

**Bracknell Forest Council
Business and Enterprise Service
Initial Work Plan:
July 2014 to December 2016**

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Business and Enterprise Service (BES) for Bracknell Forest Council has been established to ensure that Bracknell is in the best possible position to remain a first class, first choice destination for business. In particular, this means helping to bring about the right conditions for businesses of every size to succeed and generate wealth which will help the local economy grow and thrive which, in turn, will benefit the residents of the borough. Amongst a range of actions, the work of the new service will involve: supporting the borough's existing business base, facilitating inward investment, helping to generate local enterprise, assisting in ensuring that the skills of the residents are aligned to what employers need and working to secure whatever infrastructure and other improvements are necessary to protect and improve the borough's economic competitiveness. This work plan presents the initial actions (spanning the first 30 months) to create the necessary foundations for a solid and effective service. .

Bracknell Forest's offer

Bracknell Forest is blessed with an excellent location at the heart of the prosperous Thames Valley with good access to London, the airports and the best road access in the Thames Valley, including easy links to the motorways network. The borough also enjoys an enviable quality of life with excellent housing, superb sports and recreation facilities and great value office, and business accommodation. Some of the world's finest companies are based in the borough and it enjoys low levels of crime and unemployment.

Achievements to date

Before the BES was established, during the previous two years there has been many key achievements and notable, direct and indirect, successes:

- A member workshop was held endorsing a borough vision for business;
- The Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (TVB LEP) was established securing some £3.8 m of Local Growth Fund highway works improvements;
- Secured funds to create an economic impact study for improved rail links to Waterloo;
- The ESDP produces an Economic Strategy up to 2014;
- Established economic links with China;
- Introduced improved superfast broadband through participation in the Superfast Berkshire initiative;
- Attracted a number of key inward investments including Honda Europe and Telogis;
- Retained critically important businesses such as the consolidation of AVNET into part of the CAPITOL: building.
- Build upon existing positive relations with key business groups such as the FSB, Thames Valley Chamber and the local commercial property agents;
- Commissioned a major Bracknell Forest business "branding" programme which is currently being readied for roll out.

The work plan

The work plan has five Economic Priorities:

EP ONE: RETENTION AND ENGAGEMENT. Retaining and engaging with local business

EP TWO: PROMOTION AND INVESTMENT. Attracting appropriate businesses to invest and grow within the borough.

EP THREE: GENERATING ENTERPRISE. Generating new local enterprise and entrepreneurial spirit and supporting existing small and medium sized businesses.

EP FOUR: SKILLS. Ensuring the borough's residents are equipped with the necessary skills that local business needs to remain competitive

EP FIVE: INFRASTRUCTURE. Ensuring that the infrastructure within the borough is capable of meeting the future needs of business.

Creating an effective Business and Enterprise Service

The early work of the BES will be to put in place the foundations and systems to create a modern, responsive, well informed and customer focused economic development service which is effective. The number one priority (from a systems perspective) will be to start the work on creating a comprehensive Business Information and Intelligence System. Allied to this will be work to develop a effective business website and the gradual introduction of other promotional tools.

Building firm foundations

Before any meaningful work can commence it is important to assemble the right ingredients:

- Assemble financial (and other) resources;
- Recruiting the BES team;

- Put in place the essential operational systems.
- Evaluation and performance indicators (each project will have a comprehensive project plan incorporating SMART key performance indicators – KPIs.)

The Service will consist of five staff with the Team Manager reporting to the Assistant Chief Executive. The Team Manager will be supported by two Business and Enterprise (B&E) officers and a B&E support officer as well as the City Deal Business Relationship coordinator who will ensure that the work integrates effectively with the Council's wider work on skills and employment.

The Service will support the work of the Economic and Skills Development Partnership (ESDP) and it's sub-groups and this relationship will evolve over time. This will be a symbiotic relationship and so much of the work undertaken will be guided and informed through this crucial partnership. In time, the team and the ESDP will foster a wider network within the local business community and key agencies (including the voluntary sector) to sustain and improve the economy within Bracknell Forest

Essential Partners

In addition to putting new systems in place, the BES will develop work that has already been done and build upon existing partnerships and relationships. For example, work to roll out the borough's new brand for business.

Much of the BES's work will be turning the (economic development) ideas and expectations of the Council and its partners into reality. Resources have been made available and expertise assembled to improve matters significantly.

Introduction

Bracknell Forest has a proud history when it comes to attracting and retaining some of the world's biggest names in international business. The Borough has attracted investment from companies such as Waitrose, 3M, Hewlett Packard, Panasonic, Sharp Telecommunications of Europe, Fujitsu and Boehringer Ingelheim; most recently, Honda Motor of Japan has decided to relocate its European HQ operations to Bracknell Forest. The borough is at the forefront of the UK's knowledge economy and is the home of firms of significant strategic importance to the UK.

Unemployment rates in the Borough are low; 1.2%¹ (May 2014) which is below the average in Berkshire and approximately half the national average (2.6%). 86%² of the borough's population are economically active (compared to around 77% nationally). The borough has significant economic strengths being ranked in the top 12% (38th out of 325) of local authority areas nationally for overall economic performance

At the time of writing, there is about 700,000 sq ft of vacant property in the borough at the moment and about a half of this is prime commercial property; this is a dynamic situation and changes on a regular basis, indeed more so as the local economy picks up. The trend is indicating buoyancy which is good but also brings with it different issues that need to be tackled. Rents, however, remain extremely competitive against other competitor towns in the Thames Valley.

Since 2008, the world economy suffered the biggest downturn in living memory; it has been a vulnerable period for the UK economy, in particular. No-one should underestimate the pressure which even the apparently most robust businesses are under. Despite considerable strengths, Bracknell Forest will only remain a successful economic location in the long term by working with the local business community and partners to ensure that the Borough remains a first choice for

business investment. Critically, competition from other parts of the UK, and globally presents a challenge to the borough's economy.

