

# ***Report to the Council***

**Committee: Cabinet**

**Date: 17 December 2019**

**Subject: Communities and Partnership Portfolio**

**Portfolio Holder: Councillor Bedford**

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## **Recommending:**

**That the report of the Communities and Partnerships Portfolio Holder be noted**

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### **1. Economic Strategy:**

The revised version of the Economic Strategy consultation paper was published on the council's website on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October and distribution to named external contacts began at the end of September. It can be found on this link below. <https://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/consultation-of-new-economic-plan/>. While the bulk of the consultation has been online, 200 copies of the printed document have been produced and circulated.

A number of events have been organised to support greater discussion on 'Nurturing Growth'. This includes an Economic Stakeholder Conference on the 13<sup>th</sup> of November, attended by approximately 60 partners. This workshop based conference firstly received presentations from a wide range of partners on the key themes of the economic strategy. These partners included business start-up owners, Essex Highways, Tourism attractions, Health employers, the Chamber of Commerce and the Rural Community Council of Essex. The conference then broke into smaller groups to review evidence and look at effective responses to the key issues raised by the speakers.

The Economic Strategy was also a key theme of the Chairman's annual Business Networking Event attended by over 60 partners on the 28<sup>th</sup> November. The annual Tourism Conference on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December also focused on the economic strategy and sought feedback from businesses in this sector. It will also be an element of a presentation to the Youth council on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December. The evidence from these events and all the responses received by the deadline of the 16<sup>th</sup> of December will be collated and used to shape the final strategy which will be presented to cabinet.

### **2. Tourism:**

The Tourism Conference on December 5<sup>th</sup> brought together colleagues from Tourism attractions, local businesses and other partners from across Epping Forest, Broxbourne, East Hertfordshire, Harlow and Uttlesford. This conference was again sponsored by the Marriott Hotel and Epping Forest DC/Broxbourne BC. The key theme of the workshop was preparation to submit a bid to the soon to be announced new government 'Tourism zone' programme. Officers have also been in discussion with neighbouring London boroughs to seek their participation in the bid. The Visit Epping Forest website continues to grow and develop recording its busiest Autumn day on Fireworks night when it received almost 2000 visitors to its 'What's On' page

promoting organised events across the district. A review of the last twelve months shows over 160,000 visitors to the website.

Following the conference officers are now pulling together a cross border team to prepare a bid for the government's new Tourism Zone programme.

### **3. Green Arc:**

Following Essex County Council's launch of an ambitious new program to fund an extensive program of tree planting officers are continuing to work with colleagues on the London fringes to establish a joint program to resource a major new planting program on public and private land. One to one discussions are being held with government agencies and charities such as the Woodland Trust to confirm commitment to launch a joint program on this increasingly critical subject.

### **4. Skills**

Following discussion with New City College EFDC has helped to progress the establishment of a local advisory board for the Epping Forest Campus. This advisory board will be chaired by Cllr Richard Bassett and officers are supporting New City College in the recruitment of key local businesses to participate in its work.

### **5. Chairman's Business Networking Event**

The second annual Chairman's Business Networking Event took place on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November. The event was organised to raise funds for Young Carers, the Chairman's chosen charity for his year in office. The keynote speaker at the event was George Kieffer Vice-Chair of SELEP (South East Local Enterprise Partnership) who highlighted the importance of networking events such as these as well as the major contribution of new business start-ups to the local economy in Epping Forest. A wide array of businesses from different sectors attended. These included Haslers; a long-standing accountancy firm in the area, and Aero Legends; a new aviation business which has moved into North Weald.