

REPORT TITLE – BROMSGROVE ECONOMIC PRIORITIES

Relevant Portfolio Holder	Cllr Rita Dent – Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Regeneration and Town Centre
Portfolio Holder Consulted	√
Relevant Head of Service	Dean Piper – Head of Economic Development & Regeneration – North Worcestershire
Ward(s) Affected	All
Ward Councillor(s) Consulted	N/A
Key Decision / Non-Key Decision	Key decision

1. SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS

- 1.1 A new set of economic priorities and aspirations have been developed for Bromsgrove which articulate the ambitions of the Council and its key partners. The economic priorities have been developed in close consultation with members of the Bromsgrove Economic Development Theme Group, which forms part of the Bromsgrove Partnership and includes a number of business representatives and partner organisations.
- 1.2 It is intended that these new economic priorities will help to provide a focus for the Council's economic development and regeneration activities and to the operational activities of the North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR) shared service.
- 1.3 The setting of the new economic priorities and associated action plan reinforces the Council's commitment to supporting the local economy and its regeneration programme and will drive the delivery of its strategic purpose to 'Help me run a successful business'.

2. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is requested to RESOLVE that:

- 1) The economic priorities for Bromsgrove district and the associated deliverables set out at Appendix 1 are endorsed.**
- 2) The management and monitoring of the Action Plan is delegated to the Head of Economic Development & Regeneration.**
- 3) To agree that a report setting out progress against delivery of the priorities and Action Plan is brought to Cabinet on an annual basis.**

3. KEY ISSUES

Financial Implications

- 3.3 Funding is available within the revenue budget of the Council to support the activities as proposed within this report. This includes the £23k that was received from the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Pooling arrangement which was directed by Members towards Economic Development projects. In addition officers will look to maximise external funding opportunities. Should additional resources be required in the future, any requests will be subject to the Council's normal budget approval process.

Legal Implications

- 3.4 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

Service / Operational Implications

Background

- 3.5 Over the last 12 months, work has progressed to identify a set of new economic priorities for Bromsgrove district which can provide a focus for the Council, partners and to activities of the North Worcestershire Economic Development and Regeneration (NWEDR) service, which the Council supports financially.
- 3.6 The development of new economic priorities for the district has very much been informed by an assessment of the current economic challenges and opportunities facing Bromsgrove and by gaining an understanding of some of the underlying economic trends that are affecting economic performance.
- 3.7 To support the process, in July 2014, as part of a wider 'Economic Horizons' project for North Worcestershire, NWEDR commissioned Professor Brendan Nevin to facilitate a special Leader's Group workshop to help members understand more fully the economic opportunities for Bromsgrove district and to facilitate a debate as to what the future economic aspirations should be. The presentation was subsequently delivered to the Economic Development Theme Group. As a result of both sessions, the following economic challenges and opportunities were identified as important for Bromsgrove district:
- Bromsgrove benefits from its central location and excellent connectivity to adjacent economies and markets;
 - Overall the quality of life in Bromsgrove is high with the district having a strong residential offer and education system;
 - Bromsgrove town centre is not presently maximising its retail and leisure offer and is experience leakage of expenditure to neighbouring centres - the focus

should be on increasing footfall to maximise local spending and town centre vitality going forward;

- Bromsgrove is an area that experiences relatively low unemployment and has a skilled workforce;
- Average resident earnings for full time workers in Bromsgrove are amongst the highest in the West Midlands region (£581 per week in Bromsgrove compared to £489 per week for Worcestershire);
- The Bromsgrove economy is powered by the growth of small and medium sized businesses, with 89% of its business base classed as micro-enterprises (those businesses employing less than 10 employees);
- Entrepreneurial culture - self employment continues to grow in Bromsgrove, with 1 in 8 of the workforce in Bromsgrove registered as self-employed and centres such as Basepoint offering high quality flexible workspace for new start-up businesses; however there is a need for further grow on space.

3.8 Members agreed the following set of principles to guide the setting of economic priorities for the district.

- There is a need to develop an economy which is sustainable and not reliant on small number of sectors / employers;
- Bromsgrove's economy should be driven principally by SME growth not by solely attracting foreign inward investors;
- 'Evolution not revolution', the Bromsgrove economy does not need radical restructuring but carefully managed change and growth;
- There is a need to maintain the competitiveness of our local workforce to be able to access jobs across the wider Travel to work area.

Economic Priorities

3.9 Taking into account the aforementioned economic challenges and opportunities presented to Cabinet and the Economic Development Theme Group, it is proposed that the following five economic priorities will guide the future economic development and regeneration policies and activities of the Council and its partners:

1. Harness the local entrepreneurial spirit and support business start-ups and existing business growth;
2. Encourage new inward investment / SME growth through development of the key employment sites;

3. Create a more vibrant Bromsgrove Town Centre by enhancing the current retail and leisure offer;
4. Improve connectivity within Bromsgrove (Digital and Transport);
5. Invest in our local workforce by supporting training and apprenticeships.

3.10 These priorities were endorsed by the Economic Development Theme Group following its last meeting in April 2015.

Action Plan and Delivery

3.11 To support delivery against the new economic priorities, NWEDR has worked closely with members of the Economic Development Theme Group who have helped to ‘shape and steer’ the formation of an Action Plan. The Action Plan includes a range of activities and projects that could deliver economic benefits for the district.

