

Economic Enterprise & Business Development– Overview

The Economy, Enterprise and Business Development responds to the Council's priority to deliver sustainable economic growth across Bath & North East Somerset. We do this by promoting employment sites, supporting business need, enabling businesses to start and grow and promoting B&NES as a place to do business. The work of the team falls into three broad categories.

1. Economic Enterprise and Business Development

1.1 Sector Support

- **Creative Bath:** The Council is funding Creative Bath this year to deliver a set of networking, training and support events to creative firms. The network has over 1,000 individuals receiving its bulletins. The network recently launched its membership scheme. There are now over 100 paid-up members.
- **Low Carbon South West:** LCSW have signed a 12 month agreement to deliver a range of services to B&NES including a monthly business breakfast covering low carbon services, delivering a business support function for LCSW local members and SME's, facilitating two low carbon conferences and promoting B&NES and its development sites to Low Carbon inward investors.
- **Visitor Accommodation :** There is currently significant interest in the development of additional hotels in Bath. The Visitor Accommodation Study set out a strategic approach to managing the expansion of hotel accommodation in the city and a report has been prepared for Cabinet, proposing consultation on the Study, prior to its potential adoption as Council policy. To compliment this, work has been commissioned to identify the priorities for developing a proactive approach to engaging with hotel operators, developers and site owners.
- **Business Liaison:** The economic development team meets and maintains contact with key growth sector businesses as well as local business networks.

Recent business visits to introduce the Council's work and to gain intelligence include Engineering / Defence; IT / Technology; Creative; Green tech / retrofitting.

Issues discussed at meetings include premises and growth issues, support required, skills issues, and so on. Requests for assistance are taken forward by economic development in consultation with other Council teams (e.g. property; children's services). Recent key

meetings / events attended: BathSpark (technology network), Creative Bath summer event, Small Business Focus networking event, Bath and Bristol Enterprise Network Advisory Group. Assistance given on formation of Keynsham Industrial Alliance (businesses on Broadmead Lane).

1.2 Business Support

- **Business Matters Website:** A new website is being developed to promote the area as a vibrant business destination; promote local businesses, organisations and partnerships and attract new business opportunities to the area. The website is expected to go live in the Autumn.
- **Property Enquiries:** For the first quarter of 2011, the Council received 24 enquiries for available property in the B&NES area – of the 24, three were identified as local 'growth sector' businesses all looking to expand, and three potential social enterprises.
- **GWE Business West:** As a result of the closure of Trimbridge House, staff from Business West have now moved into Palace Yard Mews. This has proved a positive development and improved working arrangements. The 2011/12 SLA has been agreed and Business West is now delivering a series of business start up workshops for people interested in starting their own business in Bath and North East Somerset. In addition they are operating a programme of coaching for high growth businesses, including a focus on getting investment for growth. We are continuing to work with Business West on the implications of the closure of the regional Business Link offices in November 2011.
- **Business Improvement District (BID):** The Bath BID has been in operation since April 2011. The Council has been collecting the levy on behalf of Future Bath Plus and collection rates have been extremely high. The business-led BID Board has been formed and subgroups dealing with work programmes (for example, marketing and promotion) have also been established with a view to delivering bespoke projects to benefit the business community in the City centre. BIDs may be appropriate in other areas of the District if business support for the concept is demonstrated and the business case for using BID legislation stacks up.

1.3 Connectivity

- **Broadband – BDUK:** the Council is exploring with other West of England Authorities the potential to bid into government funding (Broadband Delivery UK) for funding to improve connectivity in the rural areas. BT continues to roll out a programme of next generation fibre-

to-cabinet speeds in areas of Bath, having completed their programme in Midsomer Norton / Radstock. The Council is exploring with BT and other providers their plans for rollout in other areas of the District.

1.4 Specific Initiatives

- **Creative / Tech Hub:** the Council held a workshop with key contacts in the creative and technology community who have been lobbying for a “hub” workspace to be launched in Bath to support the growth of this part of the economy. The Council intends to assess the opportunities locally for such a facility and its potential involvement. A hub might also offer facilities for public use (such as bar / café, meeting rooms, exhibition space).
- **Casino :**The Council has commenced the competition for the award of the small Casino licence. Stage one of the competition has been completed and four applications cleared to proceed to stage two where each will be assessed to determine which proposal offers the “greatest local benefit” to the B&NES area. The applications are for the Cattlemarket (2), Manvers Street and Sawclose sites in Bath. Stage two of the competition is scheduled to commence in July with the intention of reporting to the Council’s Licensing Committee in February 2011.

1.5 Economic intelligence

- **Local Economic Assessment (LEA):** This document provides an annual overall assessment of the health of the economy in Bath and North East Somerset. The 2010/11 document has recently been updated. The West of England Partnership has also produced a summary of the Local Economic Assessments of the 4 Unitary Authorities. These assessments provide an evidence base for the development of the Council’s economic policy and interventions.
- **Promoting Smart Growth:** Commissioned in conjunction with Planning Services the Smart Growth Report sets out the options and opportunities for achieving higher levels of sustainable economic growth in B&NES. The report has informed the Economic Strategy for B&NES, the “City of Ideas” growth agenda and the economic growth levels put forward in the Council’s Core Strategy. The report’s recommendations are also helping to shape the sector and business support work being undertaken.

