

Committee: Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee	Date: 12 February 2020
Subject: Economic Development Update	Wards Affected: All
Report of: Phil Drane, Director of Planning and Economy	Public
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Summary

This Economic Development update is provided to Policy, Resources and Economic Development Committee to inform Members about progress regarding the following:

- 2020 Brentwood Business Showcase;
- Economic Development Study;
- Place Audit of Brentwood, Shenfield and Ingatestone;
- Brentwood Fibre First programme; and
- Engagement with local employers.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

R1. Note the update contained within this report.

Main Report

Introduction and Background

1. The Council has approved its new Corporate Strategy, "Brentwood 2025" (Ordinary Council, 22 January 2020). 'Growing the Economy' is one of five key corporate priorities identified. This follows from the creation of the Policy, Resources and Economic Development (PRED) Committee. Updates on economic development activity are presented to PRED Committee.

2. To provide more detail about how the Corporate Strategy objective to grow the economy will be achieved, a new Economic Development Strategy is to be prepared. This is to replace the Council's current Economic Strategy 2017-2020. The new strategy is to be informed by items detailed in this update report, including the Economic Development Study and Place Audit of Brentwood, Shenfield and Ingatestone.

Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

2020 Brentwood Business Showcase

3. Work is underway to plan the 2020 Brentwood Business Showcase, which will be held at the Brentwood School for the fifth year. The successful event, which is a key platform for growing the economy in line with the Council's Corporate Strategy, attracts over 400 delegates from the Essex business community for a day of education and networking. The Economic Development Team is identifying opportunities for reinvention of the event, such as bringing the Showcase forward to Thursday 9 July 2020 to create more outdoor floorspace. The layout, keynote speakers, workshops and featured sectors are also being reviewed.

Economic Development Study

4. PRED Committee has resolved to commission a study to help provide an updated evidence base for the local economy. This work will help inform a new Economic Development Strategy in line with the Council's Corporate Plan. Findings from the study will be shared with PRED Committee on 18 March 2020.

Place Audit

5. An audit of the retail centres in Brentwood, Shenfield and Ingatestone has been commissioned in partnership with Brentwood Chamber and Brentwood Business Partnership. The aim of the audit is to create recommendations for place shaping initiatives in these important communities and suggest potential funding models to achieve them, including exploring the feasibility of a Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) model.
6. A presentation was given to the Brentwood Business Partnership and Brentwood Chamber on 9 January 2020 with a view to continued engagement with local businesses as part of the audit. Workshops/interviews, on site visits and desktop research will take place during February.

7. The audit will help inform a new Economic Development Strategy in line with the Council's Corporate Strategy. Findings from the audit will be shared with PRED Committee on 18 March 2020, and Brentwood Chamber and Brentwood Business Partnership during March, with a final report and action plan to follow during April.
8. As part of monitoring the health of Brentwood Town Centre, the Economic Development Team regularly monitor ground floor uses and vacancies. This has recently been undertaken and the findings are set out in Appendix A. Since this information was last reported to PRED Committee in July 2019 (item 121), the vacancy rate has dropped from 12% to 11% due to several empty units taking on new tenants. These have been measured against August 2019 national and regional statistics for comparison, with a new baseline awaited for a more up-to-date comparison. This and other data will be kept under review and presented at future PRED Committees.

Brentwood Fibre First programme

9. An important part of growing the economy includes the Council's role in supporting businesses operate within effective local economic infrastructure, such as broadband. Openreach engineers are currently busy building a new faster, more reliable and future proof broadband network in the Borough. This new network will deliver fibre optic cables from the local exchange to residents' and businesses' front doors, also known as Fibre-to-the-Premises technology (FTTP) or full fibre.
10. The programme is a once-in-a-generation upgrade that will enable Brentwood businesses to connect, trade and compete with the world reliably, for decades to come. The Government has set a target to deliver a reliable, future-proof, full fibre broadband network to everyone in the UK by 2033, in place of the old copper network that has lasted over a hundred years. Openreach is investing billions of pounds to be the national FTTP provider and has stretched their target to making full fibre broadband available to four million homes and businesses by the end of March 2021.
11. Openreach has chosen Brentwood Borough as one of the first places to benefit from FTTP. As well as adding even more reliability and resilience to broadband connections and making them less likely to drop out, FTTP can deliver speeds of up to 1 Gigabit – 24x faster than average speeds today.
12. For businesses and sole traders in Brentwood, an FTTP connection will help them compete in markets all over the UK and around the world. It makes uploading, downloading and transferring large files much easier and enables

vital new digital services like uninterrupted monitoring, video conferencing and streaming, as well as enabling things like greater flexible working for staff.

13. Openreach is providing the Council with regular updates about the rollout of FTTP across the borough. Alongside the current condition of broadband and future requirements, this work will help inform the new Economic Development Strategy.

Engagement with local employers

14. The Economic Development Team has been assisting the Council's Chief Executive in connecting with local employers, and specifically with the borough's largest employers (including McColl's; British Telecom; Liverpool Victoria; Shawbrook Bank; and Countryside Properties). A series of meetings have been set up, with some already taken place, and more appointments being scheduled.
15. The Chief Executive will also be presenting on Friday 14th February at a Brentwood Chamber event to promote the Council's economic objectives as part of the new Corporate Strategy.

Reasons for Recommendation

16. Members are provided with an update on economic activity in order to measure performance and inform priorities for achieving economic growth in the borough. This is in line with the Council's Corporate Strategy priority to grow the economy.

Consultation

17. Consultation has been undertaken with Brentwood Chamber and the Brentwood Business Partnership prior to commissioning the Place Audit. A positive response and feedback was gained from both organisations ahead of commissioning the work. Further consultation and engagement will take place during February as part of the commission.
18. There has been no public consultation, outside of the above (para 17.), on updates provided in this report.

References to Corporate Plan

19. Growing the economy is a key priority in the Council's Corporate Strategy 2020-2025: Brentwood 2025 "Where everyone matters". Under this priority objectives are set to promote Brentwood as a place to set up and do business

from; enable the growth of existing businesses; and encourage the creation of new enterprises and inward investment.

Implications

Financial Implications

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20. The value of the economic study, place audit, and resource to prepare a new Economic Development Strategy has been accounted for within the economic development budget.

Legal Implications

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21. There are no legal implications.

Economic Implications

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22. The economic implications are contained within this report.

Other Implications (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

23. None.

Background Papers

24. None.

Appendices to this report

Appendix A: Brentwood Town Centre Monitoring Report, January 2020