

15 October 2014

Business & Town Centres Committee

Economic Development Update Report

Report of: *Anne Knight, Economic Development Manager*

Wards Affected: *All*

This report is: *Public*

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on progress with the Business Needs Survey, Brentwood for Growth, Essex Rivers LEADER bid, Low Carbon Grants for Business, Superfast Essex Broadband Programme and Crossrail Economic Impact Study.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 **To note this report and the progress made on key initiatives and projects.**

3. Introduction and Background

- 3.1 This report provides an update on various areas of the Economic Development activities of the Council, including key initiatives and thematic work areas.

Business Needs Survey

- 3.2 Brentwood Borough Council is working in partnership with Essex County Council to undertake a business needs survey. This will be Essex wide, including Brentwood borough. We have requested a large enough sample size to ensure the results for our borough are robust and statistically significant, and for a report with the analysis of the results specifically for Brentwood borough.
- 3.3 This work is being funded by Essex County Council utilising Government funding from the South East Local Economic Partnership (SE LEP). The results of the survey will provide intelligence on the key issues for businesses, their future business plans, and they type of advice and support they require. This will then help to inform the shape of the future

Growth Hubs that Essex will look to create as part of the Government's business support simplification agenda.

- 3.4 The results from the survey are expected in December 2014 and will be reported to Committee for discussion.

Brentwood for Growth

- 3.5 This group of larger companies in the Borough has been inactive for over a year and a half. The group was originally set up to act as a private sector catalyst for supporting growth and ED for the Borough.
- 3.6 Discussions have taken place between the Chair of the Business and Town Centres Committee and Ray Pepper, BNY Mellon, the new Chair for Brentwood for Growth regarding its future role and purpose. It has been agreed that particular consideration needs to be given to the remit of the group and identifying areas for innovative working to drive forward the ED Strategy in a practical, outcome focused manner.
- 3.7 To ascertain this it has been agreed that a series of one to one meetings should be held with each of the BFG member organisations. The meetings will be held at the businesses premises and will aim to:
- re-establish relationships with the Council,
 - pose a number of questions and suggestions to the businesses to identify key areas where collaborative innovative working could take place between members/businesses
 - identify the key resources/expertise each member could provide
 - identify existing businesses networks that can be utilised
- 3.8 The overarching question for each member will be "how can you support economic growth by working collectively with other members/businesses?" The following themes will be discussed to tease out ideas for working innovatively in partnership to support growth in a sustainable way in the borough:
- Research, innovation, technology development and transfer (maybe working with universities)
 - Inward investment and placemaking (maybe working with Invest Essex)
 - Key infrastructure consultation and maximizing benefits (e.g. Crossrail and town centre key sites)
 - Skills and employability (working with schools, training providers)
 - Business growth and development
- 3.9 The role of the Council would be to act as a facilitator and enabler for members working in partnership to address the identified areas of

collaboration. It could provide the secretariat resource and some executive resource for meetings.

- 3.10 Cllr David Kendall and Anne Knight, Economic Development Manager will begin to undertake these meetings end November/December 2014.
- 3.11 Invest Essex have confirmed their support as a partner for this project and in assisting with the initial scoping exercise and interviews, as well as the longer-term potential of the project.
- 3.12 The Committee will continue to be updated on progress with this project.

Rural Programme, Essex Rivers Bid, LEADER

- 3.13 Following research by the EDO on the rural funding arena and potential opportunities for Brentwood Borough, an Expression of Interest letter was submitted to the Rural Community Council for Essex in January 2014 to support them in their request to develop an Essex Rivers Local Action Group (LAG) to bid for EU LEADER funding.
- 3.14 The LAG includes rural parts of Maldon and Chelmsford and the rural northern part of Brentwood borough including Ingatestone, Freyning, Mountnessing, Tippscross, Brizes and Doddinghurst, part of South Weald and part of Shenfield local authority areas
- 3.15 Encouragingly, at the beginning of June, DEFRA agreed the geographical reach of the Essex Rivers LAG and the Rural Community Council has worked with us as partners over the summer to develop the bid which was successfully submitted at the beginning of September 2014.
- 3.16 The outcome of the bid is due in December 2014. It is estimated that if the Essex Rivers LAG is successful there could be c£400k per annum from 2015-2020 funding from LEADER for the whole LAG area.
- 3.17 If successful, we will need to market the funding programme to the businesses in the rural parts of our borough and identify their needs and submit these as projects to ensure Brentwood has good representation within the bid. The Economic Development Manager is a member of the Local Action Group which will oversee and steer the overall bid if successful.
- 3.18 Any projects submitted have to be compatible with DEFRA's Rural Growth Measures:
 - Enabling rural businesses to grow and diversify

- Supporting rural tourism
- Expanding the food and drink sector
- Delivering green growth

Low Carbon Grants for Business

- 3.19 This is an ERDF EU funded programme, delivered by Groundwork on behalf a number of local authority areas in Essex including Brentwood. The aim of the programme is to reduce the carbon footprint and improve business productivity. It is open to SMEs with grants of £1,000 available for small efficiency projects to improve lighting, ICT, fuel efficiency, heating, cooling or reduce waste and water use. Larger projects costing more than £4,000 can apply for a 25% grant of up to £10,000.
- 3.20 Brentwood continue to work successfully with Groundwork in promoting the programme, hosting grant advice clinics at the Town Hall to advise potential business applicants, and enabling Groundwork to run a number of free training courses to businesses e.g. social media training, customer focused business.
- 3.21 This has generated significant interest and a formal grant award ceremony was held with the Knight Precision Engineering Ltd, Hutton Industrial Estate on 16 June, the first business in Brentwood to benefit from a low carbon grant. A second grant was awarded to A T Brown on Hutton Industrial Estate in September 2014 and there is now a pipeline of other applications being assessed.
- 3.22 We need to maintain this momentum and continue to promote the scheme. It is proposed to work with Groundwork to develop a series of case studies of some of the businesses in Brentwood that will benefit from a grant and use this for future promotional material/PR. An example of the first case study is attached in Appendix A.

