

**2 December 2015**

**Economic Development Committee**

**“Opportunity Brentwood” Proposal Update**

*Report of:* Anne Knight, Economic Development Officer

*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 To support Option D and the request from Beckett Keys School and the Endeavour School to take part in “Opportunity Brentwood” in October 2016 in partnership with Thurrock Council/“Opportunity Thurrock”.**

**2.2 That the implementation and resourcing of this project (£500 per school) is undertaken within the delegated authority of the Head of Service (Planning and Development) and Chair of the ED 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 At the 1 July Economic Development Committee it was agreed that the Economic Development Team and colleagues from Thurrock Council should 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 proved positive then facilitated and implemented the October 2015 event working jointly with Thurrock Council.
- 3.8 However following this presentation to the Careers Coordinators on 9 July 2015, only 4 of the 8 secondary schools were represented and only St. Martins expressed a tentative interest, but has not since taken 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 were also emailed and telephoned but to date have not responded.
- 3.9 At the 2 September ED Committee it was agreed that the ED Team and Thurrock's team should meet with the head teachers of the schools to present the project and assess their interest. A meeting was held on 23 September 2015. Following this, Beckett Keys School and the Endeavour

School expressed an interest in attending Opportunity Brentwood in October 2016 utilising £500 grant funding each from Brentwood Borough Council. In addition, Beckett Keys also made a late request to attend this year's event (October 2015) which we have supported (£500 from the 2015/6 ED Budget).

3.10 The feedback from Becketts Keys School attendance at this year's event has been extremely positive. 300 children attended for a fee of £500, representing excellent value for money with regard to BBC supporting the careers and skills agenda. Some of the feedback comments from the schools were:

- Great to have so many stands there
- Many lovely activities
- Great venue
- Good amount of time at the venue
- Well set out
- Transport in and out worked well
- Good value - £500 is well worth it.
- Some stands were very helpful and teased out good conversations with our students
- Next year we will be even better prepared and make sure our students make more of this fantastic experience

The Head Teacher wrote 'we are definitely interested in coming again next year, especially as Brentwood [Borough Council] are offering to pay a good amount towards entry and coaches.'

It is hoped that this positive feedback may encourage more of the Borough's secondary schools to take part in October 2016.

#### **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 Option A – Do nothing

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

4.3 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.

4.4 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)

4.5 Option D – Shared Event between Thurrock Council and Brentwood Borough Council in October 2016.

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 successful 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, to date only two of the secondary schools have expressed a desire to take part in 2016 so this will require currently only £1k from the ED 2016/7 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 Preferred option D of implementing “Opportunity Brentwood” in 2016/7 for the two schools who have expressed an interest to date will require £1,000 from the 2016/7 ED Budget. Enabling Becketts Keys School to attend the October 2015 event has required £500 from the 2015/6 ED Budget.

### **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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