

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL and MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

From: Corporate Manager - Open for Business	Report Number: BCa/17/49
To: MSDC Cabinet BDC Cabinet	Date of meeting: 5 February 2018 8 February 2018

JOINT BABERGH MID SUFFOLK ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT 'OPEN FOR BUSINESS' STRATEGY

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report outlines information relating to the Joint Babergh Mid Suffolk (BMS) Economic Development 'Open for Business' Strategy, and seeks Cabinet endorsement of the core content attached as Appendix A.

2. Recommendations to Cabinet

- 2.1 That Cabinet endorse the Joint Babergh Mid Suffolk Economic Development 'Open for Business' Strategy attached as Appendix A (to follow).

Reason for decision: To accessibly set out the local strategic approach towards meeting and positively impacting upon district level and broader economic challenges, and expressing our offer to the business community.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 None directly as a result of this report. Delivery plan projects and activity will be subject to individual scoping assessment and any budgetary/resourcing parameters.
- 3.2 Subsequent monitoring and reporting will establish the importance and impact of the Strategy towards the longer-term financial sustainability of the Councils, including such issues as growth of the business rates base, demonstrable good outcomes for businesses, increased satisfaction of the business community with BMS support and a reduction in planning appeals.
- 3.3 The costs of developing and producing the Strategy have been absorbed within the relevant project and lead officer resources, and with firm focus on JSP outcomes. Significant background research/evidence has already funded by the Strategic Planning Team and we have used New Anglia LEP, Chamber of Commerce, Suffolk County Council and other partnering intelligence to efficiently and consistently influence the formulation of this work.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 None as a direct result of this report. Delivery plan projects and activity will be subject to individual scoping assessment including any legal parameters.
- 4.2 Legal services will be consulted on any relevant legal implications/advice arising from the implementation and use of the Strategy.

5. Risk Management

5.1 None as a direct result of this report, but broader risks associated with the Strategy are set out below:

Risk	Impact x Likelihood	RISK LEVEL	Mitigation
By not having an Economic Strategy the Councils jeopardise the ability to attract new business growth, and risk loss of employment land with consequential loss of business rate income. Failure to deliver JSP.	3 (bad) x 2 (unlikely)	MEDIUM	By adopting and implementing the Economic Strategy, the Councils have a coordinated cross-service aim to support business creation and retention and deliver the overall growth agenda.
By not having an endorsed Strategy we lack a consistent foundation for prioritising and taking difficult decisions, including within the broader organisation and with our partners, businesses and stakeholders.	3 (bad) x 2 (unlikely)	MEDIUM	The strategy, whilst expressed within a document, is a flexible approach and intended to evolve and be a focused local part of the broader growth framework. The document communicates our understanding and approach rather than setting out rigid or inflexible policy.
Without a local strategy we lack a committed response towards delivering the New Anglia Economic Strategy and showcasing the impact of our micro/SME business base core.	3 (bad) x 2 (unlikely)	MEDIUM	Consultation and development work. Many stakeholder conversations and insights have informed the strategy. A specific Appendix will outline the broader context within which the strategy will function.
Lack of alignment/conflict with other strategic strands with a stake in sustainable and inclusive growth agenda	3 (bad) x 2 (unlikely)	MEDIUM	
That it is too aspirational – overpromising and under-delivering. Impacting on our reputation and performance.	3 (bad) x 2 (unlikely)	MEDIUM	Extensive consultation and good focus of intelligence, embedding a flexible approach and carefully balancing short/medium and longer term challenges will help to manage this risk. Monitoring of impact and achievement.

5.2 Further risk analyses will be undertaken as the Strategy is implemented and feeds service planning/performance measures, and will be reported to Cabinet leads and future briefings as required.

6. Consultations

- 6.1 All elements of the Strategy have been informed at development stages by discussions with businesses, partner organisations and delivery colleagues and other stakeholders. This has included day-to-day operational intelligence as well as specific projects and commissioned work.
- 6.2 Specifically on the draft Strategy we conducted a short period of further consultation including with business sector representatives, external partners and colleagues across the organisation. Senior officers have steered the work and approach from early stages.
- 6.3 Scrutiny Committee also reviewed an earlier draft in terms of how the Strategy intends to support our micro and small business base. That process influenced some of the current content.
- 6.4 An internal working group across Housing, Infrastructure and Leisure has met and this continues. Regular cross-cut working with regulatory and environmental areas has also helped to shape the content – for example its cohesiveness with the ‘New Anglia Better Business for All’ initiative launched in November 2017.
- 6.5 As a local strategy we have no need for any formal process but have undertaken a broad and inclusive approach. Responses have been received from Planning Policy, Development Management, Suffolk Chamber of Commerce, Business Improvement, Suffolk County Council (several aspects), Audit as well as informal feedback. Generally the Strategy has been very well received which suggests it is meeting our objective for it to be accessible, flexible and easy to read.

