

AN OVERVIEW OF THE EPSOM & EWELL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Report of the: Head of Place Development
Contact: Julia Owen/Karol Jakubczyk
Urgent Decision?(yes/no) No
If yes, reason urgent decision required: N/A
Annexes/Appendices (attached): Potential Key Interventions and Outcomes
Other available papers (not attached):

REPORT SUMMARY

The Council are in the process of preparing a Borough-wide Economic Development Strategy. This report serves as precursor to the more detailed Draft Strategy, providing Members with an overview of the project and the key interventions and outcomes that are likely to be included as part of the Strategy.

RECOMMENDATION (S)

That the Committee:

- (1) Gives its views on the proposed content of the forthcoming Draft Economic Development Strategy as set out within Annexe 1; and**
- (2) Notes that a more detailed Draft Economic Development Strategy will be reported to a subsequent meeting of the Committee.**

Notes

1 Implications for the Council's Key Priorities, Service Plans and Sustainable Community Strategy

- 1.1 The current Corporate Plan 2012-2016 identifies promoting the economic vitality of the Borough as a key priority for the Council. The emerging Economic Development Strategy will work in tandem with other Council policies and initiatives, such as the Local Plan, to ensure that the Borough continues to be a sustainable place to live and do business. It will also link to any relevant priorities agreed in the forthcoming Corporate Plan.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Council's Local Plan policies have consistently sought to create a healthy environment for economic development to take place. This is set out in key policy documents such as our Core Strategy, the Plan E Epsom Town

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Centre Area Action Plan and the recent Development Management Policies Document, all of which include policies that either seeks to protect existing employment sites and uses, or promote the development of new businesses. The latter includes policies that seek to ensure the Borough will have the necessary infrastructure needed to support economic growth – for example transport infrastructure.

- 2.2 Whilst the Council's approach towards business development has yielded some success, such as the expansion of the WS Atkins HQ and the relocation of Nuffield Health, the growing challenges to the Borough's local and national economy requires the Council to have a more proactive economic development role. This is particularly the case in relation to securing funding for the Borough; from sources such as the Local Enterprise Partnership or from Europe.
- 2.3 In 2014 the Council commissioned consultants, Economic Growth Management, to explore how it could take a more proactive role in local economic development. The consultant's task was to prepare a Study that identified measures that the Council and its partners could take to support the local economy, in order to retain its socio-economic prosperity and be location of choice for work and live.
- 2.4 The Study was prepared on a collaborative basis involving extensive stakeholder consultation. This included engagement with Surrey County Council and the local business community. It also included a briefing session for Members. Their resulting Study was very comprehensive.
- 2.5 The Study has successfully been used to inform and support the Plan E Town Centre Business Plan. It will also hopefully help focus the Council's vision for economic development, leading directly to the introduction of new economic development related objectives as part of the new Corporate Plan. These may include measures that maintain the commercial and retail vitality of Epsom, Ewell and Stoneleigh; maintaining close links with the business community; and working with the Gatwick Diamond and Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to secure inward investment and infrastructure funding.

3 The Emerging Epsom & Ewell Economic Development Strategy

- 3.1 The preparation and production of a Borough-wide Economic Development Strategy will provide the Council with a framework for delivering sustained prosperity. The Strategy will identify a series of actions and interventions that the Council can pursue through its economic development, Town Centres management and planning functions. It is anticipated that performance could be monitored through the Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report¹.

¹ The Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report is an established reporting mechanism, published at the end of the financial year. There is likely to be a close relationship between the indicators used to monitor the performance of the Local Plan and those related to the Corporate Plan's economic development objectives. Equally, many of the projects will be lead through the Council's Planning Policy Team, it would be logical to utilise existing reporting structures.

