

16 December 2014

Business & Town Centres Committee

Economic Development Update Report

Report of: Gordon Glenday, Head of Planning & Development

Wards Affected: All

This report is: Public

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Brentwood Business Funding and Advice Event, Proposal for 100 Business Speed Networking Event, Pro- actions event, Low Carbon Grants for Business, Quarterly Economic Working Group and Heart of Essex Partnership South East Local Economic Partnership visit.

2. Recommendation(s)

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

That members support the development of a proposal to hold a Business Speed Networking event in February/March 2015.

3. Introduction and Background

- 3.1 This report provides an update on various areas of the Economic Development activities of the Council.

Brentwood Business Funding and Advice Event

- 3.2 The Brentwood Business Funding and Advice Event was held at Poplars Hall, Poplars Drive, Hutton, on Wednesday October 29, 2-6pm in partnership with Essex County Council as part of its Essex Innovation Programme and as one of its Access to Business Finance road shows.
- 3.3 The aim of the event was to gather a range of business support providers to exhibit under one roof to engage with businesses in Brentwood; listen to their needs and provide an overview of the finance, support and advice available to assist their business.

- 3.4 The event was well attended with 50 businesses visiting the two sessions on the day. Results from the evaluation forms highlight that 100% of businesses rated the event as “good” and worthwhile and useful to attend, with the majority expressing an interest to attend future similar business events. Some of the businesses expressed that they would undertake follow up actions from the event e.g. investigating Horizon Funding, applying for Growth Vouchers, Low Carbon Grants. The majority found it a good opportunity to network.
- 3.5 The 15 exhibitors included Barclays Bank, Federation of Small Businesses, Brentwood Chamber of Commerce, UK Trade and Investment, UK Export Finance, Essex Innovation Programme, Funding and Investment Team (Essex County Council), Anglia Ruskin University, University of Essex, NWES & Growth Vouchers, Low Carbon Business/The Green Forum, Manufacturing Advisory Service, Pro- actions, Skills and Employability Team (Essex County Council), Brentwood Borough Council Economic Development Team.
- 3.6 The exhibitors provided advice on grants, loans, business mentoring and advice, start-up support, European and Regional Funding, bid writing and working with universities. Feedback from exhibitors at the event has been positive with all expressing an interest in attending future events and with many delighted that businesses have signed up for initiatives such as growth vouchers and registering for low carbon grants.
- 3.7 The event received excellent PR from local press and the Brentwood Gazette attending on the day.
- 3.8 Following the success of this event we will look to work with Essex County Council and partners to hold similar business funding and advice events later during the 2015/16 financial year.

100 Business Speed Networking Event Proposal

- 3.9 It is proposed that a Business Speed Networking Event is held in February/March 2015 utilising an estimated £2,000 from the 2014/15 Economic Development Budget. The aim is to try and secure 100 Brentwood businesses to attend a speed networking opportunity with each business having 3 minutes with each other to pitch their business and exchange business cards and network and then move onto the next person.

- 3.10 We will investigate options for delivering this event and develop an invite to tender to send out to potential external organisations who can then submit their proposals and fees to organise the event. Potential partners may include Brentwood Chambers of Commerce, Pro-actions, Federation of Small Businesses, Local by Social, or other professional speed networking companies.

Proactions Event

- 3.11 A free business briefing on Marketing for Growth and Introduction to Social Media was held on 11 November, 9am to 12.30pm at Merrymeade House, Brentwood.
- 3.12 This was the first of a series of free briefings that are being planned in partnership with Pro-Actions Ltd, business coaching experts. The briefing outlined the steps that businesses can take to make marketing work for them and provided an introduction to social media. The event also provided an opportunity to introduce Brentwood Borough Council's Economic Development Team and our work to support businesses and key priorities.
- 3.13 The marketing of the event was supported by the Council's newly developed business directory and was well attended with 32 businesses represented. From the 28 feedback sheets all attendees rated the event good or better. 82% rated the content as very good or excellent and 85% rated the same on presentation and delivery. There were also a total of 23 separate attendees expressing interest in one or more of the future events that we are planning.

