

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee – 24 September 2015

Report of Chief Officer Communities and Business

Status: For information

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary:

This report updates Members on the work of the Economic Development Team

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 developing the Economic Development & Property Team and delivering the Economic Development 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 21 October 2014 and by Cabinet on 11 December 2014.
- 3 The Economic Development & Property Team has recently been enhanced by the appointment of a new Economic Development Officer. Emily Haswell joined the team on the 10 August from her previous position at Kent County Council. Emily will be introduced to members at the committee.

4 The following highlights against the Strategic Objectives can be reported :-

5 **Inward Investment**

- Regular meetings continue to be held with Qinetiq to develop plans for the establishment of an engineering cluster at Fort Halstead. Following the resolution to grant planning permission on 10th September, subject to satisfactory receipt of the completed S106 agreement these discussions will now move forward to discuss timescales and action plans for delivery.
- Countryside Properties, one of the country's largest housebuilders, opened a regional office in Sevenoaks in April 2015 with 25 staff. They have already expanded significantly to employ close to 50 staff.

6 **Skills and Support**

- We held a very successful Business Advice Seminar and Networking event in Partnership with the Institute of Chartered Accountants and local sponsor Handelsbanken on 2 September. Over 25 attendees enjoyed presentations from Samuels Accountants and Cooling's Nursery as well as some local wines from the Mount Vineyard in Shoreham. A second in this series of events will be held on 12 November.
- In partnership with Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells Borough Councils, the West Kent Partnership has secured £30,000 to deliver a series of bespoke advice and training sessions to 100 businesses across West Kent. Areas that will be focussed on include independent retailers and rural businesses.
- Our 'Team Around Your Business' approach to working with new and growing businesses is now well established and we continue to promote this at a range of business events around the district including the Bank on Business event at Biggin Hill where the Portfolio Holder was one of the speakers. A case study featuring a family butchers in Seal featured in InShape Magazine

7 **Transport and Infrastructure**

- Funding has now been agreed with Kent County Council from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund for South Eastern Rail and Network Rail to progress the initial stages of design for a new station building at Swanley Station. South Eastern Rail are appointing designers to progress the initial stages including local consultation regarding the design of a new station building. Local Members and the Town Council will be invited to take part in this at the outset.
- Funding from the same source has been secured from to design a wayfinding strategy for Swanley. Further details will be presented at the meeting and further local consultation of Local Members will take place.
- An update on the roll out of Superfast Broadband will be presented at the meeting.

8 **Energy & Sustainability**

- After a successful and well attended first round of STEM (Sustainable Together through Environmental Management) workshops for small businesses we are working on plans to deliver a further round in 2016.

9 **Places for Growth and Improvement**

- As mentioned above the Development Control Committee resolved to grant planning permission for the redevelopment of Fort Halstead on 10th September. The Economic Development & Property Team and Planning colleagues worked to negotiate agreement from the developers to :
 - Commit to the delivery of new build business accommodation in the first phase of development
 - Commit to the refurbishment of existing buildings to create business accommodation in the first phase of development.
 - Commit to the delivery of a Business Incubator in the first phase of development
 - Identify additional land for office development should demand be proven
- Plans to regenerate Swanley Town Centre are moving forward and planning consent has now been secured for the redevelopment of 27 – 37 High Street to provide 4000 square feet of business space (with the potential to develop a Business Incubator) and 14 new apartments.

10 **Rural Economy**

- Details for the next round of Leader funding are now being finalised and it is expected that the programme will be launched this Autumn. The Economic Development Team and the Leader team are working together to ensure that as many Sevenoaks businesses as possible benefit from this funding.
- As mentioned above sector specific business Support programmes are currently being developed with the West Kent Partnership for rural businesses using funding from KCC.

11 **Tourism**

- Plans to develop a hotel and additional parking on the Sennocke and Bradbourne Car Parks close to Sevenoaks Station have been well received by the local Business and Tourism communities. Further details on these proposals will be brought before Cabinet and Council shortly.
- A Bed and Breakfast event is to be held on 5 November to help people who wish to start bed and breakfast businesses.

- This year, there have been 12,000 hits to the Sevenoaks destination page on the Visit Kent website and publicity valued at £86,000 featuring the Sevenoaks District has been placed in UK publications,

12 **Business Barometer**

- The latest business barometer will be presented at the meeting

Conclusions

- 13 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 from 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 None

Background Papers: Economic Development Strategy

http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/179217/Economic-Development-Strategy.pdf

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