7. Equality Analysis

- 7.1 No direct equality impacts arising for the content of this report.

8. Shared Service / Partnership Implications

- 8.1 Consultation and collaborative development work has taken place as outlined in this report.

9. Links to Joint Strategic Plan

- 9.1 This item most closely aligns with:

- Business Growth and Increased Productivity

The cross-cut nature of the strategy, and intended cohesion with other strategies, mean that this item impacts on most JSP outcomes.

This item also contributes towards the Industrial Strategy, Suffolk Framework for Growth, New Anglia Economic Strategy and other broader regional delivery work underway.

10. Key Information

- 10.1 Up until now, neither Council has had a strategic document or corporate economic reference of this kind. It will support working with our businesses and communities, our shorter term delivery actions and the longer term aspirations for local regional economic growth as expressed within the recently published New Anglia Economic Strategy (NAES). The NAES was endorsed by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils simultaneously on 13 October 2017. The BMS Strategy should, going forward, be an accessible and useful organisational reference.
- 10.2 This item delivers on the Councils' earlier commitment, expressed in its Year End Report 16/17, "to make sure that the link between the Government's Industrial Strategy, the Suffolk Framework for Growth and delivery on the ground in our districts is clear, by developing a new Economic Strategy for Babergh and Mid Suffolk setting out how the Councils will prioritise resources to get the right conditions and support in place".
- 10.3 It should be noted that whilst the intention is to formally review the BMS strategy in 2022, the Strategy and supporting information are intended to be an evolving and evidence/precedent-led approach. This will support the organisation's economic development and business support work across the two districts, and scaling that up in terms of its contribution towards county and regional level work. The Strategy will integrate with and be applied alongside emerging Council strategies including Housing, Infrastructure, Investment and Regulatory/Environment to create a coherent and complementary approach towards delivering our Joint Strategic Priorities. Meaningful performance indicators and measures, including bridging and linking to the NAES, are now in development.
- 10.4 The documents supporting the Open for Business approach are intended to be multi-audience, and the Strategy will serve to support:
- a long-term vision and actions which deliver economic growth in our Districts
 - inward investment – promotion of our area as an attractive place to invest and give confidence to business
 - the Joint Local Plan
 - service delivery actions and interventions, including 'how' we engage, deliver and facilitate our approach in being Open For Business (and 'All Together')
 - organisational culture benefits to support and embed new ways of working
 - how we will engage with and support businesses – whatever their scale or location
 - our delivery partners and how we work together to achieve our objectives
 - monitoring of both performance and economic conditions
 - service planning and acknowledging achievements
 - guidance around commercial, industrial and business premises: for use in planning application responses and influencing decision-making
- 10.5 The Strategy is informed by high-level information from planning consultants Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners, and previous information prepared by Ingham Pinnock Associates. The Strategy also includes its own background documents that are/will be published but not formally 'adopted' as such. This includes:

- BMS 2016 ‘Open for Business Survey’ report of findings. This is a statistical and qualitative report of the information gathered in the summer of 2016. This will be a periodic (2-yearly) intelligence gathering exercise and link to performance measuring, economic health check and service planning. It will however need to be updated in response to General Data Protection Regulation changes.
- The ‘Functional Clusters Economic Health Check 2017’ presents third-party data and BMS OfB Survey findings at functional cluster level, with commentary around the economic health of our area.
- Visioning work outputs in relation to ‘Greater’ Stowmarket and ‘Greater’ Sudbury areas.

10.6 Branding, formatting, infographics, bite-sized case studies, relevant appendices and visual translation of evidence will enhance the final output significantly but for expediency and with an eye on future link up with other strategic work we have progressed core content only at this stage, seeking its endorsement.

11. Appendices

Title	Location
(a) BMS Economic Development ‘Open For Business Strategy’ to 2022	To follow

12. Background Documents

None.

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