

Forest Heath District Council

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Report of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Tourism

CABINET

18 FEBRUARY 2014

CAB14/136

WEST SUFFOLK SIX POINT PLAN FOR JOBS AND GROWTH (Decisions Plan Reference: JAN14/03)

1. Summary and reasons for recommendation(s)

- 1.1 Following consultation with stakeholders during the production of the FHDC Strategic Plan and the SEBC Corporate Plan it was agreed that a key focus for West Suffolk was economic growth.
- 1.2 To deliver on this key focus, the Economic Development and Growth (EDG) team have the following targets: to engage with at least 100 businesses; help create at least 120 new jobs; and help create at least 10 new businesses here in West Suffolk over the next two years. In addition to these targets, we will provide support to the majority of existing businesses in West Suffolk.
- 1.3 The EDG team has produced a plan of action, entitled 'West Suffolk six point plan for jobs and growth', which sets out what the West Suffolk councils will do to meet these targets and the priority of economic growth. It is essential that we have a plan that enables us to be prepared to capitalise on any opportunities that arise.
- 1.4 The plan is closely aligned to, and derived from, the strategic growth plans of our principal partners, including Suffolk County Council's (SCC) 'Suffolk Growth Strategy' and the growth plans (Strategic Economic Plans) produced by the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership (NALEP) and the Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough Local Enterprise Partnership (GCGP).
- 1.5 To meet the needs of our different customers, the plan will be communicated in two different ways. The first approach is a more detailed explanation of how and why we will focus on each of the six points. This text will be used for our webpages and will also be available as a document (attached to this report as Appendix A). The intended audience includes Members; officers; our partners; businesses (who want more information) and other stakeholders. This more detailed information will be available to support bids and applications for funding to support our aims.
- 1.6 The second approach is a pocket sized handout. It will be short, succinct and 'punchy' and the intended audience will be businesses and investors.

- 1.7 The two documents will show how we plan to achieve jobs and growth in West Suffolk; they preface the anticipated inward investment publicity documents and communications plan that are envisaged under the action points in the six point plan.
- 1.8 The projects within the plan will be funded through a variety of funding pots, including departmental budgets, LEP funding and European funding.
- 1.9 The draft plan is attached as Appendix A to this report for Members' consideration.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is **RECOMMENDED** that Members approve the draft West Suffolk Six Point Plan for Jobs and Growth.

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3. How will the recommendations help us meet our strategic priorities?

3.1 The recommendations meet the following, as contained within the Strategic Plan:

- (a) A stronger local economy which is capable of growing

4. Key issues

4.1 Following consultation with stakeholders during the production of the FHDC Strategic Plan and the SEBC Corporate Plan it was agreed that a key focus for West Suffolk was economic growth.

4.2 To deliver on this key focus, the Economic Development and Growth (EDG) team have the following targets: to engage with at least 100 businesses; help create at least 120 new jobs; and help create at least 10 new businesses here in West Suffolk over the next two years. In addition to these targets, we will provide support to the majority of existing businesses in West Suffolk. These targets are aligned with the targets of our partners, including SCC, NALEP and

GCGP.

- 4.3 The EDG team has produced a plan of action, entitled 'West Suffolk six point plan for jobs and growth', which sets out what the West Suffolk councils will do to meet these targets and the priority of economic growth. It is essential that we have a plan that enables us to be prepared to capitalise on any opportunities that arise. Since EDG covers an extremely wide remit we have chosen a targeted approach, focussing our attention on six key areas for development.
- 4.4 The six points are as follows:
- 1) Meeting and understanding West Suffolk businesses;
 - 2) Promoting the West Suffolk economic region;
 - 3) Supporting our market towns;
 - 4) Ensuring the right conditions for growth;
 - 5) Developing skills and increasing employment opportunities for all; and
 - 6) Capitalising upon our key sectors.
- 4.5 The justification for focussing on these areas in preference to other elements of work comes from three main angles. Firstly, the recent consultation activities of local businesses and stakeholders undertaken during the preparation of the Suffolk Growth Strategy and also the European Funding workshops. Secondly, the priorities of Members expressed through consultation and also the work to produce the strategic plan. Thirdly, by the analysis of key labour market information and local monitoring information that provides an ability to understand how West Suffolk compares locally, regionally and nationally. This information also provides trends.
- 4.6 The plan is closely aligned to, and derived from, the growth plans of our strategic partners, including SCC's 'Suffolk Growth Strategy' and the Strategic Economic Plans (SEPs) being developed by both of our local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) NALEP and the GCGP. The LEPs have to prepare a SEP to enable them to compete for government funding, often referred to as the Single Local Growth pot.
- 4.7 To meet the needs of our different customers, the plan will be communicated in two different ways:
- (a) The first approach is a more detailed explanation of how and why we will focus on each of the six points. This text will be used for our webpages and will also be available as a document (the draft document is attached to this report as Appendix A). The intended audience includes Members; officers; our partners including the LEPs; businesses (who want more information) and other stakeholders. This more detailed information will be available to support bids and applications for funding to support our aims. Under each of the six points there are examples of the types of actions that we will deliver; these lists are not exhaustive and remain flexible, since there is a need for our work to be driven by opportunities as they arise. This document also includes some of the reasons why we believe these actions will drive growth. Selected information from this version of the plan will be available on our business web pages which will

allow us to easily link to case studies of existing work that we have successfully delivered which can be built upon.

