

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TASK GROUP UPDATE

### Executive Summary

This report provides an update on the work of the Economic Development Task Group, one of the three Standing Task Groups that fall under the remit of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The report highlights the key points of discussion held during the most recent meeting of the Task Group.

### Recommendations

The Committee is requested to:

**RESOLVE That** the report be noted.

|  |
|--|
| The Committee has the authority to determine the recommendation set out above. |
|--|

**Background Papers:** None.

**Reporting Person:** Councillor Ian Johnson, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Contact Person:** Frank Jeffrey, Democratic Services Manager  
Email: frank.jeffrey@woking.gov.uk, Extn: 3012

**Date Published:** 6 June 2018

## Economic Development Task Group Update

### 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Task Group was established in March 2009 with the following objective:

“To identify and seek the implementation of measures to mitigate the impact of the economic downturn on the residents, community organisations and businesses in the Borough of Woking.”

- 1.2 The last meeting of the Economic Development Task Group of the 2017/18 Municipal Year was held on 28 March 2018. The Membership for the year was: Councillor Hilary Addison, Councillor Mohammad Ali, Councillor Ann-Marie Barker, Councillor Ian Johnson (Chairman), Councillor Ayesha Azad, Councillor Graham Chrystie and Councillor Saj Hussain.
- 1.3 This report summarises the main points of discussion, in accordance with the responsibilities of the Task Group to report back to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at regular intervals.

### 2.0 Key Points Discussed

#### Economic Strategy 2017-2022 Bi-annual Progress Report

- 2.1 The Task Group considered the biannual progress report on the Economic Strategy for 2017 to 2022 and noted key points throughout the report.

#### Workforce Skills, Education and Employment

- 2.2 A careers fair had been organised by the Business Liaison Team for 25 April 2018 at the HG Wells Conference and Events Centre. Those organisations participating represented a good cross section of the employment market in the Borough, though the Job Centre had been unable to make staff available.
- 2.3 The Task Group Members noted that employment was higher in Woking than in other areas of the County, though the figures did vary depending on the measurements applied.

#### Ultrafast Connectivity

- 2.4 The Task Group discussed the Council's support for the aspiration of providing ultrafast (100Mbps) connectivity and the work being undertaken to submit a funding bid to the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to help roll out the Council's fibre network from the Town Centre.
- 2.5 A pilot exercise had been undertaken where three ultrafast fibre connections had been installed at Morris House, capable of providing speeds of up to and over 100Mbps. The pilot had been successful and discussions were now being held with other local businesses to explore the potential of expanding the ultrafast service.

#### Commercial Space

- 2.6 The Members of the Task Group discussed the extent of the Council's ownership of retail space across the Borough. It was understood that there were only four units available to let across the Borough. In view of the extent of the Council's interests, Officers undertook to draft a schedule showing all the units and the associated floor space for consideration at the next meeting of the Task Group.

#### Attracting Key Retail Brands

- 2.7 The Task Group discussed the work of the Council in attracting key retail brands and was advised that the Council proactively sought to provide a mix of units and services for the

## Economic Development Task Group Update

benefit of residents, rather than seeing to achieve the highest financial returns. Examples include Harpers, Aracelli's, the Santa Fe Coffee Company and Market Walk.

### 'Choose Woking' Leaflet

- 2.8 The Officers were congratulated on the design and development of the 'Choose Woking' leaflet, aimed at promoting commercial interests in the Borough. It was noted that an online, interactive version of the brochure would also be available.

### Date of Next Meeting

- 2.9 The next meeting of the Task Group will be held on Tuesday, 30 October 2018.

## **3.0 Implications**

### Financial

- 3.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### Human Resource/Training and Development

- 3.2 There are no human resource or training and development implications arising from this report. The activities of the Economic Development Task Group can be met through existing resources.

### Community Safety

- 3.3 There are no community safety implications arising from this report.

### Risk Management

- 3.4 There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

### Sustainability

- 3.5 There are no sustainability implications arising from this report.

### Equalities

- 3.6 There are no equalities implications arising from this report.

### Safeguarding

- 3.7 There are no safeguarding implications arising from this report.

REPORT ENDS