

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

From: Councillor Michael Holt Cabinet Member for Economic Growth	Report Number: <big>CMU13</big>
To: Council	Date of meeting: 21 January 2020

TO PROVIDE AN UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

1.0 Overview of Portfolio

- 1.1 The Economic Growth Portfolio includes Economy and Business, Regeneration and Housing Development. Since October we have moved forward a number of large Economic Growth and Regeneration projects and initiatives whilst undertaking a complete review of the team structure to ensure we have the correct skills and experience to be able to deliver ambitious and exciting future priorities. A summary of activity that has taken place across the Growth agenda over the last few months is as follows.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That Council notes the report.

3.0 Key activities since October 19

3.1 *Economy and Business*

- 3.2 The team have been developing a robust economic evidence base since August in order to facilitate the development of a refreshed Economic Strategy. Work on a framework for the new strategy has commenced and will be brought to Cabinet in the Spring.
- 3.3 We have been developing stronger relationships with our businesses in the District, with ongoing work to visit the top 20 businesses both in terms of turnover and staff numbers. We have listened to some of the issues businesses tell us they are experiencing such as lack of good quality business space, lack of fast broadband speeds, and other infrastructure issues and we will ensure our new strategy seeks to address these challenges to business growth.
- 3.4 We have now completed an Incubator and Grow On space study to better understand the challenges our business face with poor quality or a complete lack of suitable business premises. The report is now on our website <https://www.midsuffolk.gov.uk/business/economic-development/business-news-and-events/> and we are reviewing options to address the supply issues in our areas.
- 3.5 We have also been reviewing the Business Grants programme across both Districts. Whilst Babergh has a limited grants programme, Mid Suffolk has limited take up of its existing schemes so we are seeking to develop a comprehensive programme of support which covers both districts and widens the range of business uses which can be considered for grants. We anticipate bringing back a formal business case for a new grants programme across both Districts in the Spring.

- 3.6 We have continued to work with major employers who are relocating from the District to ensure that existing employment sites stay in employment use. Following the report we commissioned on the Delphi site we have had a number of conversations with potential new owners and continue to promote the benefits of our key sites remaining in commercial use. We are also supporting developers who are bringing forward new sites in our area such as the 500,000sq ft opportunity in Brantham. The sites will be fully serviced and will be ready for new occupiers wishing to develop commercial space from the Spring. This has led to some exciting discussions on large sites such as Brantham
- 3.7 We continue to market the area for inward investment and promote the scale of our economic ambition with partners such as Suffolk County Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership, being active through roles in a range of economic growth forums eg Suffolk Growth Programme Board. However in September we jointly facilitated the launch of the Central Suffolk Chamber of Commerce which will provide a new resource in the District to support and help to grow our businesses.
- 3.8 As we continue to have large empty units at Copdock, the team have been working with the appointed commercial agents to consider new potential tenants for the sites.

4.0 *Regeneration and Capital Projects*

- 4.1 We are delivering two major leisure site capital improvement projects in Sudbury and Hadleigh and both projects will result in considerably enhanced facilities for our District. Sudbury is on track to be completed in May next year with the new Hadleigh pool opening in July.
- 4.2 We are also underway with feasibility work on a number of key projects which will be brought to Cabinet later this year at business case stage. These include: opportunities for new commercial floorspace in Hadleigh, a new health centre for Sudbury, options for future use of Belle View House and work to develop a new hotel on the old swimming pool site.
- 4.3 Working with the Performance and Finance teams we have developed new ways of monitoring and managing capital projects including the establishment of an internal Growth Programme Board, development of a high level programme and risk register for each project and a capital monitoring sheet which allows us to monitor capital spend and commitments more effectively. We will use these tools for each project going forward.
- 4.4 We are now working on plans to relocate the bus station at Hamilton Road in Sudbury to an on street facility. Moving the existing poor quality provision will enable us to develop new high quality bus interchange areas and key junction improvements which will allow buses to move around Sudbury more effectively, create better areas of public realm and help to improve air quality. We will also be looking at how passenger facilities and information can be improved and how better pedestrian and cycle connectivity can be achieved.
- 4.5 A scheme for relocating the bus station means that Masterplanning work on the wider Hamilton Road Quarter can move forward. Hamson Barron Smith Architects have been appointed to work up a concept scheme for the area which can reflect the needs of local people and be complementary to the town centre. This work should conclude in early spring.

5.0 ***Town Centre Vision work***

- 5.1 Our key towns vision work continues in both Sudbury and Hadleigh and since the public workshops earlier in the summer we have collated and reviewed the findings and will be talking to local people about next steps.
- 5.2 The Sudbury Vision Steering group is involved in the some of the projects above and will continue to play a vital role in the development of the town. We have been in discussions with the Town Council about how we can work jointly on better wayfinding across the area.
- 5.3 In Hadleigh we ran a vision workshop session with children from the High school which was exciting, and we will be feeding back their comments into the wider vision work. We also fed back key themes from the original town vision workshops to Hadleigh on Show on the 5th October and had an overwhelmingly positive response from the local community.
- 5.4 With our partners we will continue to drive forward the vision work and monitor the wide range of projects in both towns to ensure interdependencies are managed to ensure the best possible outcomes for businesses and residents. We are holding a Sudbury vision engagement event on the 29th and 30th January to share a range of projects and initiatives which are being delivered in Sudbury by a range of organisations including the Council.
- 5.5 Whilst not currently part of the 5 Town Vision work, the national challenges to retail are affecting all of our towns and villages and we will continue to support these areas to ensure all centres remain vibrant and sustainable for the future.