

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 1 November 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.

1. Town and Village Centres Opportunities Fund

The Town and Village Centres Opportunities Fund has been launched for 2016/17 and following the launch of the Fund, a number of bids and proposals have been received or discussed in draft outline and it is hoped that further publicity over the coming weeks and months will further widen its reach in terms of the organisations getting involved. The Economic Development Team is in contact with a number of partners in connection with the Fund, including a number of non-town partnership groups, with bids and proposals in the pipeline which will be reported to Members in due course.

2. Business Support

Broadband Business Breakfast

As reflected elsewhere in the report of the Technology and Support Services Portfolio Holder the Economic Development Officers hosted and supported a business breakfast to explore opportunities for businesses to grow through increased use of the fibre broadband capacity being built in the district. The event was positively received by attendees who represented local businesses, industry experts and key local stakeholders.

Low Carbon Across the South East (LoCASE)

LoCASE is a new EU funded project set up to help small or medium enterprise businesses across the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) region to tackle and adapt to climate change, aiming to reduce business costs by cutting emissions and to promote the opportunities of the low carbon market. The scheme is not stalled by Brexit and the Economic Development Team has met with the Delivery Manager to discuss how we can work with them to help spread the word locally e.g. promoting in person when meeting local businesses and partners, inviting LoCASE to attend local business events, promoting in our Business Briefing, news updates and via EFDC social media etc. The Delivery Team is already engaging with a number of businesses in our district and at least two businesses are well advanced in their applications.

3. Visitor Economy

Accommodation Needs Study

Economic Development along with colleagues in Planning has commissioned Hotel Solutions to undertake a Visitor Accommodation Needs Assessment for the district. The first phase of this study took place in August 2016 with work informing the visitor accommodation policy in the draft Local Plan. Phase 2 of the study is currently being refined in light of the first stage findings and will hopefully commence in November 2016. This will provide more

evidence around the need and potential for the development of visitor accommodation with the District.

4. Asset Management and Major Projects

Good progress continues to be made in bringing forward the delivery of a number of major asset management projects. As Members will be aware, regular progress reports are made to my Asset Management Cabinet Committee regarding the Epping Forest Shopping Park. However, I can advise that the main construction contractor McLaughlin and Harvey, took possession of the site in early September and have completed their initial demolition works and started the construction of the retaining wall at the rear of the site and the excavations for surface water drainage. The Highways Works are also proceeding, and as previously reported will be phased to reduce disruption particularly at peak periods. Oakwood Hill Depot has been completed and the new MOT Station is fully operational. Further to receipt of approval of the Secretary of State with regard to the State Aid application, the St. John's Road, Epping, legal agreement is nearing completion."