

Cheltenham Borough Council

Outline Brief¹ for Expression of Interest in preparation of an Economic Development Strategy for Cheltenham.

1. Background

- 1.1. To inform the Joint Core Strategy² (JCS) and to engage effectively with emerging Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) initiatives, the Council needs to revise its Economic Development Strategy (EDS) so that it provides a strong analytical evidence base, clearly sets out the Council's aspirations and identifies through an action plan how these can be delivered.
- 1.2. The current EDS sets out a series of actions, but fails to show how these are to be delivered or to tie them to the borough level strategy and vision.
- 1.3. The possibility of widening strategic and evidential gaps is of considerable concern and is a central driver behind procuring an up-to-date economic strategy for the town. This gaps are:
 - between the forecast-based economic evidence procured by the JCS and the LEP's emerging high-level growth strategy – understanding how these marry up and what they mean for Cheltenham in terms both of spatial and sector requirements;
 - between the LEP's countywide/sub-regional economic growth perspective and the more nuanced and detailed district perspective – understanding how the borough's assets and "pull" factors can be made the most of, and how the "local" perspective can influence the higher-level strategy;
 - between the continued pressure to release employment land within the borough for housing development and the desire to retain new start-ups and attract new businesses into the town – understanding in depth the dynamics of why this is happening and what can be done to address the problem.
- 1.4. Having regard to these factors, the Council wishes to procure an innovative economic strategy for Cheltenham that seeks to close these gaps while focussing on a targeted vision for economic growth and development in Cheltenham, reinforcing the Borough's locational, spatial and sectoral strengths..

2. Objectives

- 2.1. We want to enable targeted and flexible sectoral growth, facilitated through implementation of local plan initiatives; funding and promotional activity; and other policy-based mechanisms available to the authority and its partners – such as the Chamber of Commerce, Cheltenham Task Force and Federation of Small Businesses.
- 2.2. To achieve this, the main aim of the EDS will be to identify strengths and weaknesses in the town's economy so that sectors suitable for targeted growth can be identified.
- 2.3. Using this information the EDS will then:
 - a. Provide an understanding of the land requirements, business support needs and aspirations of existing employers in Cheltenham – particularly in light of steady pressure to release existing underutilised sites for housing development;
 - b. Identify how the Council can support the existing buoyant pattern of start-up businesses and attract and retain new business into the town; and
 - c. Establish a sound basis for delivering new strategic employment sites as part of major mixed use development on urban extension sites around Cheltenham.

¹ This Outline Brief does not constitute a contract and is without prejudice to any decision of Cheltenham Borough Council.

² Being prepared jointly by Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury to provide the strategic planning context, policies and land allocations of the Local Plans for the area.

3. Outcomes

3.1. Key outcomes are:

- a. An EDS that will help the Council assist the LEP in developing and implementing its high level vision together with a series of objectives and locally nuanced targets which help Cheltenham and its employment catchment area.
- b. An EDS that is a sound evidence base for the development plan policies which will manage and safeguard employment land. This will:
 - Ensure there is sufficient availability of suitable sites to enable small business start-ups and retain them as they grow;
 - Help to protect sites essential for this strategy which may be vulnerable to redevelopment for housing; and
 - Ensure that the right type of land and buildings are available for relocating and new business on new development sites.

3.2. To help achieve these higher level objectives, other outcomes are likely to include:

- the diversification of local employment base;
- job creation;
- retention of skills;
- influencing the local education sector to enable alignment of skills with the employment base;
- retention of the younger working-age population;
- building on existing high-tech manufacturing and aerospace;
- encouraging growth of green industries;
- building on tourism and retail; and
- expanding our arts and culture offer.

4. Monitoring and Review

4.1. The dynamic and fluctuating nature of the economy and employment market will be recognised in the EDS and a methodology for ongoing indicator-based monitoring and periodic review set out in the proposal.

5. Consultation

5.1. The EDS cuts across a number of functional and administrative boundaries:

- it is a planning document and a delivery document;
- it will be a focus for developing funding bids;
- it is Cheltenham-focussed so must consider the aspirations of its community and businesses but must look wider to those of its neighbours and partners not least because of the extent of the town's employment catchment area, the role of the LEP and the involvement of the Borough in the JCS.

6. Timeframe

6.1. The project will inform the JCS and, in particular, the draft Cheltenham Plan. The submission version of the JCS is due to be published for public consultation during the summer of 2014 with Examination slated for spring 2015. It is anticipated that a consultation draft Cheltenham Plan will follow later in 2014. Outputs of the strategy will be delivered over the Local Plan period to 2031 and beyond.

7. Expressions of Interest

7.1 In the first instance the council requires:

- an outline of the key components of the proposed EDS together with identification of any issues relating to the brief, the procurement or preparation of a sound evidence base and/or related matters. The flagging of opportunities, where they exist and are not identified above, for potential synergy with other initiatives would also be helpful;
- a timescale for production of each component and for preparation of the strategy overall together with outline identification of the “critical path” of dependant tasks;
- a fee proposal for the overall project, which may, where possible, be broken down per component. In terms of consultation and attendance at working group meetings an hourly or day rate for consultant assistance should be set out; and
- a resume of experience of undertaking similar projects for local government or other public-sector organisations.

8. Contacts and further information

8.1 Further information on:

*Latest ED Strategy - www.cheltenham.gov.uk/site/scripts/download_info.php?fileID=959
Gloucester, Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Joint Core Strategy - www.gct-jcs.org
Gloucestershire LEP - www.qfirst.co.uk*

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