

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee – 23 April 2015

Report of Chief Officer Communities and Business

Status: For information

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary:

This report updates Members on the delivery of Economic Development Strategy and three year Action Plan (2015-2018)

This report supports the Key Aim of the Community Plan's Dynamic & Sustainable Economy priorities and the District Council's Corporate Plan

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Hogarth

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Recommendation to the Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee

Members are asked to note the report

Reason for recommendation: Members are asked to note the progress made in delivering the Strategy & Action Plan

Introduction and Background

- 1 The Sevenoaks District Community Plan makes a commitment to a thriving local economy where businesses flourish, where people have the skills for employment and where tourism is supported. The Community Plan also commits to a sustainable economy where people can live, work and travel more easily and are empowered to shape their communities. One of the Council's five promises in the Corporate Plan is to support and develop the local economy.
- 2 The Council's Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan was approved by the Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee on 21st October 2014 and by Cabinet on 11th December 2014.
- 3 The report has now been professionally typeset and published on the Council's website and is available as a hard copy. The Strategy was formally launch by Councillor Hogarth at a meeting of the Sevenoaks Chamber of Commerce held at

the District Council offices on 4th March 2015. It has also been promoted at a number of other events including the West Kent B2B on 27th March and the Sevenoaks Business Show on 17th April.

4 As members are aware the Council's new Head of Economic Development and Property joined the Council on 8th December 2014 and the recruitment of an Economic Development Officer is under way. Interviews are being held and a verbal update will be given at the meeting. An Administrative Assistant for the Economic Development and Property team started on 30th March 2015. The Council's Economic Development Graduate Trainee leaves the Council on 4th June (at the end of a fixed term contract) and the process of appointing a replacement is underway. Work to deliver the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan will clearly progress more rapidly once a full team is in place.

5 Detailed reports on progress against the Action Plan will be prepared quarterly and the first of these will be produced in July 2015.

6 In the meantime the following highlights against the Strategic Objectives can be reported :-

7 **Inward Investment**

- Regular meetings are now being held with Qinetiq to develop plans for the establishment of an engineering cluster at Fort Halstead
- The Council's recent acquisition of Suffolk House in Sevenoaks Town Centre helps secure this commercial space in office use as well as providing an income to the Council.

8 **Skills and Support**

- A number of successful workshops for small businesses have been held covering topics including, use of social media and finance.
- Our 'Team Around Your Business' approach to working with new and growing businesses is now established and being promoted at a range of business events around the district and on our website

9 **Transport and Infrastructure**

- We are meeting regularly with Southeastern Rail to develop and bring forward proposals for improvements to Swanley, Bat & Ball and Sevenoaks Stations alongside supporting sustainable transport initiatives
- We are working closely with KCC on the delivery of superfast broadband across the district. Investment of is progressing and Virgin Media have recently announced plans to extend their service within the district.

10 **Energy & Sustainability**

- We have recently run a successful and well attended round of STEM workshops for small businesses

11 Places for Growth and Improvement

- We are working closely with the owners of Fort Halstead to ensure that their proposals meet the councils aspirations for a high quality employment led development and that there is a robust delivery plan in place for the employment land
- The Council's recent acquisition of Swanley Working Men's Club and the submission of a planning application for the former Meeting Point site sees the Council taking a leading role in delivering a high quality 'gateway' to Swanley Town Centre.

12 Rural Economy

- A dairy group has now been established and a first meeting held.
- We are supporting a number of initiatives to promote locally produced food and drink.

13 Tourism

- We are working closely with Tourism and Planning colleagues on updated demand analysis to assist in the promotion and development of a range of accommodation across the district

Conclusions

- 14 Members of the Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee are asked to note the progress being made in delivering the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan for the period 2015-2018.

Key Implications

Financial

There are no financial implications associated with the Economic Development Strategy. Work identified in the action plan will be funded within existing resources or from external funding where this can be accessed.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Appendices Economic Development Strategy - Appendix A

Background Papers: South East LEP Growth Deal and Strategic Economic Plan

<http://www.southeastlep.com/about-us/activities/262-developing-a-growth-strategy-and-prioritising-investment-in-the-south-east>

West Kent Priorities for Growth.

<http://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=291&MId=1661&Ver=4>

Lesley Bowles
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