

THURSDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 2014

**REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ECONOMY AND EDUCATION****BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP (BEP) - STRATEGIC PLAN****EXEMPT INFORMATION****PURPOSE**

To seek Cabinet's endorsement of the revised Business and Economic Partnership's (BEP) Strategic Plan 2014 – 2018.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That Cabinet endorses the BEP Strategic Plan in terms of its overall vision, key themes, issues and priorities.
2. That Cabinet notes the next steps in developing the Action Plans based on each of the key themes of the Strategic Plan, which will now be formulated by the 'Theme Champions' and their support partners, who all sit on the BEP Board. This process will be facilitated by officers from the Shared Service and will involve further member consultation.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Business and Economic Partnership (BEP) is a group of public, private and voluntary organisations and businesses which was formed in 2009 following the establishment of the Shared Service Economic Development between Tamworth Borough Council and Lichfield District Council. The BEP was established in order to support and develop the local economy and to articulate the priorities, needs and economic significance of Tamworth and Lichfield. In order to facilitate and provide strategic direction to these objectives for all partners within the BEP, in 2011 the BEP developed an Economic Strategy, which clearly articulates the economic ambition to support sustainable business growth and development. This Strategy was put together following the extensive involvement of businesses and key partners within the BEP and a wider consultation exercise with local businesses and partners.

Although the BEP is facilitated by Tamworth Borough Council and Lichfield District Council through the Shared Service, it is important to note that the BEP remains an independent partnership body which seeks to coordinate the activity and business engagement of its partner organisations. However, as a key partner and facilitator within the BEP, Tamworth Borough Council's Cabinet was asked to endorse the BEP's Strategy in September 2011, which it duly did.

The 2011 Strategy has been instrumental in setting the overall direction of economic policy and partnership working for the BEP and its partners, which has resulted in some notable successes, including:

- secured a BEP seat on the Development Board of the GSBLEP and significantly shaped its work programme particularly around business support
- supported and facilitated the establishment of the Tamworth and Lichfield '4Business'

- programmes providing local access to business advice and support
- Business Brief – regular update on local business news – now superseded by the BEP4Business website
- provided a unique forum to allow the business community to directly engage with and influence key public sector bodies
- provided written responses to GBSLEP/ SSLEP and local consultation exercises on behalf of the Partnership and wider business community through the engagement of our Business Networks Forum

However, since the formulation of the 2011 Strategy, there have been a lot of changes in the economic and partnership landscape that has necessitated a refresh of the BEP's strategic thinking. In the field of economic development and economic policy formulation, there have been 5 important pieces of work completed at the end of last year and which BEP partners have helped to shape, namely: the Tamworth and Lichfield Business Place Marketing Strategy, the Southern Staffordshire Enterprise Belt Prospectus, the draft Local Plans of both districts, the Southern Staffordshire Skills Plan and the Tamworth Borough Council Growth and Regeneration Plan. These pieces of work have provided a valuable body of evidence and strategic thinking which have fundamentally helped to inform the development of this revised BEP Strategic Plan. It also became evident that the 2011 strategy was too broad in its scope and needed to become more focussed on areas of work where the BEP, through the bringing together of partners and their resources, could make a real practical difference to what already is happening on the ground.

A Task and Finish Group appointed by the BEP Board has produced a revised Strategic Plan for the BEP, which the BEP Board approved at its last meeting on 7th August. As a key partner in the BEP, Tamworth Borough Council is now being asked to endorse the new Strategic Plan through Cabinet approval. Lichfield District Council's Cabinet is also being asked to endorse the Strategic Plan at its meeting on 9th September.

The Tamworth and Lichfield Business and Economic Partnership continues to be a credible and successful Partnership; one that has provided a good working model for the Local Enterprise Partnerships. Having adopted the Strategic Plan, the BEP and its partners is now fully focused on its implementation in order to contribute to an uplift in performance of the local economy. To this end, Theme Champions appointed from within the Board have been actioned with producing Delivery Plans for their themes which will guide the activity of the BEP and drive the delivery of the Strategic Plan.

It should be noted that while the Councils shared Economic Development Service provides invaluable support to the BEP the service has over time reduced its input into the BEP as it becomes more self sufficient. This trend is being facilitated and accelerated to ensure that the Economic Development Service can resource the Local Enterprise Partnerships and focus on delivery of key economic objectives.

## **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

1. There are no immediate financial implications of the Strategy, as the BEP and its activities are facilitated by established pooled economic development budgets within the Shared Service administered by Tamworth Borough Council.
2. The Strategy is seeking to influence other partnerships' programmes and activities, and in particular the LEPs, who have recently been allocated Single Local Growth funding (SLGF) to implement capital projects and who will also apply for future SLGF rounds. In addition, the LEPs will soon have control over European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) which will enable them to expand existing business support activities and instigate new programmes of activity to support the local economy.
3. There are no human resource implications as the facilitation of the BEP remains a core part of the delivery of the Shared Service in Economic Development with Lichfield District Council.

