

Heading: NEWCASTLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY, YEAR THREE ACTION PLAN AND YEAR TWO REVIEW

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Portfolio: Economic Development, Regeneration and Town Centres

Wards affected: All

Purpose of the Report

To report comments made by the Economic Development and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 12th March on the Economic Development Strategy Year Three Action Plan and to seek Cabinet approval for the same.

Recommendations

That the Economic Development Strategy Year Three Action Plan be approved and adopted as the basis for the Borough Council's work over the coming 12 months to promote the economic development of the Borough and bring new jobs to the area.

Reasons

To ensure that the broad objectives contained in the agreed strategy are converted into realisable actions; to consider progress made over the previous 12 months; and to reflect the views expressed by Scrutiny Committee.

1. Background

The Borough Council's five year Economic Development Strategy (EDS), approved in May 2012 is accompanied by annual action plans which are designed to show how the strategy is being taken forward. Each year the Economic Development and Enterprise Scrutiny Committee considers and comments on a draft Action Plan for the coming year and receives a report on action taken in the previous year. The Action Plan for 2014-15 (Year Three) is arranged under four broad headings:

- promoting enterprise and supporting local businesses to grow
- improving the skills of the local workforce
- marketing and development, and
- strengthening the vitality and appeal of the town centres.

The Action Plan is set out in the Appendix to this report and reflects the broad position as at 1st April 2014.

2. Comments of Scrutiny Committee

A number of modifications to the draft Action Plan reported to Scrutiny Committee have been made to reflect comments made by Scrutiny Committee on March 12th.

Amended wording is shown in italics (see Appendix)

In particular, comments referred to:

- widening the range of providers we work with to promote opportunities for apprenticeships;
- working with Marks & Spencer and the University Hospital North Staffordshire to encourage greater take up of available jobs from local people;
- engaging with the City Council to explore the potential for bringing the High Speed 2 rail project through the City with a station at Etruria;
- assisting Keele Science Park to bring more high tech businesses to the science park;
- working with developers and landlords to encourage greater use of unoccupied space in the town centre for residential use;
- the greater use of social media to promote new businesses opening up in the town centre, and;
- working with the Roebuck centre to introduce new signage on the Midway Car Park to promote the town centre to passing trade on the ring road.

Actions which Committee considered are of greater priority are **shown in bold** in the Appendix.

3. Issues

No entirely new issues to those in the Strategy itself were raised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee; its comments were focused upon more fine grain actions and priorities. The Action Plan is principally about how best to get things done and how the Council would be best deploying its staff resources (and money, where appropriate) and how it can work with other partners, including the private sector, to achieve its aims.

4. Proposal

The suggestions and additions listed above (section 2) have all been taken on board and are included in the draft Action plan set out in the Appendix to this report.

5. Reasons for the Preferred Solution

To reflect the views expressed by Scrutiny Committee (and, in the broader sense, to ensure that, while the general direction of the EDS is maintained, the annual action plans allow for the work of the Council to reflect changed opportunities and changing circumstances. The annual action plans are also used as a basis for discussions with partner organisations to encourage complementary action).

6. Outcomes Linked to Corporate Priorities

This work, and in particular the actions contained in the EDS Action Plan for 2014-15, falls within the Council's corporate priority of 'Creating a Borough of Opportunity'.

7. Legal and Statutory Implications

It is not a statutory requirement for the Council to prepare annual action plans showing how its economic development strategy is being implemented, though it is good practice to do so and, regarding the strategy itself, it is good practise to take decisions on the basis agreed priorities, using up to date data and evidence and following consultation with partner organisations.

8. Equality Impact Assessment

Specific actions which are designed to lead to a differential impact on particular sections of the community, such as the unemployed, will be subject to subsequent reports, which may themselves require an EIA.

9. Financial and Resource Implications

The major resource implication of each annual action plan is the staff time (principally that of the Economic Regeneration team) who will be employed taking forward the actions listed in the Plan. Any action requiring new financial expenditure will be the subject of a separate report (unless part of an already agreed budget).

10. Major Risks

These will be dealt with project by project. At a more strategic level it could be argued that any failure of the Council to prepare and implement an Economic Development Strategy could lead to long term economic decline.

11. Key Decision Information

This report has been included on the forward plan. The action plan affects more than two wards of the Borough. Approval for specific expenditure will be subject to more detailed later reports.

12. Earlier Cabinet Resolutions

The Economic Development Strategy itself was approved at Cabinet's meeting on 23rd May 2012. At an earlier meeting on 14th March 2012, Cabinet agreed that the Strategy should be accompanied by annual action plans.

13. List of Appendices

The Draft EDS Action Plan for 2014-15 is contained in the appendix to this report.