

# Overview and Scrutiny – 27<sup>th</sup> April, 2015

## Briefing note

### Future options for the Council's economic development function

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 The Council supports economic development as a key corporate objective which cuts across a range of CBC activities and director responsibilities, including land use planning and development, asset management and tourism/promotion of Cheltenham. It is important that all these aspects are reflected in the strategic approach adopted.
- 1.2 The Council has received the final report from Athey Consulting entitled 'Cheltenham Economic Strategy: Developing Cheltenham as a business location – January 2015 – Final report: options, ideas and recommendations'.
- 1.3 The report, which has been the subject of a member presentation, summarised the analysis and findings of a project undertaken to support the provision of an economic strategy for Cheltenham, focusing in particular on the Borough's role as a business location.
- 1.4 Cabinet will be considering a discussion paper to inform thinking around how it would like to take forward its approach to economic development in the future having regard to the Athey recommendations, which will lead to the drafting of a more formal report with recommendations regarding the way forward, according to the timetable outlined below.
- 1.5 It is suggested that Overview and Scrutiny may wish to debate this issue and provide input to help shape the Council's approach to supporting economic development, which may well go wider than the issues raised in the Athey report.
- 1.6 The proposed timetable for considering options is set out below.

Date	Action
May 2015	Cabinet discussion regarding economic development
29 <sup>th</sup> June, 2015	Overview and scrutiny – to be consulted on draft Cabinet proposals regarding options for future support of economic development
14 <sup>th</sup> July, 2015	Cabinet meeting to determine shape of future Council support for economic development activity

#### 2. Next Steps - in light of feedback from member presentation

- 2.1 We need to think about the conclusions of the report, how to respond to and resource the recommendations and who we work with to do so.
- 2.2 GCHQ is a major economic opportunity and needs to be addressed as such.
- 2.3 The Cheltenham Plan needs to include and address how we deal with our heritage stock and the Kingsditch industrial estate area as a priority.
- 2.4 It is suggested that the 'Town centre manager' role (or similar) should be extended beyond its current retail focus.
- 2.5 There should be closer working with the Chamber of Commerce, tapping into the potential of individuals.
- 2.6 Consider extension of the Taskforce model, with a focus on helping to deliver high value jobs.

### **3. Further issues which scrutiny may wish to consider**

- 3.1 Does the Council need to have a clearer vision of how it wishes to support the economic development of the town, beyond that enshrined within the JCS and emerging Cheltenham Plan?
- 3.2 Do we want to re-commission the Council's economic development function and if so, do we want to do this directly, or in partnership with others?
- 3.3 In light of the Athey report, what specific areas would scrutiny like to see covered by the function in the future – are there any important areas which the committee thinks are missing?
- 3.4 Is there an appetite to extend or supplement the current remit of the Taskforce, or to create a new delivery vehicle to support local businesses and to offer support for the delivery of major cross-boundary strategic investment like Junction 10?
- 3.5 Are there specific areas where scrutiny would not want the Council to follow the suggested options, ideas and recommendations within the Athey Consulting report?
- 3.6 How does the council ensure that economic growth through, for example, tourism and the promotion of Cheltenham, are an integral part of the Council's future strategic economic development approach?
- 3.7 Have we got the funding and staff resourcing right for supporting economic development in the future, either alone or in partnership with others?

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