**LEGAL/RISK IMPLICATIONS BACKGROUND**

	<b>Risk Description</b>	<b>Likelihood / Impact</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Countermeasure</b>
A	Either district council ceases to fund the Shared Service and BEP	Low / very high	Financial  Reduced impact  Reputational damage	Regular attendance and participation at BEP meetings, regular updates with Lichfield District Council.
B	Partner organisations lose commitment to the BEP	Low / very high	Reduced impact  Reputational damage	Continuous engagement of partners through the BEP Board, Business Networks Forum and through other less formal exchanges.
C	BEP loses influence with and confidence from other partnerships, in particular the LEPs	Low / very high	Reduced impact  Reputational damage	Continued participation in relevant Boards, Steering Groups and Workstreams, as well as less formal exchanges.
D	BEP loses influence with and confidence from the business community	Low / very high	Reduced impact  Reputational damage	Continuous business engagement through the Business Networks Forum to ensure business views are captured and acted upon.
E	BEP Strategic Plan fails to have desired impacts	Low / very high	Reduced impact  Reputational damage	Robust performance management and review framework to be developed and clear lines of accountability for the Strategic Plan on the BEP Board. The BEP will continue to influence and engage with partners to ensure their activities work towards the stated objectives of the Strategic Plan.

**SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

1. The objective of the Strategic Plan is to promote inward investment, indigenous business growth and new business start ups, but only on a sustainable basis so that the businesses and jobs thus created are around for the long term.
2. The creation of increased local job opportunities will decrease the need for out commuting and promote more sustainable forms of transport, such as walking, cycling, rail and buses.
3. Businesses will be encouraged to adopt more sustainable business practices, including product/process enhancements, waste management and energy consumption.
4. Through the creation of a local business network, businesses and public bodies will be encouraged to adopt more sustainable procurement practices, increasing business opportunities to local companies and reducing the transport impact of businesses.
5. Residents will be encouraged to use local facilities, such as shopping, thereby reducing travelling and the resultant environmental impact.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The BEP’s aim is to facilitate and support sustainable economic growth and it seeks to achieve this by focusing on activities where additionality can be proven through three different approaches ...

1. **Influencing, lobbying and monitoring** the strategies and actions of local businesses, public bodies and partnerships
2. **Coordinating communication and engagement** activities with local businesses, public

bodies and partnerships

### 3. **Commissioning** useful products and services to the business community

The Strategic Plan sets out the approach that the BEP will take as a partnership to provide the influence, communication and commissioning/delivery to support the local economy and make it more resilient.

The BEP recognises however that growth and wealth creation lie mainly in the hands of the private sector and therefore the BEP needs to focus in the main on influencing those in the public sector that can facilitate and support private sector growth. That said, the BEP has and will also further develop a clear and tangible offer to business. In particular, the BEP will continue to act as the main means of business engagement for BEP partners, as well as a means through which businesses can influence economic agendas, policies and activities.

## **STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**

Once the BEP Board had decided that a strategy refresh was appropriate, a small Task and Finish Group from within the BEP Board was brought together. The first task was to review the 2011 strategy in the context of the changing economic landscape, particularly since the 2 LEPs for the area have and continue to evolve quite significantly since the original strategy was formulated. In addition, there had been the onset of a slow and small economic recovery, which has since gathered pace. The outcomes of the 4 pieces of economic strategy and policy work referred to in the Executive Summary also needed to be firmly taken into account. Finally, an up to date economic profile of the area was carried out.

The overall aim of the Strategic Plan remains, as was the case for the 2011 Strategic Plan, to promote a stronger, more resilient local economy through sustainable business development and growth, which reflects both the urban and rural dimensions to the Tamworth and Lichfield area.

The Vision of the 2011 Strategy was reviewed and has been slightly updated, in particular to make it more succinct. This now is as follows:

***“to improve on the excellent location, communication links and local skilled workforce, to promote the area as a dynamic place to live and do business”***

In addition, the number of themes in the strategy has been condensed down from 4 to 5 with the merger of the Place Promotion and Town Centres theme into one, as it was felt that the 2 former themes fully complemented each other. The full list of priority themes in the Strategic Plan is now as follows, along with a summary statement to encapsulate each:

- **Business Support** - *Our wealth creating businesses will deliver the growth, and we will facilitate this by ensuring businesses are plugged into a coherent business support offer.*
- **Infrastructure** - *The public sector has key role in creating the conditions for growth – we will facilitate this by identifying and encouraging investment in appropriate facilities; commercial buildings and the physical environment; in housing; in transport links; and in communication and utilities.*
- **Place and Town Centres** - *Private sector investment will change our Districts – we will facilitate this by building confidence in our centres and creating the conditions for investment across our Districts.*
- **Workforce Development** - *People are the engine of economic growth – and we will facilitate this through raising aspirations across our community, making learning accessible, and showing the economic value of training, workforce development (e.g. Leadership and specific business and technical skills) and qualifications.*

The Strategic Plan is attached to this report as Appendix 1 and under each of the above themes, sets out the key issues that the BEP has identified from its collective knowledge and evidence base, and then presents a set of key priorities for action under each theme, along with a description of the successful outcome.

A Communications Plan to support the Strategic Plan has also been developed, which schematically represents how the BEP acts at the core to communicate messages about the local economy to the business community and partners, as well as a central repository for receiving information back.

## **STRATEGY NEXT STEPS AND DELIVERY**

This Strategic Plan has now been approved by the BEP Board at its last meeting on 7th August 2014. The Theme Champions have also been actioned with producing Delivery Plans for their themes which will guide the activity of the BEP and drive the delivery of the Strategic Plan, setting out actions under each priority that have been identified. These actions will reflect the three principles guiding the BEP's role: influence, communication and commissioning/delivery, as appropriate. Finally, the Strategic Plan will undergo a graphic design process to add appropriate graphics, logos, imagery and colour to improve its visual appeal and impact, before then being fully published and distributed.

## **REPORT AUTHOR**

James Roberts – Economic Development and Enterprise Manager

## **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Business and Economic Partnership – Strategic Plan 2014

## **APPENDICES**

None

This page is intentionally left blank