

**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL****EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S REPORT TO CABINET****17<sup>th</sup> July 2013****NEWCASTLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY: YEAR TWO ACTION PLAN AND YEAR ONE REVIEW****Submitted by: Neale Clifton, Executive Director, Regeneration and Development****Principal author: Simon Smith, Regeneration Manager****Portfolio: Economic Development, Regeneration and Town Centres****Ward(s) affected: All****Purpose of the Report**

To review progress made in taking forward the Borough's Economic Development Strategy, in particular by reviewing the Year One Action Plan and considering the Year Two Action Plan.

**Recommendations**

- (a) That receipt of comments from the Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.**
- (b) That the review of the Economic Development Strategy Year One Action Plan be noted and that the Year Two Action Plan be approved.**
- (c) That officers continue to seek Members' approval for the annual Action Plans and to keep Members informed of progress made with the same.**

**Reasons**

To ensure that the broad objectives contained in the agreed strategy are converted into realisable actions.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 Cabinet agreed a new Economic Development Strategy for the Borough at its meeting last May following consultation with partners and the local business community on an earlier draft. Printed copies of the strategy, illustrated with plans and photographs, have since been widely disseminated, including to Cabinet Members. The approved strategy has a five year timescale (2012-17) and included the preparation of an Action Plan for Year One (2012-13) which identified a number of concrete actions which could be taken in a shorter time scale.
- 1.2 This report provides a review of that Year One Action Plan and (in part informed by this) sets out a Year Two Action Plan (2013-14) for your consideration and approval. By its nature this Action Plan is fairly detailed and for this reason is contained in appendix form. The draft action plan was considered by the Economic Development and Enterprise Scrutiny

Committee and a number of minor changes have been made to improve the quality and specificity of the action plan. The action plan covers a wide range of objectives many of which are delivered through a range of partnerships and are reliant on external partners. The improved action plan includes all the objectives and partnerships but also highlights where the Council is focussing our internal resources to high priority projects where the Council is playing a significant role in delivery.

2. **Issues**

- 2.1 Strategy is inherently about making choices – making the case for why certain actions should be prioritised over others and to what intended effect. The annual action plans on the other hand are more about adding the flesh to those priorities, setting out what actions are to be taken, so that the actions proposed can be seen in the context of the broader objectives. While it is intended that the broad thrust of the strategy will have a long enough life to see demonstrable progress made (in this case a five year time horizon), the annual action plans are drawn up anew each time and are able to reflect changing circumstances and (sometimes unforeseen) opportunities as they arise. This should have the benefit of keeping them relevant and fresh. This annual review may also take the opportunity to consider new initiatives from Government or a key partner or changes in the economic or financial landscape and capitalise on them. It may also suggest changes in emphasis or priority (and perhaps what might no longer be pursued so that new things might be tried).
- 2.2 At the end of the five year period covered by this strategy (2017), the Council will publish an evaluation report of the effectiveness of the strategy and assess the successes achieved and what might have been done better (or differently). This more detailed review will be undertaken after the period of the Strategy by which time changes in the economic and financial circumstances of the country (and the area) will be clearer and it may then be more appropriate to consider more fundamental changes in direction, including new initiatives.

3. **Options Considered**

- 3.1 When the preparation of a new Economic Development Strategy was first discussed, it was initially proposed to provide a 'mid-term report' half way through the five year horizon of the strategy to review progress made and consider whether any changes in emphasis (or even direction) were required. Cabinet instead requested an annual review in the form of an annual Action Plan in which progress made in the previous year's Action Plan was reviewed and a detailed Action Plan for the following year drafted and agreed. This report follows that approach.

4. **Proposal**

- 4.1 The appendix to this report contains a review of the Year One Action Plan (2012-13) and sets out a proposed Year Two Action Plan (2013-14) for your consideration and approval. The annual Action Plans set out in more detail how the aims and 18 broad objectives agreed will be carried out. Like the strategy itself, these will also be based around the four themes of:
- Economy
  - Place and Infrastructure
  - People, and
  - Image & Marketing

5. **Reasons for Preferred Solution**

- 5.1 To ensure a commitment to agreed objectives (the Strategy) while also ensuring that actions are flexible and reflect changing opportunities and circumstances (the annual action plans).
- 5.2 To continue to act as a basis for dialogue with other partners to encourage complementary action.

6 **Outcomes Linked to Corporate Priorities**

- 6.1 An Economic Development Strategy falls within the Borough Council's corporate priority of 'Creating a Borough of Opportunity'.

7 **Legal and Statutory Implications**

- 7.1 It is not a statutory requirement on the Council to prepare an Economic Development Strategy though it is good practise to do so and to take decisions against the background of agreed priorities, up to date data and following consultation with partners. In view of the relevant powers and duties placed upon Local Authorities in relation to economic well-being it is appropriate for the Council to lead upon the preparation of such a strategy.

8. **Equality Impact Assessment**

- 8.1 No differential impact had been identified. Specific actions which are designed to improve the prospects of particular sections of the community (for instance, those without work), will be subject to subsequent reports, which may themselves require an EIA.

9. **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 9.1 Where actions are proposed which require proposals for expenditure these will be the subject of specific reports to Cabinet. The Economic Development Strategy and the annual Action plans will provide context for that expenditure but there is no presumption that funding will be met by the inclusion of an action within the Action Plan and any action requiring Borough Council expenditure will be subject to its own report and justification.

10. **Major Risks**

- 10.1 These will be dealt with project by project.

11. **Key Decision Information**

- 11.1 This report has been included in the forward plan. The strategy will affect more than two wards of the Borough. Approval for specific expenditure will be subject to more detailed later reports.

12. **Earlier Cabinet Resolutions**

- 12.1 At its meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2012, Cabinet resolved

- (a) That the draft strategy be amended in the light of comments received.

- (b) That Cabinet given further consideration to any other improvements / modifications Members wish to see made to the draft

- (c) That the modified (final) version of the strategy be reported to next meeting for approval.
- (d) That the final version of the strategy be accompanied by a first year action plan demonstrating in more detail timescales, lead bodies and resource implications.
- (e) That the approved version of the strategy be re-formatted with plans and photographs added and printed for wider distribution.

12.2 At its meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2012, Cabinet resolved

That the Economic Development Strategy and the first year Action Plan be approved.

That arrangements be made to publicise the strategy.

13. **List of Appendices**

13.1 Year One Action Plan Review 2012-13 and Draft 2013-14 Action Plan.

14. **Background Documents**

14.1 Newcastle Economic Development Strategy 2012-17