

Report to the Local Development Framework Cabinet Committee



Report reference: LDF-013-2010/11
Date of meeting: 11 November 2010

Epping Forest District Council

Portfolio: Leader

Subject: Support for the Lee Valley White Water Centre Economic Development Study

Responsible Officer: Amanda Wintle (01992 564543)

Democratic Services Officer: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That the Council joins with other stakeholders in the commissioning of the Lee Valley White Water Centre Economic Development Study; and**
- (2) That the Council provides a financial contribution towards this study capped at a maximum of £15,000 and that this cost be met from the existing LDF budget.**

Executive Summary:

EFDC is part of the Lee Valley White Water Centre Legacy Board, which also includes Broxbourne Borough Council, the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, Hertfordshire County Council and Essex County Council. It is proposed that a study considering the economic and social implications of the venue is undertaken and this looks at the impacts there may be on the surrounding area. EFDC is asked to contribute to the cost of the study, and it is considered that this contribution should be no more than £15,000.

This work will also contribute to the evidence base of the Local Development Framework.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To seek to capitalise upon the potential opportunities presented to the district in relation to the new Lee Valley White Water Centre.

Other Options for Action:

To not part-fund this piece of work and therefore not contribute or secure any benefit from the study. To take this action would risk missed opportunities for Waltham Abbey and the broader district in relation to the Lee Valley White Water Centre.

Report:

Background on the White Water Centre

1. The Lee Valley White Water Centre (LVWWC) is currently under construction on the border of Waltham Abbey within the Borough of Broxbourne. The Centre will host the London 2012 Olympic white water events. The LVWWC will be a world class venue and will be

unique in that it will be the first brand new Olympic venue to be open to the public before the Games. The venue will be operational from April 2011 for an initial period of six months. After this time it will close to allow for preparation for the Games. It will re-open to the public once again following the Games under the management of Lee Valley Regional Park Authority (LVRPA).

2. It is forecast that the venue in its post Games “legacy” operation will receive about 70,000 visits per annum. The Centre will become a major commercial white water rafting venue as well as providing paddling facilities for both elite participants and the local community and will be home to the British Canoe Union.

What the Study will Achieve and Timescales

3. The LVWWC Legacy Board comprises representatives from Epping Forest District Council, the Borough of Broxbourne, LVRPA, other Hertfordshire and Essex stakeholders and those involved in Games preparation. The Board supports the need for an economic development study that will:

- (a) assess the true impact of the LVWWC on the surrounding local economy; and
- (b) identify actions which can be taken to maximise economic gain from the facility within the local area.

4. The study will feature two principal elements. It will firstly evaluate and quantify the economic and social impact of the LVWWC on the Regional Park, Epping Forest District and the Borough of Broxbourne. Secondly, it will identify opportunities and recommend actions for maximising the positive impact of the facility on the neighbouring catchment area. This will involve an evaluation of the potential for complementary leisure activities and development as well as a broader market appraisal of other land uses to understand other potential development opportunities. It will further identify infrastructure requirements in order to realise any of these options and provide guidance on delivery of the options identified, including the appropriateness of authorities’ existing strategies (or the shape new strategies should take), potential constraints or risks to delivery and timescales.

5. The findings of this study will also help inform the preparation of the Local Development Framework, particularly where long term recommendations are made. The presence of a world class sporting venue within a short distance of the district must be recognised in the Core Planning Strategy, and the implications of this facility must be addressed, both in terms of maximising benefits and appropriately managing potential issues.

6. There is a need to finalise the invitation to tender swiftly and commission the study, given that the Centre is nearing completion and will be open to the public (for an initial period) from April 2011. Upon appointment it is expected that the selected consultants will complete the study in less than four months. The Council will play a key role in the commissioning and managing of the study. Input will be sought across a number of Directorates/functions within the Council including Planning, Economic Development, Environment and Street Scene and Estates. The study’s findings are likely to have implications across all these functions. The new joint Olympics Regeneration Officer (a shared post between Epping Forest, Broxbourne and North Enfield) will play a strong role in taking forward recommendations within the study with input from others.

Resource Implications:

The total cost of this piece of work will be in the region of £45,000. Financial input is sought from Epping Forest District Council, the Borough of Broxbourne, Lee Valley Regional Park

and Hertfordshire and Essex County Councils. The maximum financial input required from Epping Forest District Council is £15,000 but it is anticipated that this may be reduced to an extent with confirmation that the two county councils are willing to input into the project. Presently Essex County Council has agreed a £2,500 contribution subject to Hertfordshire County Council agreeing to match this investment.

It is proposed that the Council's input is met by the existing LDF budget, as this study will inform the long term planning strategy for Waltham Abbey.

Legal and Governance Implications:

None relevant.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

None relevant.

Consultation Undertaken:

Initial discussions have been undertaken between the Deputy Chief Executive and the other partners.

Background Papers:

None.

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management

The presence of a world class sporting venue a short distance from Waltham Abbey needs to be recognised and managed appropriately. There is a risk that the area may not fully capitalise on potential benefits of the venue, or that any potential issues may not be properly identified and managed.

Equality and Diversity:

Did the initial assessment of the proposals contained in this report for relevance to the Council's general equality duties, reveal any potentially adverse equality implications? No

Where equality implications were identified through the initial assessment process, has a formal Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? No

What equality implications were identified through the Equality Impact Assessment process?
N/A.

How have the equality implications identified through the Equality Impact Assessment been addressed in this report in order to avoid discrimination against any particular group?
N/A.