

Corporate Governance Committee

18 May 2009

Report of the Economic Development Manager

Progress to Agreed Action Plan

Objective	Management Comment
1. Promote new and support the growth of economic and community vitality/wealth within the District with new and existing businesses and related social endeavours and seek to reduce economic deprivation where possible	
1.1	<p>_A local Economic Assessment for Taunton Deane was completed in January 2009. The report was commissioned to establish a baseline of economic performance as a first step in creating an Economic Development Strategy to 2026 to coincide with the time period of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS).</p> <p>The conclusion is that Taunton Deane's economic structure was weak before the recession, and the balance of high-value/low-value business activity and the balance between private sector/public sector employment have been unfavourable for some time. The recession could lead to an even lower starting point for building the level of economic activity that is needed in the future to achieve the economic Vision.</p> <p>The assessment is attached at Annex A.</p> <p>An economic development Vision has been established and 'headline strategies' identified during the 'Envisioning the Future of the Taunton Economy' process. The process began reviewing Taunton Deane as an economic area, but partners and the business community quickly identified that the economy of Taunton is under-performing, and that a strong and vibrant Taunton would bring economic benefit to Taunton Deane and Somerset as a whole. Stakeholders agreed that the Vision needed to focus on the growth of the Taunton economy.</p> <p>The report identifies a series recommendations and opportunities and is attached at Annex B.</p> <p>The next steps are to consult on and agree economic priorities, and create delivery plans through stakeholder groups within each 'Theme' to feed into project planning delivery of activity; first drafts to be completed by late Autumn 2009 and the Economic Development Strategy finalised before March 2010. This will be a 'bottom up' process so that ownership of the Vision and Strategy is at business/community level.</p>

Internal Service Plans will be developed to match actions to capacity within the new organisational structure from 1 April 2010, with performance indicators and targets agreed with all stakeholders, with monitoring achieved through longitudinal research activity and regular economic assessments.

2. Businesses leave the District because the Council does not meet their needs

- 2.1 The development of the Economic strategy will take a bottom-up approach, and will engage with as many businesses and social enterprises as possible, in addition to representative and support organisations, and economic development partners. The response to the involvement of businesses in the Envisioning process has been welcomed and received very positive feedback.

A business survey was undertaken in January 2008, specifically around employment land and premises issues, but the survey also requested information on additional support requirements and perceptions of TDBC. A total of 884 responses were received from a mailing of 7,200.

The results about employment land have been presented to the Employment Land Task and Finish Group in order to inform their recommendations, and the support requirements will be discussed with Business Link.

The results from the business's views of TDBC were as follows:

Helps businesses to thrive	1%
Actively encourages businesses	5%
Has a positive attitude towards businesses	20%
Does nothing to help businesses	24%
Actively hinders business growth	6%
No strong view	47%

There is clearly more work to be done to improve the perceptions of TDBC by local businesses, and further work to understand their requirements will be undertaken, but these results will be used as a baseline in establishing performance outcomes.

4. Loss of information due to poor security/backup arrangements

- 4.1a Continuity Plan for Flu Pandemic completed but additional work not yet undertaken.
- 4.1b Business Link now provide detailed information on continuity planning, and planning for a pandemic on the businesslink.gov.uk website.

Business Advice clinics are held regularly at Deane House, and events on topical issues are promoted in conjunction with Business Link, eg recent event at Taunton School and a business support week planned for June 2009.

5. Poor promotion of business and economic opportunities within the district

5.1 The likely implementation of the 'new website' is July/August 2009

6. The website is not utilised to its full potential

6.1 See 5.1

7. The authority fails to identify the grants available

7.1 It remains my belief that the Authority would benefit from a dedicated resource to identify and bid for funding for economic and community development projects.

8. Financial loss as grants are not claimed or received

8.1 Funding for all successful grant applications is claimed and received.

Additionally, other opportunities have been exploited when presented ie £2k from SCC to support the Envisioning process, £40k from Somerset NHS to fund community development work in deprived areas, and £20k from LSC to match fund research into employment and skills issues.

10. Lack of evidence of best value being achieved.

10.2 Agreement has been reached on the relationship between Into Somerset and TDBC. We are awaiting formation of Into Somerset as a limited company so that we can agree a SLA.

A PID has been drafted by the STP Coordinator for submission to the Regeneration Directors meeting on 6 May 2009 to begin the process of reviewing the future of the partnership. TDBC led on the development of a MoU, which has been signed by all partners for a period to 31 March 2010, in order to provide stability to the partnership and allow a review to take place.

12. Inconsistent or improper working practices due to lack of guidance and training

12.1a Comments as given

12.1b All staff have had interim PREDs and have either completed or have a meeting scheduled for annual PRED.

13. Equipment is lost or stolen

13.1a Not completed.

Philip Sharratt
Economic Development Manager