

**SUGGESTED LABGI SOURCED EXPENDITURE****Developing business networks - £5,000**

Waltham Abbey Town Partnership has a track record in coordinating successful business networking events and recently the Council has partnered with Loughton Broadway Town Partnership to deliver a similar event in Langston Road. In parallel to these established forums there is merit in hosting a series of business events on a district-wide basis thus providing the opportunity to engage with more businesses across the district and providing local businesses with access to broad networks, in particular, those not located within the reach of the above mentioned two partnerships. These events could look to address specific topics, which might struggle to attract a sufficient audience at very localised events. In line with the Council's statutory duty, Emergency Planning is developing material on Business Continuity Management and this could be launched and shared effectively with the business community at such an event. The Council also needs to engage with businesses in the development of the Local Development Framework and this is something that the Economic Prosperity Group of the LSP and Forward Planning are considering at present.

**Upgrade of industrial units - £50,000**

The Council is the freeholder of a number of industrial units on the Oakwood Hill Industrial Estate and this means it has an obligation to maintain and repair the structure and exterior of these premises. It is proposed that LABGI monies are invested in the improvement and upgrade of these units and the estate inline with the development and regeneration of the wider area. This investment would furthermore facilitate the re-letting of vacant premises, improving the income stream.

**Support for the District's town centres - £36,000**

The district's unique six town centres collectively boast history, charm and a wealth of independent shops but they also face challenges, for example, competition from the larger retail centres surrounding the district. The district's six town centre partnerships are well-established structures, which through a large amount of voluntary effort, implement events and initiatives to help promote and safeguard their town centres.

The six Town Centre Partnerships are grant funded at present, both in terms of their administrative costs (£1,000 per year), and in terms of a special projects fund totalling £6,000 per year (which does not allow each of them to have one £2,000 special project per year). It is proposed that the Partnerships grant be increased to £2,000 each for three years at a cost of £18,000. Whilst the Council will not dictate the precise spend of this grant it will require that each partnership conducts expected procedures (e.g. each will hold an AGM and ensure separation of duties between roles such as treasurer, secretary etc). This extra grant may be used to cover inflating costs of administration and/or for increased marketing, contact development etc. In the case where a partnership secures administrative assistance in-kind this grant may be used for project delivery.

It is further proposed that the special projects fund also be increased for three years to allow each partnership one £2,000 special project per year. This would mean a cost of £18,000. The partnerships will be required to bid for this special project funding much as they do at present. Applications must prove the initiative has clear objectives and involves an appropriate range of partners. Partnerships will be encouraged to explore other options of funding and, in the case of repeat events/projects, detail how the current bid seeks to build upon the success of the last.

A further strand to this proposed support for the district's town centres is the extension of the Town Centre Manager post and this is addressed within the 'Other Options for Action' section. All of the above proposals reflect the Council's commitment to Corporate Objectives EP2 and EP6.

**Development of enhanced business contacts database - £4,000**

The Council's Economic Development Officer (EDO) has made good progress in developing contact details since starting in post earlier this year. Business contact details are important so that the Council can build stronger relationships with the business community and for example, easily cascade information out to businesses (on business support, events, funding schemes etc). It should be appreciated that securing accurate contact details is not the end of the process but rather allows the real task of effective communication with businesses to begin. For this reason it is proposed that LABGI support is granted to ensure the prompt completion of this valuable resource.

Through the Council's involvement with the Essex Development & Regeneration Agency (ExDRA) it has access to the Evolutive Content Management System. The Council is able to use this system to manage its business contact details and opt to share/hide details from Essex partners as appropriate. This system also overcomes limitations of existing systems such as difficulties in mail merging to Novell GroupWise. It is possible for selected contact information to then feed an online business directory within the Council's own website and this could be pursued later.

**Town Centres and Employment Land Reviews - £60,000 and £15,000**

As part of the Local Development Framework (LDF) process the Council is required to conduct various reviews. These are not a tick box exercise in the preparation of the LDF but are of paramount importance to planning and economic development, particularly in the context of the district's challenging employment growth targets in the impending East of England Plan. Furthermore, these targets are presented in terms of 'the number of jobs created' rather than 'hectares of land to be developed for employment use' as historically the case within Structure Plans. Town Centres are important for employment and for other facilities which they provide for the community.

The Employment Land Review is an opportunity to develop detailed intelligence on what is happening in the district; where there may be scope for more employment provision to help meet targets; where demand lies and potential shortfalls in supply. For example, is there sufficient incubator and small business space in the district? Conversely, is there any potential negative impact from larger sites being developed into clusters of smaller units? It is recognised that the Seedbed Centre started with a business support ethos but it is unclear to what extent this is still the case. The Economic Prosperity Group of the LSP has discussed this as a priority and is looking to amend its action plan accordingly. Given its significance it is proposed that a £15,000 contribution from LABGI funding is injected into this exercise with a particular emphasis on 'the way forward' and priorities for the Council. The use of LABGI for this purpose fits well with the Council's corporate objective EP3 – 'co-ordinate land use and planning policies to ensure economic prosperity'.

**Tourism Summit - £2,000**

Waltham Abbey Town Partnership has brought together a number of tourism providers in its immediate area and has worked collaboratively on specific projects (e.g. 'Days out in Waltham Abbey' leaflet) but there is little evidence to suggest such networks exist at a broader level. This is despite a strong belief that the district has much to offer the visitor but is not currently fulfilling that potential. This is particularly significant given the approaching Cultural Olympiad and London 2012 Games. It is thus proposed that LABGI monies be directed to fund a 'one-off' Tourism Summit that will bring together all tourism providers and stakeholders involved in the district.

This Summit will be well-planned and have clear objectives in order to maximise the potential of drawing such a group together. It will prove a valuable opportunity for tourism providers and others to come together and discuss their own activities as well as their views on the district's tourism product and market; how the district should promote itself and what its

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priorities should be. It also provides an opportunity for tourism providers to mix with others in the sector increasing the potential for cross-referral between attractions, places to eat, places to stay etc. It may also be appropriate to invite county and regional colleagues so as to showcase the District's assets.

Although the proposed event is a 'one-off' it will signal the Council's commitment to the visitor economy such that proposals stemming from the Summit (and subsequent working) may seek to secure further LABGI/Council funding.