

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



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Report reference: AMED-010-2016/17**

**Date of meeting: 26 January 2017**

**Portfolio: Asset Management and Economic Development**

**Subject: Economic Development Report**

**Responsible Officer: Mike Warr / Vicki Willis (01992 564472 / 564593)**

**Democratic Services: Jackie Leither (01992 564756)**

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**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. Visitor Economy**

**Tourism Website**

Work continues on the refresh and enhancement of the new district tourism website. Data is being sought from the district's attractions and accommodation establishments to populate the website with useful content in advance of a soft launch in the New Year and a planned wider launch during Tourism Week 2017.

**Accommodation Study**

Economic Development is working with selected consultants, Hotel Solutions, on phase 2 of the Visitor Accommodation Needs work. The 2nd phase of work is more substantial than the first and will provide a clearer picture of how existing visitor accommodation providers are performing, seek to ascertain if proposed developments (i.e. schemes with planning permission) are likely to be progressed and gauge wider developer interest in the district. It

will also progress liaison with bodies such as Lee Valley Regional Park around any potential future visitor accommodation development and further consider how it might be possible to meet the market need for additional budget hotel provision in some of the district's larger town centres.

## **2. Town Centres**

### **Town & Village Centres / District Economic Opportunities Fund**

Following a Cabinet decision in November 2016 the Town and Village Centres Opportunities Fund has been expanded to now include non-town centre focused and non-village centre focused proposals and ideas which have a broader economic development impact across the district. As a result the scheme will be renamed the Epping Forest District Economic Opportunities Fund and a revised policy document to support the fund will be produced. In recent weeks a number of exciting proposals for projects have come forward and economic development officers are in discussion with the groups to assist them in preparing their bids.

### **Waltham Abbey Wayfinding Project**

Following a full tendered procurement process a contractor has been appointed to design, manufacture and install a new pedestrian wayfinding system in Waltham Abbey Town Centre. A total of eight tenders were received all of which were essentially of a similar quality. Therefore the award of the tender was determined by the lowest priced tender and Mödel Signage Solutions were the successful contractor. The winning tender was less than 50% of the total potential budget that had been agreed for the project representing excellent value for money and ensuring that further funds will remain available to consider further enhancement projects for the town centre in the future.

Mödel have already undertaken a stakeholder presentation and consultation event in the town and have subsequently set up an online survey to enable those stakeholders, including businesses, unable to attend the meeting to have their say. It is intended that a proposed design for the scheme be presented to the key stakeholders in February in order that the finalised design can be agreed before the end of the current financial year.

## **3. Business Support**

### **Eastern Plateau**

After a period of uncertainty we are pleased to confirm that it is now business as usual for the Eastern Plateau programme which is part of the Rural Development Plan for England. This funding is open to projects in certain areas of East Herts, North Herts, Uttlesford and Epping Forest Districts. The aim of the funding is to create jobs and promote business growth in rural areas and it focuses on small business growth, projects covering farm productivity, rural tourism, the provision of rural services, culture and heritage forest/woodland productivity. Economic Development Officers are working with the Eastern Plateau to identify the best routes to publicise the programme and maximise the impact within our district and the programme facilitator has met with economic development officers to connect the programme with potential projects in the district.

### **Business Confidence**

The economic development team are exploring the possibility of conducting a business confidence survey utilising the business contact database purchased in 2016. The content is to be confirmed but it is hoped that it will provide an indication of how the district's businesses are looking forward and planning for the future.

## **4. Broadband**

### **Smart Places**

With the ongoing rollout of ultrafast and superfast broadband infrastructure throughout the district continuing to deliver greater levels of connectivity, attention has turned to the wide range of applications that can be applied through this infrastructure and the opportunities for transformed service provision that the networks offer. The economic development team are supporting the exploration of such initiatives and opportunities and an initial meeting has been held of the Epping Forest Smart Places Project Steering Group. This EFDC lead group will work closely with Essex County Council in the first instance and then appropriate additional external partners to explore the potential for Smart Place projects and to position the district as a forward thinking and innovative place to live, study, work and do business.

### **Ultrafast Network**

The Rural Challenge Project to deliver ultrafast broadband to rural parts of the district continues to make progress. Almost 175km of network has now been built with in excess of 2,400 connection pots installed at the property edges. Five cabinet areas in the district are now completely built out and live - Bobbingworth, Fyfield, Norton Heath, Abbess Roding and Toot Hill – with a further two cabinet areas – Stapleford Tawney and The Lavers - also live, albeit the network build in these areas is currently only partially completed.

A recent press event was held at the Animal Country Club in the rural village of Moreton recognising the connection of the 2000<sup>th</sup> premise to the Gigaclear network. Attended by Cllr Alan Lion Epping Forest District Council Technology and Support Services Portfolio Holder and Cllr Penny Channer, Essex County Council Deputy Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Partnerships the event reflected on the continued success of the Rural Challenge Project and the step-change in broadband connectivity that the project is delivering to the residents and businesses of the intervention area.

## **5. 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 (SE LEP)
- London Stansted Cambridge Consortium (LSCC)
- 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
- Superfast Essex

**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.

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There are no implications to consider as this report is a progress report.