1.6 Redundancy Support

- **MOD :**The MOD has confirmed that it is to vacate all three of its sites in Bath and move 2600 jobs to the Abbey Wood complex in South

Gloucestershire. The Council has expressed concerns over the economic and environmental impacts of these relocations and is seeking to address these and the future use of the three sites with the MOD through a Bath Sites Working Group.

1.8 Engagement

- **B&NES Economic Partnership (Theme group for Local Strategic Partnership):** This group consists of key businesses, business networks and HE and FE along with the Council and supports the delivery of the Bath and North East Somerset Economic Strategy. This strategy was launched in 2010 and provides an overall vision and action plan for the economy. The Economic Partnership is in the process of being re-structured to ensure it can feed local intelligence into the West of England LEP and following the departure of a number of public bodies (e.g. The Regional Development Agency and Government Office South West) to broaden representation. Recent issues it has focussed on include broadband delivery, graduate retention and high growth support.
- **B&NES Initiative:** The Initiative, a joint initiative between the Council and the Chamber of Commerce, provides a forum for large employers in the area to meet together to support the Council in delivering its economic agenda. It provides a strong and supportive voice for Bath and North East Somerset into Government and at the West of England. The Council continues to support the Initiative in particular to consult with them on economic policy and delivery.

2. Sustainable Development (Regeneration Delivery)

2.1 Bath Regeneration

- **Grant Applications - Regional Growth Fund:** In 2010 the Government launched the Regional Growth Fund. This is a £1.4 billion fund over three years to create private sector jobs, particularly in areas with a high reliance on public sector employment. Private business or public/private sector partnerships are eligible to apply, but not public sector only organisations (e.g. Local Authorities). Nationally approximately £250 million was available for round 1 and bids worth £2.78 billion were received. There were 8 applications to round 1 from the West of England, but none from Bath and North East Somerset. 2 bids were successful, both focussed on manufacturing industries. Bath and North East Somerset has strongly supported a bid to round 2, worth £4 million from the University of Bath to develop a Tech Hub for Bath, building on the areas existing strengths in digital and media sectors.

- **Enterprise Area:** The West of England Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has determined that Bristol Temple Quarter will be given a new designation as an Enterprise Zone. This means Bristol City Council will need to produce a Local Development Order outlining how they will encourage business to locate there through relaxing planning rules. The Government will also offer a business rate holiday for new businesses starting in the zone and allow the LEP to retain business rates from new businesses. As part of this agreement 4 Enterprise Areas within the West of England have also been agreed. One of these is Bath City Riverside. This designation means that these areas will be the first to benefit from some of the financial gains from business rate retention accrued from the Bristol Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone.

2.2 Keynsham Regeneration

- **Business Association:** B&NES EEB officer attending Keynsham Business Association monthly meetings to provide access to support partners and advocacy with the local authority in terms of local business needs and issues.

2.3 Radstock regeneration

- **Radstock Economic Action Plan:** This project aims to understand the key strengths and weaknesses of the local economy in Radstock and Westfield, and develop a series of locally owned actions designed to support businesses to start and grow and broader job creation in Radstock and Westfield. It will include a desk-top mapping exercise of economic data to develop a baseline position, (including: 1. Workplace and economic performance, 2. Business Stock, 3. Labour market supply and demand, 4. Employment land and premises offer, 5. Business support and FE provision) and a workshop bringing together key local organisations to present the findings of the economic research and identify interventions and develop an action plan.

2.5 Neighbourhood Regeneration

- **London Road:** For some years, the London Road area has been in relative decline, and its traditional role as a local centre has been eroded, with retail units becoming empty and changing use. The area also suffers from higher unemployment rates than other areas of Bath.

A wide approach to Community Regeneration is being developed. The Council owns the freehold of three buildings in the area – numbers 2, 3, and 4 Long Acre, which have the potential to contribute towards the wider regeneration of the vicinity. The Council is currently in discussions with Places for People about their wish to extend their lease in 2 Long Acre (Caroline House).

Any decision on the future of the buildings by the Council will take fully into account the potential of these sites to contribute to the overall regeneration of the London Road, the role of the area as a gateway into the city, and the needs of the local community.

3. Local Enterprise Partnership

3.1 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP): Following an invitation from Government in June 2010, the West of England Partnership submitted a proposal to Government to form a LEP covering the West of England area on 6th September 2010. On 28th October 2010 it was announced that the West of England was successful and should proceed with establishing its Board.

The purpose of the LEP is to support the delivery of sustainable economic growth and private sector jobs in the West of England. The role of the LEP Board is to:

- Co-ordinate the approach to economic growth by the private and public sector
- Identify opportunities and linkages across sectors for innovation, to maximise value from limited funding
- Facilitate opportunities for business and private sector organisations
- Influence government programmes and initiatives
- Engage in dialogue and lobby Government

The Board has agreed its priorities in three main areas: establishing a business focussed and joint working approach; removing barriers to business growth; and maximising the West of England's assets. The priorities will form the basis of a LEP business plan.

The Council is actively engaged in the LEP through:

- Board membership by our Leader
- Leadership of the business theme of the LEP on behalf of the 4 Unitary Authorities by Development and Major Projects
- Active engagement with a series of sector sub groups (e.g. creative industries, low carbon, tourism etc)
- Membership of the main project team supporting the board
- Membership of the small business group