

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



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Report reference:** **AMED-010-2015/16**

**Date of meeting:** **10 December 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. Eastern Plateau Rural Business Funding**

After several months finalising the organisation and administrative arrangements with Defra, the Eastern Plateau contracts have now been signed and they are open for business. The goals of the programme are to create jobs, develop rural businesses; and support the rural economy. Outline application forms can now be issued to rural businesses interested in accessing funding to increase farm productivity; support micro and small businesses and farm diversification; boost rural tourism; provide rural services; provide cultural and heritage activities; and increase forestry productivity.

EDOs will work with Eastern Plateau to promote and publicise the scheme to our rural businesses and to ensure they are able to access the available advice, support and assistance to complete their applications.

### **2. Town Centres**

EDOs, working closely with Waltham Abbey Town Partnership, put together an application to the Essex County Council Community Initiatives Fund for funding towards design

consultancy support to design a wayfinding project for Waltham Abbey town centre. We hope to be able to update Members verbally at the meeting on the outcome of this application.

The first round of the Town & Village Centres Opportunities Fund has now closed. Although the quantity of applications received was less than hoped it was pleasing to receive a number of applications from the village centres to whom the scheme was opened up this year. One of these applications has been successful and will be awarded funds and the second has opened up dialogue between the EDOs and the village organisation to work on the project and develop it further to hopefully secure a small amount funding later in the cycle.

The second round of applications is due to close on 2<sup>nd</sup> December when it is hoped that further bids will be received. Work has been ongoing to assist one town partnership to develop its bid for seed funding. In anticipation of the second round closing the EDOs have been developing some outline ideas to be taken forward in last few months of the year subject to submitting applications to the Portfolio Holder for consideration. A number of these potential bids are focused on building capacity amongst our town centre partnerships and deeper understanding of the issues that face the towns, and it is hoped that these will lead to further bids by the partnerships in future funding cycles.

A report requesting Cabinet make available a further £35,000 of District Development Funding for the operation of the Town & Village Centres Opportunities Fund in 2016/17 has been written and will be considered by cabinet on 3<sup>rd</sup> December. A verbal update on the outcome of the meeting will be given to members at the Asset Management and Economic Development Cabinet Committee meeting.

### **3. 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 Bovingher area and work is ongoing to build the network connections from that cabinet to the residential premises that it will serve. The overall schedule of works for the Rural Challenge Project (RCP) has also been published via the Gigaclear website and made available to Members through the Bulletin and published to residents via the Council's news website. This will enable residents covered by the RCP to gain a better understanding of when work will commence in their areas.

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.

With rollout progressing well on both the RCP and the wider BDUK SuperfastEssex programme focus will now move towards the promotion of the infrastructure that is being put in place and encouraging take-up of the Superfast and Ultrafast broadband services that will progressively become available to our residents.

### **4. Local Plan / Economic Development Strategy**

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 19<sup>th</sup> November. This was an opportunity for District, Town and Parish Council Members to hear about responses relating to the economy from the Community Choices Consultation, consider the issues and key evidence findings and ask questions about them. 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.

**5. Visitor Economy**

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. Added to this is the potential for further collaboration with North London counterparts and joining with Harlow to the north. At the heart of this emerging work is obviously Lee Valley Regional Park's immense visitor offer. Moving to other tourism matters, the Tourism and Visitor Board has confirmed that 2016's Annual Tourism Summit will be held on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

**6. Business Support**

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.

**7. 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 District Town Team
- Eastern Plateau Local Action Group
- Stansted Airport Local Authority Forum
- Tourism & Visitor Board
- West Essex Skills & Learning Forum
- Waltham Abbey Town Partnership
- One Epping Forest

In terms of working with Essex County Council, it had been agreed to establish meetings on a regular basis with key members and officers at Epping Forest District Council and Essex County Council who are involved with economic development. The first such meeting was held on 21<sup>st</sup> October ECC and proved useful in many respects.

**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.