

## MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

<b>From: Councillor Brewster Cabinet Member for Economy</b>	<b>Report Number: CMU 2</b>
<b>To: Council</b>	<b>Date of meeting: 23 November 2017</b>

### TO PROVIDE AN UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMY

#### 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. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Council notes the report.

#### 3. Key Activities/Issues Over the Past Six Months

- 3.1 The 'Visioning for Prosperity' project activities for Greater Stowmarket & Greater Sudbury communities concluded on 10th November 2017. After a good turnout at both events, the Open for Business Team have reported preliminary findings at a Stowmarket Place-shaping meeting and are now collating and analysing comments so that Councillors and members of the public can see what was said by their communities. A realistic and time-bound delivery plan will emerge from this work which pulls through and aligns previous engagement activities.
- 3.2 A multi-service business engagement (led by the Open for Business Team) with a significant food production business looking to invest in Mid Suffolk, has culminated in a planning application being lodged (awaiting validation). This has the potential for significant job creation, regional food sector significance and local business supply chain benefits.
- 3.3 The New Anglia Economic Strategy 2017-2036 was successfully endorsed by both Cabinets in October 2017 and formally published on 25 October 2017. The local BMS Economic Strategy, including links and response to that regional work, is now drafted and will be brought to both Cabinets shortly, after a short period of further stakeholder consultation, including an early review by the Scrutiny Committees. That will include local case studies and a supporting evidence pack.

- 3.4 Generally, good progress is being made in terms of supporting new business enquiries, businesses diversifying or interested in siting in BMS – including on the new 40 acre Port One Logistics Park at Great Blakenham, Enterprise Zone sites and other employment sites.
- 3.5 MSDC Open for Business Team have pro-actively facilitated a collaboration of stakeholders coming together to progress a project and feasibility study for a Technology Hub building in MS. This work remains ongoing with an objective of better supporting our districts' tech sector businesses and improving space for them to innovate. MS has made a £50k investment towards this project which the Open for Business Team are now developing into a specialist support resource for the next 12 months.
- 3.6 The Open for Business Team pro-actively liaised with colleagues at Suffolk County Council (SCC) Highways to ensure that highways improvements around Eye Airfield would be included in a SCC-led bid for funding from the National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF). The evidence for the bid document was delivered within a short window of opportunity to justify the need for funding, improve safety, support an increase in economic growth along the A140 between Norwich and Ipswich and indicate that local landowners would be willing to negotiate with SCC highways. The Department for Transport made the announcement in October 2017 to confirm funding (of £3.75m) to SCC from its National Productivity Investment Fund. BMS will continue to support delivery of this important project to help unlock the significant potential of Eye Airfield.

#### **4. Future Key Activities**

- 4.1 The Councils are progressing our draft Economic Development 'Open for Business' Strategy through a further period of stakeholder consultation, briefings and forward plan. Scrutiny Committee have also had early sight of this work. Reports relating to this work are anticipated to come to Cabinet for endorsement in early February 2018.
- 4.2 There are ongoing collaborative and commercially sensitive lines of conversation with some significant businesses, attractions and developers. This increases the potential for high value inward investment and links to unlocking stalled sites and promotion of our Enterprise Zone/Food Enterprise Zone designated sites. This work also potentially helps to create jobs, increase the options for our micro and SME businesses, increase value of existing businesses and attract New Anglia LEP and central government investment, including vital infrastructure. Our influence and networking is growing with businesses, utility sectors and other partner organisations – all focusing on sustainable growth, jobs and productivity.
- 4.3 Our support for the public outdoor events sector will resume from January 2018 through our Open for Business Team, which co-ordinates the multi-agency and blue light Safety Advisory Group and works to increase the viability and visitor economy of our key places. Our Licensing Team are also re-engineering work processes so as to continue effective support of the events, leisure, transport and other licensed sectors whilst working to agile principles.
- 4.4 Tourism strategy work streams will progress significantly over the next few months, some of which will form reports to Cabinet.

## **5. Conclusion**

- 5.1 The above supports that we are now starting to see some good momentum on key activity and collaborations delivering against set priorities and justifying our emerging draft strategy approach. This also outlines the breadth of work underway and demonstrates our impact. There is a lot of other supportive activity and 'business as usual' engagements underway in addition to the above report headlines. The next period will push all of the above work on further, and the key activities in section 4. As progress is made there will be difficult decisions and choices to be made, including on our resource investment, and therefore a clear and transparent strategic approach is crucial to underpinning this.

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