3.12 Some projects and activities will be instinctively led by the NWEDR shared service or Bromsgrove District Council, but it is anticipated that there will be a need to engage with a breadth and depth of partners to ensure that certain activities can be delivered. For example, investment in broadband infrastructure to facilitate small business growth across the district will require the direct involvement of Worcestershire County Council.

3.13 Appendix 1 sets out in detail the relationship between the Economic Priorities, sub-priorities, deliverables and proposed performance measures. A summary of the priorities and deliverables is as follows:

Priority	Rationale	Approach	Lead organisations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Harness the local entrepreneurial spirit and support business start-ups and existing business growth; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bromsgrove is a highly entrepreneurial area ▪ Lack of small starter units, grow on space and ‘mid sized’ units ▪ Further nurturing of existing and new SMEs desired 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Business support initiatives ▪ Mentoring ▪ Access to finance ▪ Networking ▪ Workspace/incubation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NWEDR ▪ Bromsgrove District Council ▪ Local Enterprise Partnerships ▪ Landowners and developers ▪ Workspace providers ▪ Economic Development Theme Group

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

CABINET

1ST JULY 2015

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage new inward investment / SME growth through development of the key employment sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sites identified within Bromsgrove Local Plan offer potential to accommodate further inward investment / SME growth ▪ Enterprise Park – vacant plots of land offer further potential for economic growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote key employment sites ▪ Incentivisation packages ▪ Promotion of Bromsgrove district 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NWEDR ▪ Bromsgrove District Council ▪ Landowners and developers ▪ Commercial property agents ▪ Inward investment agencies i.e. Marketing Birmingham ▪ Economic Development Theme Group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a more vibrant Bromsgrove Town Centre by enhancing the current retail and leisure offer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mixed retail offer with relatively high number of small independent shops ▪ Lack of larger retail units for high street multiples ▪ Lack of evening economy ▪ Potential for other uses to create a more vibrant offer i.e. Residential and leisure ▪ Need for co-ordination of the town centre offer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Town centre regeneration programme ▪ Town centre management ▪ Incentive packages ▪ Events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NWEDR ▪ Bromsgrove District Council ▪ Worcestershire County Council ▪ Landowners and developers ▪ Retailers and town centre establishments ▪ Commercial property agents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve connectivity within Bromsgrove (Digital and Transport) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bromsgrove does benefit from excellent strategic road connections, ▪ District has a high dependence on car ownership and high out-flows of commuters to the adjacent conurbation ▪ The A38 corridor is under strain and this will be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improved broadband ▪ A38 – programme of investment and development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NWEDR ▪ Bromsgrove District Council ▪ Worcestershire County Council ▪ Local Enterprise Partnerships

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	<p>exacerbated with further growth in Bromsgrove</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Broadband connectivity is patchy particularly in Town Centre 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Invest in our local workforce by supporting training and apprenticeships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Highly mobile local workforce; 22% of local workforce is exported to Birmingham / Solihull ▪ Residents who travel to work outside of the district have higher remuneration than those who work within the district ▪ Proportion of the workforce qualified to NVQ Level 4 or equivalent higher in Bromsgrove than national average ▪ Lack of clear evidence from local employers as to their skills requirements and whether there is a 'skills deficit' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Investment in and promotion of Apprenticeships ▪ Understand local businesses skills needs ▪ Work experience opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NWEDR ▪ Bromsgrove District Council ▪ Worcestershire County Council ▪ Heart of Worcestershire College ▪ Private training providers ▪ Local employers ▪ Schools ▪ Local Enterprise Partnerships ▪ Economic Development Theme Group

3.14 The Theme Group has also proposed an 'umbrella' strapline to act as a calling card for all economic development and regeneration activity within the district. It is anticipated that the meaning of the 'Business Begins in Bromsgrove' strapline will be defined during 2015 and be used to articulate Bromsgrove's offer to business utilising existing brands and communication channels such as 'Better Bromsgrove' and 'Invest in North Worcestershire'.

Management and monitoring of the Plan

3.15 It is proposed that overall management and monitoring of the plan is delegated to the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration. Monthly briefings and

updates will be provided to the Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Regeneration and Town Centre to ensure effective progress in delivering the plan.

- 3.16 It is proposed that the Economic Development Theme Group is well placed to act in an advisory capacity to the Council to provide some external support and insight.
- 3.17 It is proposed that quarterly progress reports will be presented by the Head of Economic Development & Regeneration to the Theme Group and that Cabinet will receive an annual report setting out progress in delivering against the priorities and the Action Plan.

Customer / Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 3.18 It is anticipated that delivery of the Economic plan will have positive benefits to disadvantaged local residents by assisting them to access employment and training opportunities.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 4.1 Risks associated with the delivery of the individual activities within the Action Plan will be managed on a project by project basis. It is proposed that the Economic Development Theme Group will monitor progress against delivery of the plan with quarterly reports presented and remedial action taken where project progress is not as anticipated or where project risks are a cause for concern.

AUTHOR OF REPORT

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