Essex Superfast Broadband Programme (with BT Openreach)

- 3.23 Essex County Council is leading the Superfast Essex Broadband Project, an investment in Essex's broadband infrastructure. It will bring much improved and superfast broadband to homes and businesses across the county.
- 3.24 The roll out of this infrastructure to Brentwood Borough has commenced and a successful launch event was held in August 2014 to celebrate the arrival of Superfast Broadband in the borough.

- 3.25 This was organized and hosted by Brentwood Borough Council (in conjunction with Schwarz Printing Ltd) on the Hutton Industrial Estate and attended by Rt. Hon Eric Pickles, MP for Brentwood and Ongar, Essex County Council, BT, Brentwood Chamber of Commerce and the FSB (see Appendix B for photograph).
- 3.26 The aim is for 90% of the County to have access to Superfast Broadband (more than 24 Mbs) by 2015 and the whole County to be able to access speeds of at least 2Mbs. In the meantime the Essex Superfast Broadband website provides the opportunity of checking a specific postcode within an area to see when and whether Superfast Broadband is planned for that area, and if not sources of alternative suppliers, see link www.superfastessex.org.

Crossrail Economic Impact Study

- 3.27 Brentwood Borough Council and Essex County Council have jointly commissioned a study to research the likely wider economic impacts of Crossrail for the Borough. The study will:
- understand the value and impacts of Crossrail to Brentwood Borough's economy, local communities and the surrounding area.
 - support the evidence base to inform any new policies in the Brentwood Local Plan in respect of Crossrail/Shenfield/Public Realm.
 - provide intelligence to enable a funding bid to SE LEP to be scoped to facilitate the economic impacts and necessary public realm improvements.
- 3.28 The study report is due at the end of October and will be reported to the Committee.

4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

- 4.1 For each of the thematic work areas outlined above, different options for delivery will be considered and where necessary a recommendation for the preferred option provided.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 The recommendations above are to support and drive forward the Economic Development Strategy and enable delivery of associated thematic priorities.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 The Draft ED Strategy has successfully undergone public consultation.
- 6.2 Key partners and business groups for each thematic work area are being consulted and engaged with project development.

7. References to Corporate Plan

- 7.1 Economic Development is a key priority to support the delivery of the Corporate Plan priorities of sustainable economic development, promoting a mixed economic base across the Borough, maximising opportunities for retail and a balance night time economy. This includes:
 - Facilitating the creation of new businesses
 - Assisting in the provision of advice and guidance for local businesses
 - Working in partnership with the business community and support agencies
 - Seeking inward investment into the Borough
 - Assisting the SE LEP and Heart of Essex Partnership to secure projects and funding to benefit the Brentwood economy

8. Implications

Financial Implications

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- 8.1 Implementation of some of the thematic work areas will require support from the ED budget (£28k for 2014/5, plus £15k reserves) and possible additional support from the Renaissance Group and their associated budget.

8.2 The current profiled ED budget and committed allocations for 2014/15 is:

Economic Development Budget-G408		28,000			
Projects	Activity Code	Allocation of budget	Actual to date	Remainder to spend	Notes
Crossrail Economic Impact Study	1058	3,517	0	3,517	awaiting invoice from County (end Oct)
Business Event October 2014		2,000	0	2,000	estimated budget
Business Pop-up banners		250	250	250	estimated budget
Business listing/CRM		7,250	7,250	0	Invoices received
Tractivity		400	0	400	annual budget
Schools Careers Fair		1,500	0	1,500	Proposed contribution
Visitor Website		10,190	0	10,190	Proposed contribution
Currently un-allocated		2,893	0	2,893	
		28,000	7,500	20,500	

8.3 To deliver, some of the initiatives will also require support from external funding partners such as:

- SE LEP (Single Growth Fund, and EU funding)
- Essex County Council – ED and infrastructure funding
- Essex Employment and Skills Board (Essex County Funding)
- Visit Essex
- Invest Essex
- EU/DEFRA funding – LEADER
- EU ERDF funding – Low Carbon
- BDUK – broadband funding

Legal Implications

Name & Title: Christopher Potter, Monitoring Officer

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8.4 None

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

8.5 None

9. Background Papers (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright)

9.1 None

10. Appendices to this report

- Appendix A – Low Carbon Grant Case Study
- Appendix B – Superfast Broadband Launch Photograph

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CASE STUDY KNIGHT PRECISION ENGINEERING

First Brentwood grant awarded!

The first grant to be awarded in the Brentwood area is **Knight Precision Engineering**. The engineering firm made good use of the **Low Carbon Business** grant by using it to purchase a new mini mill, saving time, costs and creating an additional job in Brentwood.



Pictured: Rob Robinson from Low Carbon Business and Anne Knight from Brentwood council hand over a big cheque to Kevin Knight from Knight Precision Engineering by the new mini-mill.

“There is no value in standing still; this project will help in future- proofing the business!”

Kevin Knight
Director

GRANT

£7,987.20

EXPECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

- ✓ Annual savings of 21,825 kWh of electricity.
- ✓ 91 litres of soluable oil coolant annually.
- ✓ CO₂ Reductions totalling 9.72 tonnes.
- ✓ Annual cost savings totalling £2,600.
- ✓ 1 Full time position created.



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LOW CARBON
BUSINESS

Appendix B – Superfast Broadband Launch Photograph

