

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY UPDATE REPORT

Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee - 11 October 2016

Report of Lesley Bowles - Chief Officer for Communities and Business

Status: For Consideration

Key Decision: No

This report supports the Key Aim of: Supporting and developing the Local economy from the Corporate Plan and supporting the Dynamic and Sustainable economy priorities in the Community Plan.

Portfolio Holder Cllr. Roderick Hogarth

Contact Officer Emily Haswell, Economic Development Officer, Ext. 7261

Recommendation to Economic and Community Development Advisory Committee: To be updated on progress with delivery of the Economic Development Strategy and its associated action plan.

Reason for recommendation:

Good progress with delivery of the strategy and associated action plan has been made and the majority of actions remain on target for delivery during the lifetime of the strategy. The Economic Development Strategy is important to maintain and enhance the Sevenoaks District economy.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The Economic Development Strategy sets out an extensive action plan to be delivered in conjunction with partner organisations. The majority of actions are expected to be completed by the end of 2018, however it is recognised that this strategy has a number of ongoing activities and will need to evolve to fit economic conditions and external changes during the strategy lifetime.
- 2 The Economic Development Strategy is a broad ranging document with challenging targets, some of which are influenced by external factors, Sevenoaks District performs well with low unemployment, 0.8% claiming out of work benefits (NOMIS 2016) high numbers of Micro businesses 90.3% (0-9 employees) (NOMIS 2015) and a high percentage of people working from home. The recent Economic Needs Study helps to set out both current strong sectors and predicts future trends for the local economy and will therefore inform future development.

3 Strategic Objective 1 - Inward Investment.

Much of this target is on track to deliver results within the strategy lifetime. Areas of risk are around the change in permitted development rights leaving a decrease in employment space. Whilst this is outside of our control, the evidence base for the new local plan includes an Economic Needs Study which has been completed with Economic Development input and future employment land projections will take into account the impact of permitted development on employment land availability.

4 Strategic Objective 2 - Skills and Support

The Economic Development team is delivering a wide range of business support programmes and working with partners to continue to ensure that Sevenoaks District Businesses have the support they need to prosper and grow. The new West Kent business support programme commences on 1st October offering business planning support. Additional business support activities are planned for Small Business Saturday and for Social Saturday. The Real Business newsletter continues to be successful with an increased readership each month. The next phase of activity will be around planning jobs and Careers events and initiatives for young people. Team Around Your Business is performing well and assisting a greater number of businesses.

5 Strategic Objective 3 - Transport and Infrastructure

We continue to work closely with Kent County Council broadband delivery team to ensure that Sevenoaks is well connected, further meetings to take place in the near future to identify areas not covered by the Phase 2 BDUK Roll out. There are some targets where the actions are not realistically going to be achieved within the strategy lifetime due to factors outside of our control. Kent County Council have included possible future investment in transport projects for Sevenoaks District in the Local Transport Plan 4.

6 Strategic Objective 4 - Energy and Sustainability

A successful series of STEM (Steps to Environmental Management) workshops have been delivered to businesses, further work is to be done to ensure that the better relationship with businesses developed as part of Strategic Objective 2 can assist to market additional future advice and training in this area.

7 Strategic Objective 5 - Places for Growth and Improvement

As part of the development of a new local plan, Economic Development is working closely with planning officers to ensure the future economy is supported and are jointly reviewing and recommissioning a number of key documents and studies. The Swanley and Hextable Master Vision is currently

in its second phase of consultation, the Economic Development Team is working closely to ensure local businesses are engaged in this process.

8 Strategic Objective 6 - Rural Economy

Funding for rural businesses is currently available through the LEADER programme, West Kent Partnership are offering additional business support for businesses wishing to apply for this scheme. An event for local food producers is planned for early 2017

9 Strategic Objective 7 - Tourism

The delivery of Tourism has recently become part of the Economic Development and Property Team and continues to be on target to complete actions during the strategy lifetime. Further business events are planned for the forthcoming year and options for a Destination Management Plan are being considered.

10 The first 18 months of strategy delivery have ensured that the vast majority of actions are well on track for completion within the strategy lifetime, and the work of Economic Development continues to expand to fulfil the objectives of providing support to local businesses and therefore supporting economic prosperity in the District.

Financial

There are no financial implications for the delivery of the strategy which is resourced through Economic Development budget and by working in partnership with other organisations.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

There are no legal implications for delivery of the Economic Development Strategy Action Plan.

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.

Conclusions

The ECDAC is to be advised that the delivery of the Economic Development Strategy Action Plan is on target and work will continue to ensure that the majority of actions are achieved. The committee is asked to note that the activity of the Economic Development Team will continue to adapt to meet needs and it should be recognised that the strategy is an evolving document. This involves extensive work with partner organisations and from officers across a number of departments with

Economic Development providing co-ordination and professional support where required.

Appendices

Appendix A - Economic Development Strategy
Report - September 2016

Background Papers:

[Economic Development Strategy](#)

Lesley Bowles
Chief Officer for Community and Business