

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

From: Councillor Gerard Brewster, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth	Report Number: CMU5
To: Council	Date of meeting: 26 September 2019

TO PROVIDE AN UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

1. Overview of Portfolio

- 1.1 Increasing jobs, productivity and supporting our businesses to thrive and grow
- 1.2 Attracting and encouraging inward investment
- 1.3 Business friendly and collaborative strategies to support being 'Open for Business'
- 1.4 Build relationships with local businesses
- 1.5 Liaise with neighbouring authorities and other organisations such as NALEP, SELEP and the Haven Gateway Partnership to support cross-border economic development and investment.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That Council notes the report.

3. Key Activities/Issues Over the Past Six Months

- 3.1 'Visioning for Prosperity' work across 5 key towns continues. Sudbury Steering Group now re-established together with officer working group and Stowmarket officer group set up with first Stowmarket Steering Group to be held in the next 4-6 weeks. Vision workshops across Hadleigh, Needham Market and Eye completed and first feedback of emerging themes in Hadleigh to be revealed at Hadleigh on Show on 5th October.
- 3.2 Work on refreshed Economic evidence base underway which will help inform the new Economic Strategy to reflect Corporate Economic ambition, a draft strategy will be available in the New Year.
- 3.3 The Needham Lake visitor centre/café feasibility work has been completed and work progressing on a planning application for submission before the end of 2019 for an environmentally sustainable building with high quality design.
- 3.4 Work has been completed with New Anglia LEP to draft a Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) with focus on clean energy, Agri tech and food and AI and Digital. LIS endorsed by Mid Suffolk Council Cabinet on 28th August and goes to Babergh Cabinet on 12th September.
- 3.5 Part funded by BMSDC, the new Central Suffolk Chamber will be launched in October. The new chair has been confirmed as Dr Peter Funnell former Executive Dean of the University Campus Suffolk.

- 3.6 The Tech hub group in Stowmarket are working on 2 key projects; a micro hub in space located close to the station which will offer hot desking, virtual membership, networking and training events for the digital tech sector. Supported by the LEP and Tech East it will draw in experts from the local and national tech sectors to help grow local SME businesses. Seeking to launch in 2019-20. Work is also underway to develop an Innovation Cluster in Stowmarket to provide a range of high-quality commercial spaces for businesses in the medtech, digital/AI and energy/environmental tech sectors. Initial studies suggest demand for such space on the A14 would be strong.
- 3.7 Work has been commissioned on a workspace and “grow on” space study across both districts to help inform the Economic Evidence base and consider whether market failure interventions might be required by the Councils. Work will be completed in October.
- 3.8 Ongoing Work with Department for Business, Environment and Industrial Strategy and the Local Energy Hub to develop a number of low carbon based projects which are linked to economic development or regeneration – these include early review of possible developments for local heat networks, review of new opportunities across council sites for solar.
- 3.9 There is currently a review underway of existing and possible future grants programmes to provide better support to local businesses and ensure stronger local take up.

4. Future Key Activities

- 4.1 Progressing all of the projects in part 3 to next stages.
- 4.2 Developing a robust well-resourced team in order to meet the strong economic ambitions of BMSDC.
- 4.3 Ensuring refreshed economic strategy also has a linked implementation plan and developing more project management approach to delivery, monitoring risk, programme issues, and managing capital and revenue spend.
- 4.4 Work to ensure the Council’s priorities are aligned to regional strategies and make efforts to raise the profile of BMSDC economic ambitions
- 4.5 Develop a proactive inward investment function which not only seeks to promote the area to new businesses but supports the growth of current businesses within the two districts.
- 4.6 Work with partners to increase access to high speed digital fibre connectivity across the districts for business users
- 4.7 Officers will continue to work with SCC and other stakeholders to progress Skills and Youth Employment Service strategy during the next period.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 This report demonstrates that the Councils are developing good momentum on key activities and collaborations delivering against set and increasing economic ambition. There is an increased focus on deliverability alongside a refreshed economic strategy which will give better visibility of BMSDC economic priorities within the LEP area as well as nationally.

Work on the town centre visioning builds upon the strong heritage and creative/cultural assets that exists in our areas including the strong ambition from our partners such as the Museum of East Anglian Life (MEAL), John Peal Centre (JPC), St. Peters Church Sudbury and Gainsborough's House. However, we also seek to develop new and fast-growing emerging sectors such as energy and environmental as we have many businesses developing cutting edge technology in these sectors and many businesses who are far advanced in development low carbon business activities.

In addition, we continue to build skills, knowledge and processes in the team, including project and programme management to ensure we are committed to delivering the Councils rising ambition around Economic Growth and Regeneration.