Low Carbon Grants for Business

- 3.14 This is an ERDF EU funded programme, delivered by Groundwork on behalf of 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 30% grant.
- 3.15 Brentwood continues to work successfully with Groundwork in promoting the programme. On the 12 November 2014, the Economic Development Team attended an award ceremony for the third grant in

the Borough to Granite Transformations in Brentwood High Street. £3,640 was awarded towards the cost of energy efficient show room lighting and air conditioning. This has enabled the business to drastically reduce their carbon footprint and energy bills, whilst keeping the shop warm for their customers throughout the winter months. The low carbon grant made the project possible by contributing towards 30% of the cost of the installation.

- 3.16 To date a total of £14,420 of low carbon grant funding has been awarded to businesses in Brentwood, and with the successful marketing at the recent Brentwood Business Funding and Advice Event and continued promotion, there are now another 3 grant applications soon to be awarded and a further 10 being assessed.

Quarterly Economic Working Group

- 3.17 The first ever Economic Working Group between Essex County Council and Brentwood Borough Council was held on 12 November 2014. The aim of the working group is to facilitate effective relationships and joint working to drive forward the economic development agenda and strategy.
- 3.18 The meetings will be held quarterly and chaired alternately by Cllr Barry Aspinell, Leader of Brentwood Borough Council and Cllr Kevin Bentley, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Infrastructure, Essex County Council.
- 3.19 The Group is attended by Brentwood Borough Council's Chief Executive, Head of Planning and Development, the Chair of the Business and Town Centres Committee and relevant County and Borough officers.
- 3.20 The first meeting of the Group was positive and facilitated the opportunity to outline our joint priorities and discuss issues such as inward investment, business support and engagement, visitor economy, employability and skills, energy technologies, transport and infrastructure and partnership working. A number of areas for joint working were discussed and followed through by the actions from the meeting.
- 3.21 The next meeting will be scheduled for February 2015.

Heart of Essex Partnership – visit from South East Local Economic Partnership Chair

- 3.22 Brentwood Borough Council is a key partner of the Heart of Essex Partnership alongside Chelmsford and Maldon local authorities. We are recognised as a sub-regional partnership within Essex in particular by the South East Local Economic Partnership who is responsible for overseeing National and European funding to support economic development.
- 3.23 Peter Jones, Chair of the South East Local Economic Partnership visited the Heart of Essex Partnership on the 19 November 2014 to understand the nature and issues of the sub-region better and discuss our priorities.
- 3.24 On the day, Peter Jones also visited and met with a number of key businesses from the area, including from Brentwood Borough, BNY Mellon, British Telecom, Marks and Spencers, Countryside Properties, and Brentwood Chamber of Commerce. This provided an opportunity for South East Local Economic Partnership and us to hear some of the issues of our businesses and to develop/re-enforce relationships with them.
- 3.25 In addition to visiting the businesses, there was a successful networking lunch and Heart of Essex Partnership meeting attended by Peter Jones and some of the businesses, at which presentations were made by the Heart of Essex Partnership, Essex County Council and by Peter Jones. The event was hosted at Hyland House and coincided with the Chelmsford Business Showcase, offering the opportunity to network and sample the showcase's offer.
- 3.26 A Heart of Essex Prospectus was developed specifically for this event for Peter Jones and emphasises key area facts, successes and priorities for Brentwood, Maldon, and Chelmsford. The event provided an excellent opportunity to raise South East Local Economic Partnership's awareness of Heart of Essex region and key issues for Brentwood borough's economic development.

4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

- 4.1 Different options for delivery are considered when scoping and developing economic development proposals 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 2014/15, including £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	Budget Allocation	Actual to date	Remainder to spend	Notes
Cross rail Economic Impact Study	1058	3,517	0	3,517	Awaiting invoice
Business Event October 2014		960	960	0	Invoices received
Business Pop-up banners		209	209	0	Invoice received
Business listing/CRM – Phase 1		6,150	6,150	0	Invoice received
Business listing/CRM – Phase 2 (Business Directory)		8,164	0	8,164	To be commissioned
Visitor Website		6,000	0	6,000	To be commissioned
Artist Studios feasibility Study		1,000	0	1,000	
100 Business Speed Networking Event		2,000		2,000	To be commissioned
		28,000	7,319	20,681	

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

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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

10.1 None

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