



Buckinghamshire County Council

Report

Deputy Leader

Decision to be taken on or after Tuesday 24 September 2002

Cab Member Report No. DL03/02

Date 9th September 2002
Title Economic Development Action Plan
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Electoral Divisions Affected All

Summary

The Local Government Act 2001 gives local authorities the power to promote the economic, social and environmental well-being of their communities. The County Council's Economic Development Action Plan sets out the actions the authority will undertake in the delivery of this power. The Policy Advisory Group for Economic Development, Europe and External Funding discussed the Action Plan at their meeting on the 11 July and supported the proposals and actions within the document.

The Action Plan has been developed in consultation with other services across the Council, the District Councils, the Buckinghamshire Economic Partnership and the Buckinghamshire Lifelong Learning Partnership and sets out how the Council will deliver its economic programme for the year.

The document, in line with the stated principles of the Council's Plan, highlights the issues and lists the projects, timescale and outcomes that will support and sustain the economy of the County. Economic development is a cross-cutting service, therefore the Action Plan includes actions undertaken by other service providers within the Authority.

The aim of the Action Plan is to achieve 'a prosperous, modern, diverse and sustainable economy, balancing the requirements of business, the workforce, customers, residents and the environment'. The projects are built around the framework set out in the Buckinghamshire Joint Economic Strategy which are: business competitiveness, business infrastructure, workforce development, quality of life and the environment, promotion, information and marketing and partnership development.

Business Competitiveness – actions under this heading are aimed at stimulating sustainable development, growth and investment among existing and new employers to ensure competitive, environmentally responsible businesses committed to Buckinghamshire. This will be done by liaising with key partners to highlight projects which will benefit through joint working. The provision of economic information for residents and businesses includes the management and maintenance of the business, property and sites database, producing a monthly Labour Market Bulletin, a quarterly newsletter and maintaining and updating the ‘one stop shop’ website for business information. The research and intelligence service will provide information to support project development and the aftercare function being undertaken in conjunction with the Buckinghamshire Economic Partnership and SEEDA.

Business Infrastructure – creating and maintaining efficient operating conditions is vital if businesses are to trade successfully. Developing transportation and communication networks and making sure that there is a choice of business accommodation will ensure that Buckinghamshire remains an attractive location for business and the workforce. This will be done through lobbying for major development, promoting Business Travel Plans and dealing with local issues. The Review of the Structure Plan has created the opportunity to ensure that an economic perspective is included in the final document.

Workforce Development – ensuring that both the workforce and business in Buckinghamshire embrace a learning and training culture to develop their fullest potential. This will be done by supporting workforce development, working in partnership Business Link Solutions, the Learning and Skills Council, the County’s Adult Education Service and the Lifelong Learning Partnership. The Workforce Development Task Group of the Buckinghamshire Economic Partnership provides a forum for business and education providers to work together to identify and develop new and innovative ways of working together.

Quality of Life and the Environment – maintaining and enhancing the high quality physical environment, cultural activity, quality of life and distinctive character which make the County the place of choice to live, work and play. Implementing the Tourism Action Plan will be achieved by developing projects that revitalise our market towns and help deliver the Rural Strategy. The launch of the Food Directory will be built on to support diversification, promote local trading and assist the rural economy. Working with CEAC (Corporate Environmental Advisory Council) the issues of waste and energy conservation will be raised to help businesses become more efficient, environmentally friendly and save money.

Promotion, Information and Marketing – promoting and raising the profile of the County is crucial if we are to ensure that our economic success is maintained. The provision of clear, concise and easily accessible information is key if we are to influence decisions at regional, national and European levels. The provision of an interactive website, publication of a quarterly newsletter and rewarding success through sponsoring the Business Excellence Awards in Aylesbury and High Wycombe will raise awareness of economic activity and enhance the profile of Buckinghamshire.

Partnership Development – working in partnership with other organisations avoids duplication of effort and adds value to project development, particularly through maximising funding opportunities. This will be done through working with the District Councils, other partners and by providing partnership funding for the Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes, and Thames Valley Economic Partnerships.

Recommendation

THE DEPUTY LEADER TO AGREE THE ACTION PLAN

A. The decision required, and why it is needed

The Action Plan requires the agreement of the Deputy Leader, on behalf of the Council, to give the Plan the full support of the Authority. The performance targets are set out in the Service Plan for Economic Development.

B. Recommended action, and the reasons for this

The key decision to be taken by the Deputy Leader gives the document the support and authority required to implement the economic development programme for the County Council. The Action Plan supports the Council's policy steers for supporting key partnerships, bringing in external funding and adding value to the budget.

C. Other options available, and their pros and cons

None

D. Resource implications

The budget of £176,125 is set against the actions for delivering the Joint Economic Strategy and includes a carry forward of £57,125 for developing the Innovation Centre and £19,000 for rural issues.

E. Other implications

The decision will give legitimacy to the projects being undertaken when delivering the Action Plan. The projects are, in the main, undertaken in partnership with other local organisations to add value and avoid duplication of effort. The Action Plan not only raises the profile of the County Council but also the services who have made a significant contribution towards the economy of the County, particularly education, social services and transportation. For example, without a well maintained road network the residents of Buckinghamshire would be unable to travel to work nor would the businesses be able to distribute their goods and services locally and nationally.

F. Feedback from consultation and Local Member views

The Action Plan is developed as a result of consultation with other service providers within the Authority and through continuous discussion and consultation with external partners.

The Policy Advisory Group for Economic Development, Europe and External Funding considered and supported the Action Plan at their first meeting on the 11 July.

G. Communication issues

The document will not only be distributed to key businesses in the County and partner organisations but will be placed on the Business web pages to enable all businesses and residents to take advantage of the information and actions contained within the Action Plan.

H. Other issues

The aim of the action plan is to sustain and develop the economy within the constraints of the County thus balancing the economic well-being and the environment.

Background Papers

Economic Development Action Plan 2002/3
Economic Development Service Plan
Buckinghamshire Joint Economic Development Strategy
SEEDA's Regional Economic Strategy
Copies may be obtained from the Contact Officer.

Decision Taken:

Signed: _____
Date: _____

Decision Not Taken:

Signed: _____
Date: _____
Reason: _____

Your questions and views

If you have any questions about the matters contained in this paper please get in touch with the Contact Officer whose telephone number is given at the head of the paper.

If you have any views on this paper which you would like the Cabinet Member to consider, or if you wish to object to the proposed decision, please inform the Head of Policy Support by 5.00pm on Monday 23 September 2002. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 383986), Fax (to 01296 383441), or e-mail to cabinet@buckscc.gov.uk