



Policy and Resources Committee – 8 April 2013

Draft Economic Development and Tourism Strategy for Consultation

Purpose of report

To seek Member approval to publish the Draft Economic Development and Tourism Strategy 2013-2016 for consultation with key stakeholders and local businesses.

Attachment(s)

Appendix 1 – Proposed Consultation Draft of Economic Development and Tourism Strategy
Appendix 2 – Equalities Impact Assessment

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The previous Economic Development Strategy 2009-12 was adopted in 2009 whilst the Tourism Strategy 2010-15 was agreed in 2010. Since then there have obviously been considerable changes in the national and local economic context, resulting in a desire at all levels for economic growth. In addition to improved employment prospects for residents, the council has an additional incentive to assist local economic growth as we can now retain a proportion (32%) of any growth in business rates. This will form an increasingly important strand of funding for this council to support a wide range of service delivery as central government grant aid continues to reduce. It was therefore considered timely to produce a new Strategy. The proposed draft strategy for consultation can be found at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 Despite the economic downturn, East Northamptonshire remains a growth area. Therefore this draft strategy is based on the strengths and opportunities of the East Northamptonshire area, particularly its small and medium size enterprise culture. It recognises that much of the activity that will drive economic growth in the district will come from businesses themselves, as well as from key partners such as Northamptonshire Enterprise Partnership, which is likely to have access to significant central government funding to support economic growth. The strategy therefore focuses on what this council can do most effectively to support local businesses and develop a prosperous and sustainable local economy, both of which in turn support the well-being of our communities.
- 1.3 One of the key changes proposed by this strategy is to recognise that the council needs to change in a holistic way its approach to businesses if it is to be recognised as a 'good council to do business with'. This change takes time to embed but the action plan for the strategy sets out a number of short- to medium-term activities which will inform and kick start this change.
- 1.4 Consultation on the draft strategy will be used to raise awareness of East Northamptonshire priorities with partners and to promote collaborative approaches on issues of common priority. It is also a key stage in the process of engaging with businesses to understand their needs. Consultation is planned to start in mid-April for one month, with a final version being brought to the June meeting of this Committee for adoption.

2.0 Equality and diversity implications

- 2.1 Members are asked to carefully consider the Equalities Impact Assessment set out at Appendix 2, which identifies potential positive impacts that may arise if this strategy is

adopted after consultation.

3.0 Legal implications

3.1 As well as practical and financial constraints on the activity that this council can undertake, there are legal duties in respect of regulatory activity which may constrain how business friendly we can be in some circumstances e.g. where enforcement is required to protect public safety in respect of food.

4.0 Risk management

4.1 The most significant risk related to this strategy is the increasing reliance on NNDR (Business Rates) growth to support the service delivery aspirations for this council. This is currently a lower risk than for some other councils, as we are not reliant on one major employer or sector for business activity. However, our local small- to medium-size enterprise culture may also not deliver the overall scale of NNDR growth needed to offset reductions in central government grant, reducing further our opportunities to support local growth.

5.0 Financial implications

5.1 The draft strategy does not propose any additional costs for delivery as it is proposed that the changes in approach can be resourced from within existing budgets for service delivery.

5.2 As noted in paragraphs 1.1 and 4.1, growth in business rates will in future form an increasingly important element of funding for this council.

6.0 Corporate outcomes

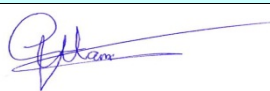
6.1 This draft Economic Development Strategy complements and expands on the vision in the council's Corporate Plan of working with our communities to sustain a thriving district.

7.0 Recommendations

7.1 That councillors:

- review the draft strategy (Appendix 1);
- approve the draft be released for consultation, subject to any amendments required at this stage; and
- note that comments received during the consultation process will be brought before this Committee in June, when the final strategy is presented for approval.

[Reason: to ensure that the strategy aligns to corporate objectives]

Legal	Power: Local Government Act 2000				
	Other considerations:				
Background Papers:		Economic Development Strategy 2009-12 Tourism Strategy 2010-15			
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Date: 26 March 2013					
CFO		MO		CX	