

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 18 February 2016

Subject: Assets and Economic Development

Portfolio Holder: Councillor A Grigg

Recommending:

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

Tourism

The Visit Epping Forest 2016 Tourism Conference is confirmed as taking place at the Marriott Hotel Waltham Abbey on 4th March at the start of English Tourism Week. Key speakers have been booked including Michael Veasey of Eastern Plateau/ BEST Growth Hub, Del Goddard of Vibrant Partnerships and George Kieffer of Visit Essex.

Town Centres

EDOs, working closely with Waltham Abbey Town Partnership, have been successful in acquiring funding from Essex County Council's Community Initiatives Fund to commission consultancy support to design a wayfinding project for Waltham Abbey town centre.

Business Support

The Economic Development Team is working with the BEST Growth Hub to promote and encourage take-up of its services by our local business community. We are promoting its suite of free workshops for start-up and established businesses across Essex from January to March and it has been confirmed that a number of these sessions will be at Epping Rugby Club and Epping Forest College.

BEST will also have presence at the Tourism Conference and we are exploring opportunities for some different format events i.e. drop-in surgery session for businesses or a Pop-up Business Café. The premise of the latter is to secure an informal setting for businesses to come and get some free advice from BEST Growth Hub and the private sector.

Partner Liaison

The Economic Development Team was represented at a new grouping in January termed the West Essex Economic & Investment Officer Forum. This new group has been well received by partners and has been established to help communication, foster a stronger common understanding of the issues and projects across West Essex and, and to ensure that West Essex has a joined-up voice (when inputting into LSCC, SE LEP etc).

Major Projects

Progress on the Council's major development projects is reported regularly at the Asset Management and Economic Development Cabinet Committee. The next meeting is due to take place on the 11 February where the Council's Project Managers and Marketing/Lettings Consultants, will give a detailed update. However, I can report that due to the initial lack of response to the Tendering of the main construction contract, this has had to be re-advertised. The delay will mean that the target date for completion of the shopping park is now Easter 2017 as opposed to Christmas 2016.