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- 3.2 The Study prepared by the consultants, Economic Growth Management, provides a good starting point for the preparation of the Strategy. The Study identified a wide range of actions and interventions that the Council could pursue in order to achieve the objective of maintaining and enhancing the Borough's prosperity. These have been refined to form a more realistic and achievable range of interventions and outcomes, which Officers propose will form the basis of the forthcoming Economic Development Strategy.
- 3.3 A Schedule of possible interventions is set out in the Annexe to the report. It identifies the nature of intervention and the outcomes that will be necessary to secure delivery. The proposed interventions cover the following:
- 3.3.1 Securing essential enabling infrastructure, specifically support for both the Plan E highway improvements and Kiln Lane link road, which are key programmes required to support future economic development in the Borough. This intervention also includes the promotion of the inclusion of Epsom within Zone 6 of the Oyster zone - thereby making Epsom a more attractive and affordable business location;
 - 3.3.2 Safeguarding and widening the choice of commercial property in the Borough to provide existing businesses with the opportunities to grow and expand. Ensuring that new business have space to start-up and that there is accommodation for established business seeking to move into the area;
 - 3.3.3 Retaining existing and attracting new business investment by ensuring that there is local engagement with employers; understanding and supporting any local issues they might have. As well as working with local partners to promote the area as a business location and respond to location enquiries;
 - 3.3.4 Providing support for high level skills and long-term employment by continuing to promote available skills programmes and initiatives, particularly apprenticeship based within the Borough; and
 - 3.3.5 Providing economic development support to the three main retail centres; and the development of a Business Improvement District in Epsom Town Centre.
- 3.4 This report has been prepared to provide the Committee with an advanced overview of the emerging Economic Development Strategy. This provides an opportunity to incorporate the Committee's initial thoughts into the Draft Strategy. It also ensures that the Strategy does not hit the Committee cold. Subject to the comments generated by the Committee, we anticipate that a draft version of the Economic Development Strategy could come before the Strategy & Resources Committee in due course.

4 Financial and Manpower Implications

- 4.1 Staff resources have been allocated to oversee the implementation of the emerging Economic Development Strategy. The majority of the tasks will fall to the Council's Planning Policy Team, which sits within the Place

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Development Department. This includes Economic Development expertise and the recently appointed Town Centres Manager, both of whom will have key roles in implementing the emerging Strategy.

- 4.2 It is anticipated that some of the proposed interventions will require additional sources of funding. A key task will be identifying and drawing upon appropriate external funding sources, such as from the County Council and Local Enterprise Partnership, to deliver those interventions.
- 4.3 **Chief Finance Officer's comments:** The Economic Strategy as outlined in the report above needs to be developed in line with the new Corporate Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy and Budget (MTFS). The MTFS currently contains provision for the implementation of Plan E and makes reference to potential sources of funding for Kiln Lane.

Clarity is required around the potential costs to the Council associated with the interventions contained within this Strategy, particularly around those outlined in the Annexe to this report and (where required) funding earmarked as part of the MTFS and annual budget prior to the content of the Strategy being adopted by Members.

Requests for addition funding need to be considered against the backdrop of having to reduce the General Revenue Fund Budget deficit of £2.4m over the next four years and a capital programme with bids over £2.8m for next year.

5 Equalities and Other Legal Implications

- 5.1 None for the purposes of this report. However, there are implications arising from the possible interventions/outcomes listed in the Annex. The full implications arising from each item will be considered at the appropriate time.

6 Sustainability Policy and Community Safety Implications

- 6.1 Ensuring that there are opportunities for local economic growth is an important component of maintaining the Borough as a sustainable place where people can live and work. This is a key aspect of sustainable development as defined by national planning policy.

7 Partnerships

- 7.1 The Corporate Plan and the proposed Economic Development Strategy requires that the Council maintain existing, and develop new, partnerships such as those with the Gatwick Diamond Initiative and the Coast to Capital LEP. This is likely to include those we already have with organisations such as Surrey County Council, in addition to new partnerships with business.

8 Risk Assessment

- 8.1 Changes in national and local economic environments, changes to the way essential community infrastructure is funded and amendments to national planning policy are making it increasingly important that we are proactive about economic development. Without positive interventions and outcomes

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we run the risk of unplanned for growth, which is not compliant with our strategy and vision for the Borough. By preparing a Borough-wide Economic Development Strategy we will minimise the risk of unbalanced and unsustainable growth.

9 Conclusion and Recommendations

- 9.1 That the Committee give their views on the proposed content of the forthcoming Draft Economic Development Strategy, and note that a more detailed Draft Economic Development Strategy will be reported to a subsequent meeting of the Committee.

WARD(S) AFFECTED: N/A