the Council has acquired the sole interest in the development of the project and the associated risks, both financial and reputational, the Asset Management Cabinet Committee have now taken on responsibility for a higher degree of project monitoring. The Council's Consultant Project Manager and Marketing/Lettings Advisors are attending the Cabinet Committee meeting on the 10 December to present their reports.

Work is progressing on the development of the new depot at Oakwood Hill, which will accommodate the Council's Ground Maintenance and Fleet Maintenance Services, who will be vacating Langston Road. Ground-works are complete with the steel frame largely erected. If current progress is maintained, practical completion should be achieved in April 2016.

The Council's Consultants, Savills, have undertaken a marketing exercise to seek a development partner to promote aviation activity at North Weald Airfield. Three expressions of interest were received, the details of which were presented to the Asset Management Cabinet Committee who recommended to Cabinet accordingly. It is now intended that a further procurement process in accordance with European regulations to let a "concessionary" contract to a potential partner is instigated. Progress will be reported to Council.