

2 September 2015

Economic Development Committee

“Opportunity Brentwood” Proposal Update

Report of: Anne Knight, Economic Development Manager

Wards Affected: All

This report is: Public

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report updates on the project proposal for “Opportunity Brentwood”.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 That Option D be agreed, that the Economic Development Team hold further discussions with the Borough’s secondary schools in the Autumn 2015 to assess their desire to take part in “Opportunity Brentwood” in 2016/7, and if this is positive then this event be facilitated working in partnership with our large employers and Thurrock Council/“Opportunity Thurrock”.

2.2 That the implementation and necessary resourcing of this project be agreed and be undertaken with delegated authority to do so being granted to the Head of Planning and Development in consultation with the Chair of the Committee utilising the 2016/7 Economic Development Budget.

3. Introduction and Background

3.1 The 2014 Brentwood Economic Development Strategy sets out a shared vision and framework to steer the interventions of Brentwood Borough Council and partner organisations to deliver optimum economic benefits to the Borough to 2030.

3.2 One of the key priority objectives of the Strategy is skills and employability to ensure that local people have the necessary skills, ability and knowledge to gain employment and to encourage employers to recruit local people to support a sustainable community and borough.

- 3.3 In order to address this it is important to establish effective links between the education providers and the businesses so that the job and career opportunities available within these businesses and key industry sectors are clearly articulated to learners/job-seekers.
- 3.4 Over the last few years, Brentwood has been fortunate in having the Brentwood Learning Partnership to organise and hold a successful annual careers convention. However since the demise of the Learning Partnership during the last year, Brentwood's secondary schools now have to provide this careers advice individually and the level and type of provision varies. Individual school events are smaller and less likely to attract the larger employers as these employers need to engage with larger audiences and events in order to ensure cost-effectiveness of their time and involvement.
- 3.5 The ED Team visited the Thurrock Council skills team to find out about the successful annual careers event they run called "Opportunity Thurrock". This takes place annually with good take-up from secondary schools and large employers/SMEs. It is undertaken with workshops and interactive exhibits that the employers provide to wet the appetite of secondary school pupils regarding the opportunities within their businesses and career sectors.
- 3.6 During the visit to Thurrock, Brentwood received an offer to work in partnership with Thurrock Council to host a joint event, with the opportunity of branding our part of this "Opportunity Brentwood".
- 3.7 It was agreed at the 1 July Economic Development Committee that the Economic Development Team and colleagues from Thurrock Council would meet with the Careers Coordinators Group of the secondary schools within the Borough to assess their appetite for being involved in this event, and if this is positive then facilitate and implement the event working jointly with Thurrock Council.

4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

- 4.1 The issue is to address the skills and employability priority of Brentwood's Economic Development Strategy, Brentwood Borough Council should help facilitate education-business links and enable effective events/initiatives for doing this to ensure careers and employability advice and broker local people to local job opportunities.

4.2 Following a meeting with the Careers Coordinators and Thurrock Council on 9 July 2015 to present the project to the secondary schools in Brentwood, only 4 of the 8 schools were represented and only one, St Martins, expressed a tentative interest, but has since not responded despite the ED team's best efforts to take this further. Brentwood School did not wish to be involved given they already have their own careers day planned for the 7 October 2015. The Careers Coordinators for the schools that were not represented at the meeting have also been emailed and telephoned but to date there has been no response.

4.3 The schools are now closed for the summer and the timescales for involving any of the schools for the 2015/6 Opportunity Brentwood/Thurrock event is now limited. The options are:

4.4 Option A – Do nothing

This will not enable Brentwood Council to provide any support to facilitate education-business careers advice opportunities.

4.5 Option B – Individual Schools provide their own advice

Some of the schools are already providing careers advice through smaller individual events, but coverage is not comprehensive and varies in content and few larger employers are engaged.

4.6 Option C – Brentwood Borough Council organise its own stand-alone careers convention

This would allow Brentwood Borough Council exclusivity regarding the organisation and PR for the event. However it would be the most resource intensive option with budget costs (estimated at £5-6k) for venue, organisation, marketing and promotion and significant demands on ED Team time (resulting in fewer other ED projects being able to be progressed within the same time period)

4.7 Option D – Shared Event between Thurrock Council and Brentwood Borough Council but for 2016/7 rather than 2015/6.

This is the preferred recommended option, as it is the most resource efficient option for Brentwood Borough Council to produce the desired outcomes, building on an existing successfully run event by Thurrock Council (and utilising their expertise, skills and budget). It also enables a wider pool of employers and industries to come together to support students in exploring their career aspirations. The costs for Brentwood for

this option are the ED Team's time utilised mobilising the schools and businesses to take part; to help market and promote the event, and help host on the day. The funding model that Thurrock Council deploys is that each school contributes £500 towards the cost of the event and this includes transportation for the students to the event. In addition therefore the only consideration for Brentwood's ED budget would be to subsidise this cost for our secondary schools that want to take part but do not have their own funding. However, not all of the eight secondary schools are likely to take part so at worst it is estimated this would require £2-3k from the ED 2015/6 budget.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 To progress the project proposal for "Opportunity Brentwood" for 2016/7 in order to support the skills and employability priority of the Brentwood Economic Development Strategy.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 The Economic Development Strategy successfully underwent public consultation and has been adopted.
- 6.2 Key partners and business groups for each priority area are consulted and engaged with project development, in this case the secondary schools and large employers in the Borough.

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 balanced 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 The preferred option of implementing “Opportunity Brentwood” in 2016/7 is likely to require approximately £2-3k from the 2016/7 ED Budget if the cost of the schools involved are subsidised.

Legal Implications

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- 8.2 None

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

- 8.3 All Health & Safety issues relating to the event will be managed by Thurrock Council and the venue chosen.

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

- 9.1 None

10. Appendices to this report

- None

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