- (b) The second approach is a pocket sized handout. It will be short, succinct and 'punchy' and the intended audience will be businesses and investors. It 'signposts' our new local authority focus on economic growth. This document will contain the headlines of the six point plan and will explain how and why businesses and investors should get involved. It will be a designed, fairly 'glossy' document which will be printed in pocket-size for convenience and easy use by Members and all are 'investment ambassadors'. It will also available for download via our websites.

4.8 The two documents will show how we plan to achieve jobs and growth in West Suffolk; they preface the anticipated inward investment publicity documents and communications plan that are envisaged under the action points in the six point plan.

4.9 The projects within the plan will be funded through a variety of funding pots, and potential sources include:

- (a) Local Authority Business Growth Incentive funds (LABGI);
- (b) section106 allocations;
- (c) departmental budgets;
- (d) Pooled business rates;
- (e) LEP and SCC funding;
- (f) national grants; and
- (g) European funding.

4.10 The draft, more detailed plan (as referred to in option (a) in paragraph 4.7) is attached as Appendix A to this report for Members' consideration.

5. Other options considered

5.1 The 'do nothing' option would be a missed opportunity for the relatively new EDG team to express a clear focus on growth. This option would not provide a clear mechanism for the team to measure whether its work has been a success.

5.2 Another option would be to undertake a full economic strategy for West Suffolk. Both FHDC and SEBC have relatively recent strategies although both were prepared in pre-recession times. This piece of work would take longer to complete and would involve a full consultation exercise. Ipswich Borough Council has decided to follow this course of action whereas Suffolk Coastal/Waveney and Mid Suffolk/Babergh are following the same 'action plan' approach as being proposed here.

6. Community impact

6.1 **Crime and disorder impact** *(including Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998)*

6.1.1 No impact from this report.

6.2 Diversity and equality impact *(including the findings of the Equality Impact Assessment)*

6.2.1 The action plan will not negatively impact upon any of the equality groups. A number of the commitments under action five 'developing skills and increasing employment opportunities for all' focus specifically on young people and delivery of the county-wide Apprenticeship project and employing apprentices in various departments across the councils. The action plan could be improved so it would have a positive impact by including specific commitments in relation to the following equality groups (where appropriate): gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, faith groups and rural isolation.

6.3 Sustainability impact *(including completing a Sustainability Impact Assessment)*

6.3.1 No impact from this report.

6.4 Other impact *(any other impacts affecting this report)*

6.4.1 No impact from this report.

7. Consultation *(what consultation has been undertaken, and what were the outcomes?)*

7.1 The Suffolk Growth Strategy was launched in February this year and it followed a number of consultation activities, that themselves followed topic based consultation on broadband proposals. In addition, other recent consultation exercises were held to help set out the priorities for skills development (i.e. 'Raising the Bar') and European funding and these have been used to formulate the priorities for action.

8. Financial and resource implications *(including asset management implications)*

8.1 There are resource implications in terms of officer and Member time to plan and deliver the actions within the plan. The majority of the actions within the plan will also need financial support; an internal document will be produced which will clearly align budgets to individual actions.

9. Risk/opportunity assessment *(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)*

Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
If we do not have a plan for jobs and growth in place then service delivery will not be focussed and the overall impact on growth in West Suffolk is likely to be less successful.	High	Ensure that the six point plan for jobs and growth is approved and implemented.	Low
Without a plan that is communicated to businesses in West Suffolk, the businesses may feel	Medium	Ensure that the six point plan for jobs and growth is clearly communicated to West Suffolk businesses.	Low

Risk area	Inherent level of risk (before controls)	Controls	Residual risk (after controls)
less supported, unclear about the future of local authority support and less able to take advantage of funding opportunities (e.g. via the LEPs), etc.			

10. Legal and policy implications

- 10.1 The approach of the plan focusses on the next two years and will be reviewed regularly, including through our governance processes such as the West Suffolk Joint Growth Steering Group.
- 10.2 There is a landscape of both emerging and existing corporate documents which this plan is aligned to. Whilst this document is focussed mainly on jobs and growth it relates well to housing, families, communities, sustainable development and so on. Vision 2031 is an existing corporate document which sets out our long term aspirations for the borough of St Edmundsbury. The West Suffolk six point plan for jobs and growth covers two years and will help deliver the jobs and growth element of the Vision 2031 documents.

11. Ward(s) affected

- 11.1 All wards in Forest Heath.

12. Background papers

- 12.1 None.

13. Documents attached

- 13.1 Appendix A – Draft West Suffolk Six Point Plan for Jobs and Growth