

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	1 December 2015
Subject:	Update on Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Review
Report of:	Julie Wood, Development Services Group Manager
Corporate Lead:	Rachel North, Deputy Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Cllr R A Bird
Number of Appendices:	None

Executive Summary:

The report sets out the progress to date of the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Review Working Group, including the first meeting. The report outlines the developing priorities and the way forward.

Recommendation:

To CONSIDER the progress of the Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Review.

Reasons for Recommendation:

Not applicable.

Resource Implications:

None at this stage – to be identified through the review.

Legal Implications:

None at this stage.

Risk Management Implications:

None at this stage.

Performance Management Follow-up:

None at this stage.

Environmental Implications:

None at this stage.

1.0 INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

1.1 The current Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 'Regenerating and Growing

the Economy' covered the time period 2012-2015. This strategy focused on five main themes:

1. Business Development & Support.
2. Place Potential.
3. Marketing & Investment.
4. Human Resources.
5. Work Towards a Low Carbon Economy.

Members at the Working Group were informed that a new strategy is required to set direction for the work of the Council with regard to economic development and tourism. As part of this process a Working Group was set up, with Terms of Reference, to help shape the new strategy.

1.2 At this first Working Group, the Officers outlined the background, purpose of the review, current priorities and activity, as well as a way forward. Members were informed that the purpose of the Working Group was to cover four main elements:

1. Review of current work.
2. Set priorities for the future.
3. Agreeing a time period.
4. Allocating the resources required.

1.3 This work would include:

- Reviewing the current Small Business Grant Scheme.
- How to best help businesses.
- How the borough can develop as a key centre of employment.
- How priorities can be aligned with wider growth opportunities.
- Which partnerships the Council can be part of and utilise.
- How policies and employment allocations in the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) and Borough Plan can support jobs growth, sector development and inward investment.
- An assessment of the borough economy, including relevant policies and economic drivers.
- How best to support an increase in visitor numbers and tourism.
- Best practice review from elsewhere.
- Consultation with the business community.

1.4 It was then envisaged that this work would culminate in:

1. a new Economic Development and Tourism Strategy which supports business growth and economic vitality across the borough; setting the context within which the Council will deliver its economic development and tourism service and
2. development of a business support scheme, which delivers benefits to the local business community and stimulates economic activity.

1.5 Members were then informed of the major focus that economic development and tourism has within the Council Plan, particularly under the 'Promote Economic Development' theme, specifically to:

1. Promote Tewkesbury Borough to attract large scale businesses.

2. Provide support to help new start-ups, young and growing businesses.
3. Work with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to promote economic growth.
4. Ensure the JCS makes provision for sufficient employment land.

1.6 The Working Group was also made aware of the current landscape for economic development and tourism. The Council has a current focus on growth, particularly through the JCS, which will influence employment land allocation as well as housing growth. The Strategic Economic Plan for the county, which includes a key focus on the M5 Growth Zone, sets out the economic priorities at a county level and therefore a key element would be positioning the Council's strategy to interpret this at a local level. The national focus on growth meant there were also a number of new funding opportunities available that the borough could benefit from, such as the Growth Deal and EU (DEFRA) funding. The current work with partners was crucial and would be increasingly important - key partners were seen as the LEP, Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucestershire Enterprise, Cotswold Tourism, Tewkesbury Regeneration Partnership, Gloucestershire Rural Community Council and the business and tourism networks. Devolution was also seen as a key element of the economic development landscape that would need to be factored in as the strategy developed.

1.7 Members received detailed information on the current workload and projects including the importance of tourism to the local economy and the role of tourism marketing such as:

- campaign work;
- supporting local businesses;
- promotional work;
- tourist information points;
- grant support;
- partnerships;
- international marketing initiatives; and
- support for festivals and events.

1.8 Members also received information and examples relating to the current role and importance of economic development within the Council:

- business support grants;
- training and development;

- advice and support;
- inward investment;
- employment allocations;
- business events;
- support networks;
- grant funding;
- town centre support, including events/festivals;
- supporting flood affected businesses;
- commenting on planning applications; and
- rural growth programmes.

2.0 FUTURE VISION AND DIRECTION

2.1 Following the discussion the Working Group agreed that growth was a key component to a new strategy and suggested an emerging vision:

'For Tewkesbury borough to be the engine that delivers growth in Gloucestershire.'

2.2 It was put forward that the staff approach should continue being a facilitator, not a deliverer. Partnerships were also seen to be a vital way of delivering the service and to develop, strengthen and widen these partnerships and networks e.g. partnership working with Highways regarding J9 and J10, and the partnership with the LEP.

2.3 With regard to tourism, the Working Group discussed the need to:

- support and make the most of larger attractions;
- utilise external funding opportunities for tourism attractions;
- address the shortage of hotel accommodation and conference venues;
- effective promotion;
- ensure the Council remain linked to and build on the Cotswold Tourism brand;
- use the rivers as a positive attraction for visitors;
- look at external funding opportunities for attractions and other businesses; and
- development/review of partnerships.

2.4 With regard to economic development, the Working Group discussed the need to provide:

- Representation of the key business sectors.
- Town centre support including valuing events as part of the local economy and

recognising the changing role of the High Street.

- A key focus on business growth with key links to planning and infrastructure, particularly looking at the potential for further economic growth at J9 and J10.
- Allocation of employment land to support jobs and growth.
- Input into the JCS and Borough Plan.
- Encouragement to Tewkesbury Regeneration Partnership to focus on major strategic elements.

2.5 It was also recognised that the emerging strategy should align with Council Plan progress, so both plans complement each other. It was understood that economic development and growth will be a major focus within the new Council Plan. As well as accompanying the Council Plan, the new strategy would also require cross-referencing against the JCS and Borough Plan.

2.6 It was agreed that the business community were a vital component in setting the agenda for growth for the Council. Therefore they would be consulted as the strategy developed and the priorities emerged. It was also proposed that the strategy would have a lifespan of five years.

3.0 WAY FORWARD

3.1 The Working Group decided that the next meeting would focus on four main topics:

1. Ensuring the vision aligns with the J9 Working Group.
2. Providing information on economic data/employment sectors.
3. Discussing funding opportunities.
4. A presentation from the LEP – particularly focussing on how the Council can work best with the LEP.

It was also decided that business support would be covered at a future meeting.

3.2 As the strategy developed, it was agreed that the Working Group would need to cover the following items:

1. To provide input to and agree a draft strategy for consultation.
2. To receive and discuss any consultation feedback and make any amendments where appropriate.
3. To identify any resource implications.
4. To recommend the draft strategy for approval by Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3.3 An indicative programme was agreed:

First meeting – October 2015

- Introduction and context

- Setting the scene

Second meeting – Nov/Dec 2015

- Meeting with the LEP

Third meeting – January 2016

- Value of economic development and tourism
- Report back on review progress
- Emerging priorities

Fourth meeting – April 2016

- Consider priorities
- Draft strategy considered

The strategy would then be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny before approval by the Executive Committee.

4.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 None.

5.0 CONSULTATION

5.1 No consultation at this stage. Consultation with the business community will be carried out during the development of the strategy.

6.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

6.1 Council Plan 2012-2016

Tourism and Economic Development Strategy 2012-2015

7.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

7.1 None at this stage.

8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

8.1 None at this stage.

9.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

9.1 The completed strategy will set the focus for driving growth in the borough.

10.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

10.1 None at this stage.

11.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

11.1 Overview and Scrutiny 16 June 2015

Background Papers: Economic Development and Tourism Strategy Review Working Group
Terms of Reference

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Appendices: None