

Report to the Council

Subject: Asset Management and Economic Development Portfolio Date: 20 February 2014

Portfolio Holder: Councillor A Grigg

Recommending:

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

North Weald Airfield

In my last report I mentioned that officers were commissioning further work on the condition of the runway at North Weald Airfield. That work is now well underway with the assessment of the main runway having been completed. It is hoped to receive the report shortly, following which we will be able to draw some conclusions about the approach to sustaining aviation at the Airfield as agreed by Cabinet following its consideration of the Deloitte report last year.

An approach has been made by the Essex & Herts Air Ambulance in respect of extending its operational hours at the Airfield. The Air Ambulance plays a very important role in providing medical care to critically ill or injured casualties, and officers are currently considering the request received from the Air Ambulance Management. I hope to be able to report back on the outcome of these discussions in a future report.

Economic Development

Work continues to develop with our partners to support our local economy. At the strategic level we are working closely with SELEP to ensure that the new Strategic Economic Plans reflect the needs and opportunities in Epping Forest, and with the West Essex Alliance to ensure the benefits of the new Enterprise Zone in Harlow are shared across West Essex. In addition new relationships are being formed with other councils and commercial bodies through the London Stansted Cambridge Corridor to champion the interests of communities in this economic area.

New Research is being completed into the shape and value of the tourism and visitor economy in the district in the last year, for which figures are available. The Tourism Task Force under Councillor Boyce which includes many of the main attractions in the district has agreed to continue coordinating and leading development in this sector locally. The Lea Valley Food Taskforce which is hosted in the district is expanding with East Hertfordshire Council joining the other six local authorities, DWP and the Regional Park Authority, NFU and representatives of the growers. Working groups are meeting to increase local employment opportunities in the growing

industry, and are examining the impact of planning policy in the Lea Valley on the industry.

The Town Centre Partnerships are working hard to deliver on the projects funded by the new Town Centres Fund, and a number of meetings have been held with local retailers and other partners to help increase participation. Plans are being developed to ensure the opportunities for the district of the Tour de France are realised.

The work of the local partnerships for economic growth are now also benefiting from funding agreed at Cabinet to take their work to the next stage in tourism, the growing industry and once again in supporting our local town centres. While increased capacity and leadership will also be delivered via the posts approved as part of the restructure

Work is continuing, with the support of Ignite Business Enterprise Limited, to develop a suite of business support and employability products. Subject to identifying a suitable venue it is hoped to run both a five day Business Planning workshop and a three day Employment Skills workshop each of which would result in a qualification for those attending, providing they meet the standards.