

**REPORT TO:** OVERVIEW WORKING GROUP

**DATE:** 9 MARCH 2017

**TITLE:** ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY –  
FINAL REPORT

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**RECOMMENDED that:**

- A** Overview Working Group notes the progress made in the development of an Economic Development Strategy for Harlow.
- B** The Overview Working Group recommends to Cabinet that the Economic Development Strategy at Appendix A is approved.

**REASON FOR DECISION**

1. Regeneration and a thriving economy is a priority for Harlow Council. The Council requires a clear statement of policy to guide its economic development activity and make the case for investment in Harlow. This is particularly important in the context of the development of the Local Plan.

**INTRODUCTION**

2. The Overview Working group established a working group to review the Council's current economic development activity and reach conclusions for future policy and activity in order to develop the Economic Development Strategy for Harlow.
3. The Working Group engaged with a variety of stakeholders through two workshop based discussions. Participants included representatives from Harlow College, Sir Charles Kao University Technical College, Harlow and District Chamber of Commerce, Essex County Council, the London Stansted Cambridge Consortium and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership. A separate consultation took place with Harlow Youth Council.

4. The feedback from the workshops and the above consultation has been used in development of the Economic Development Strategy at Appendix A.

## **CONTEXT AND STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE**

5. Harlow's location and connectivity to London and Cambridge (and further afield) means the Town is in a unique position to attract both national and international employers and support a vibrant small and medium sized business community.
6. Harlow has a key role to play in achieving the economic potential of the London Stansted Cambridge Corridor and as a sub-regional centre Harlow and the wider area is a key focus for both housing and economic growth, playing a complementary role to London and Cambridge.
7. Harlow has huge potential for business growth and improving resident prosperity. Harlow's importance and role in the corridor is further evidenced by the establishment and growth of the Enterprise Zone and the decision of Public Health England to locate its headquarters and national Science Hub in Harlow. These two initiatives together have the potential to deliver and support 9,000 jobs.
8. Increasing economic prosperity within the Town and for all its residents is a key priority. Harlow's residents currently earn some of the lowest wages in the County of Essex and yet earnings on offer from the jobs located in the town in fact command much higher wages. Skills levels within the town are also below the Essex and National averages. Improving the prosperity of Harlow's residents will improve quality of life, health and well-being and opportunity.

## **KEY OUTCOMES**

9. The Economic Development Strategy is organised around three key themes:-
  - a) Business and Jobs
  - b) Place
  - c) People
10. The critical challenges are :-
  - a) Securing investment, jobs and new business growth.
  - b) Ensuring that local employers access the skills they need and that local residents can benefit.
  - c) Addressing the Town's infrastructure deficits which are preventing private and public investment.
  - d) Delivering the top quality locations and communities that knowledge-based business and their employees demand.

11. There are key principles which drive every aspect of the Strategy:-
  - a) Maintaining and delivering on the momentum achieved for the local economy.
  - b) Keeping the pressure on to deliver the transport and enabling infrastructure that is critical to major developments.
  - c) Sharing prosperity.
  - d) Working in partnership.
  - e) Financial sustainability.
  
12. Key measures of success of the Economic Development Strategy will be:-
  - a) Narrowing the gap between resident and workplace earnings through the raising of resident earnings.
  - b) Increasing the numbers of residents qualified at each level from 2 and above, again closing the gap with the national average.
  - c) Maintaining growth in the numbers of businesses locating in Harlow.
  - d) Maintaining growth in the number of employees' jobs in Harlow.

## **WAY FORWARD**

13. It is proposed that following the approval of the Economic Development Strategy, the Council will establish an Economic Development Officer Group that will be tasked with delivering the Strategy through the development of an Action Plan.
  
14. The Group will comprise of Officers with responsibility for economic development, regeneration, planning and Harlow Enterprise Zone.
  
15. The Group will be responsible for executing the Action Plan, reporting to the Corporate Management Team as required and to the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Enterprise.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### **Place (includes Sustainability)**

As set out in the report

Author: **Graeme Bloomer, Head of Place**

### **Finance (Includes ICT)**

The development and encouragement of a strong economy will provide wide ranging financial benefits to the town and the Council. The current review being carried out by the Government in to Local Authority funding is focused almost entirely on removing central government support and forcing councils to become reliant on income generation, housing growth and business rates specifically for their future funding streams. The themes and priorities set out in the strategy

align with this direction of travel for the Council's future funding arrangements under Business Rates Retention.

Author: **Simon Freeman, Head of Finance**

### **Housing**

As outlined in the body of the report.

Author: **Andrew Murray, Head of Housing**

### **Community Wellbeing (includes Equalities and Social Inclusion)**

As contained within the report.

Author: **Jane Greer, Head of Community Wellbeing**

### **Governance (includes HR)**

Whilst working in partnership the Council should be minded that when it is providing advice on succession planning, human resources management, recruitment, employment matters and workforce skills that this advice is signposted and caveated with being subject to those being advised to procure their own independent advice. This will mitigate risk to the Council of reliance on advice given without being held accountable.

Author: **Brian Keane, Head of Governance**

### **Background Papers**

None.

### **Glossary of terms/abbreviations used**

None

### **Appendices**

Appendix A – Harlow Economic Development Strategy