

## Strategic Plan 2012-16

### ECONOMIC GROWTH: A stronger economy which is capable of growing

#### Objectives and actions

- 1 Create the right conditions for economic growth
- 2 Provide appropriate support to existing firms, work to retain key businesses and jobs and support new business start ups
- 3 Attract inward investment
- 4 Revitalise our high streets as a vibrant part of our towns

#### ***We will.....***

- promote and market Forest Heath as a great place to live and do business
- work to make more sites available and improve existing access to allow businesses to expand and new businesses to relocate to Forest Heath
- promote and support the development of faster broadband access across the district
- provide advice and support to our businesses, including an online directory of local businesses and a programme of grants and loans to start-ups
- make significant progress towards creating an Enterprise Hub or Innovation Park in the district
- maximise the potential of the Council's business properties in supporting economic growth
- make it simpler to do business with the Council by streamlining the tendering process
- work with partners to implement the recommendations of the Council's review of educational attainment in order to improve the skills of the future workforce
- develop a clear strategy to inform and shape the Council approach to supporting families and communities in the district,
- improve the district's tourist offer, including by delivering the Home of Horseracing project in Newmarket and improvements to Mildenhall Museum
- increase opportunities for tourism in the district through grants, information and planning guidance
- deliver a programme of themed events in our main towns to improve the vibrancy of our high streets
- improve the look of our high streets through supporting shop front repainting and developing potential new designs for the Mildenhall shopping precinct
- work in partnership on a wider pedestrianisation scheme in Wellington St, Newmarket

#### **Performance measures:**

- Number of business enquires leading to development / investment
- Number of sites where business development commenced
- Number of eligible business applying for appropriate business rate relief
- Grant scheme take-up for new and existing businesses
- Number of new business start-ups in the district and level of business rate failures
- Number of residents helped to find employment in the district
- Educational attainment in the district
- Percentage of district with 2Mb broadband and number of business with 20Mb access
- Number of visitors to new tourist attractions and overall visitor numbers
- Number of retailers benefitting from retail enhancement schemes
- Level of additional funding available to support economic growth.

## **HOUSING: meeting the district's housing need**

### **Objectives and actions**

- 1 Provide adequate provision in our planning policy framework to meet current and future housing needs
- 2 Help manage the district's existing housing stock
- 3 Use our influence to bring empty homes back into use

#### ***We will.....***

- use our policies and plans to support the numbers of new homes needed in the district and ensure there is enough land to build them
- work with private developers and registered providers of social housing to build homes in Forest Heath
- ensure our policies for new housing development includes securing the right mix of market and affordable housing and is supported by infrastructure and other facilities
- support Parish and Town Councils in developing Neighbourhood Plans
- publish a tenancy policy that makes sure we make the best use of the existing housing stock by allocating homes to the most appropriate people
- champion the needs of elderly and vulnerable residents by holding other agencies to account for the quality of accommodation and services provided
- refocus the use of grants for improving housing conditions to ensure they are used to support those most in need
- provide targeted advice and support to owners of empty properties to support them in bringing them back into use, including through loans and grants
- take enforcement action where appropriate to persuade owners of empty properties to bring them back into use

#### **Performance measures:**

- Register of housing needs
- Number of parish and town councils supported with neighbourhood planning
- Level of satisfaction of social housing residents
- Level of spend and number of households assisted through support for private sector housing improvements
- Number of homes made decent and / or adapted
- Number of empty homes brought back into use
- Numbers of disused or empty commercial premises brought forward for housing development
- Number of empty homes made available through the Private Sector Leasing scheme

## **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: Supporting stronger, more active communities**

### **Objectives and actions**

- 1 Increase the level and quality of community participation in decisions
- 2 Strengthen and support parish councils and community and voluntary groups across the district
- 3 To work with the community and partners to help meet the needs of residents in our market towns

#### ***We will.....***

- establish locality forums across the district, supported by locality officers, to enhance residents' engagement with the Council and other public sector partners
- improve the way the Council engages with the youth community by encouraging Youth Councillors and the re-establishment of the Youth Forum
- put in place new arrangements across the district for residents to access services and for the Council to communicate with residents
- enable communities to use the opportunity to keep important assets in community ownership
- increase opportunities for volunteering by Councillors, Council staff and residents
- give each Councillor a budget to spend on the priorities in their ward
- give help to voluntary groups to raise funds and enable them to have an opportunity to run council services
- ensure the "old school" project in Brandon is completed and work with local agencies to help reduce inequalities in the town.

#### **Performance measures:**

- Number of locality forums being held regularly in our main towns and evidence of outcomes being used to inform service delivery across partners
- Young people can identify and see outcomes being delivered in their area
- Level of feedback and satisfaction of communities on Council activity
- Number of volunteering hours in the district
- Number of projects assisted through locality budgets and distribution across the district
- Value of external funding secured for voluntary and community groups
- Resident satisfaction with access to GP services in Brandon
- Increased usage of Brandon Leisure Centre

## **BEING AN EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE COUNCIL**

### **Objectives and actions**

#### 1 Ensuring value for money

##### ***We will.....***

- keep Council Tax increases to a minimum
- ensure that the business rates returned to Forest Heath as a result of the Government's plans are used to the maximum benefit of residents
- make better use of our buildings by sharing more space with other organisations
- reduce our energy use through the installation of photovoltaics and a more cost effective heating system at our Mildenhall offices
- review the management of our car parking services in the district to ensure they are cost effective and offer value for money for the customer
- keep our fees and charges fair and sustainable
- complete the sharing of services with St Edmundsbury Borough Council and explore opportunities to make savings by working in partnership with other organisations

##### **Performance measures:**

- Level of Council Tax levied by the district council
- Level of business rate retained in relation to a baseline
- Level of energy usage in Council buildings
- Relevant unit costs including support services