The Strategic Economic Plan produced by the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Economic Partnership forecasts that economic growth is likely to slow to rates comparable with the rest of the south east. Infrastructure, workforce skills and the need to encourage innovation are other areas where Berkshire needs to address. The Bracknell Forest BES will develop the borough's Economic Framework and Plan within the context for the LEP's plans, working closely with other local authorities in Berkshire.

The BES will provide a strong local dimension, supporting the economy through engagement with existing businesses, understanding what they need to enable them to stay and grow and harnessing the energies and resources of key partners to sustain, and develop an already vibrant local economy. In addition, the BES will: be proactive in attracting new investment to the area; assist local people to improve their skills and; encourage indigenous enterprises. The council is ambitious for its businesses – the BES will help to create the conditions whereby stellar growth companies of the future are generated.

This work plan presents the initial actions (spanning the first 30 months) to create the foundations for the service This work plan sets out how the BES will develop a responsive, problem solving service with a "can-do" attitude and adoption of work styles which include, leading, supporting, influencing or monitoring .

¹ Source: Claimant Count.

² Source Annual Population Survey.

Section One: Bracknell Forest's offer

Its success is due to an exceptional place to do business. Close to Heathrow Airport; between the M3 and M4 motorways; close proximity to London and other major airports; a plentiful supply of well-qualified people; comparatively affordable commercial rents and housing; an outstanding quality of life) which have helped the town and borough become one of the prime places for business in the Thames Valley, the jewel of the UK's knowledge economy. Past successes are good and provide a firm foundation but with an increasingly challenging and competitive global marketplace, Bracknell Forest has to ensure that it is best placed to take advantage of as many future opportunities as possible and one of the responses to this issue is for the Council to take a lead and create a dynamic, innovative and responsive Business and Enterprise Service.

1.1 Travel Connections

Bracknell Forest lies 28 miles west of London, at the heart of the Thames Valley, within the county of Berkshire. As a former New Town, designed from the outset for the car - unrivalled and low congestion compared with any other business location in the Thames Valley The Borough has easy access to the motorway network, M3, M4, M40 and M25, and is also 35 minutes' drive to Heathrow and an hour's drive to Gatwick. There are direct trains to London, and the journey takes an hour. From July 2014, trains from London to Bracknell will hold greater capacity and be more frequent, especially at peak times.

1.2 Living in Bracknell Forest

Bracknell Forest covers 109sq km of central Berkshire and includes the towns of Bracknell and Sandhurst, and a number of villages including Crowthorne and Binfield. One of the major attractions of the borough is the amount and quality of green space, with a third of the Borough comprising woodland. There is a

wide range of housing suitable for families and young people. The borough is one of the least deprived areas in the country (291 out of 326, IMD 2010); it has one of the lowest crime rates in the country; unemployment is currently 1.2% (May 2014, Source ONS) compared to a national average of 2.6%. Bracknell Forest has many high performing schools ranging from nursery, through to infant and secondary schools (with over 15% achieving the highest "outstanding" grade in terms of Ofsted inspection outcomes). Furthermore, Bracknell Forest is becoming an increasingly diverse area with 18% of school pupils coming from BAME (Black Asian Ethnic Minority) backgrounds in 2013.

1.3 Bracknell town centre

Bracknell is currently on the verge of the comprehensive regeneration of its town centre. This will have an enormously transformational effect for the town and will further enhance the attractiveness of the borough as a prime business location. In addition to attracting major anchors this will be one of the country's finest developments putting Bracknell at the forefront of leading edge town centre design fit for the 21st Century. Significantly increased retail and leisure space will be augmented with longer opening hours and a more vibrant and thriving night time economy.

1.4 Sport and leisure

The Borough and its surrounding areas have a wide-range of sports and leisure facilities. These include first-class facilities provided by the Council, such as water parks and adventure playgrounds, and unparalleled facilities, such as three world-class golf courses including Wentworth, Legoland, the world-famous Ascot racecourse, and eight Michelin restaurants, including the Fat Duck, awarded three Michelin stars and voted Best Restaurant in the World and Best Restaurant in the UK.

1.5 Major Corporates and the knowledge sector

Bracknell Forest has some of the biggest names in business located in the Borough, including Waitrose, 3M, Hewlett Packard, Panasonic, Sharp, Fujitsu and Boehringer

Ingelheim. Employment in the knowledge sector is well above the national average and nearly 30% of all jobs in Bracknell Forest are in this sector.

1.6 Bracknell Forest; a borough of enterprise

There are some 2,700 businesses in the borough paying business rates on premises and many more micro businesses where people run their businesses from home. This really is a borough of enterprise, whatever the size of business. This enterprise is situated in the middle of an enviable group of education opportunities, including the universities of Reading and London (Royal Holloway) within half an hour and Oxford University, Oxford Brookes and Henley Business School an hour away from Bracknell. Higher education is also well-provided for including Bracknell and Wokingham College and Reading and Farnborough colleges within half an hour travel time by car.

1.7 Office facilities and other business space

Bracknell Forest has excellent quality office developments which are available to move into such as The Capitol Building, and Beaufort Park. The borough offers an outstanding opportunity with highly competitive rents compared to competitor areas and availability of the highest calibre office space is excellent. There are also a range of conference facilities including the Easthampstead Park Conference Centre and the Hilton National Hotel and 4* accommodation at the Coppid Beech Hotel.

1.8 The Council's vision for business:

The council will listen to the needs of current and future businesses to ensure their continued profitable growth. It will provide a work class infrastructure for working and living with access to the latest technology and training. In 2025 the borough will be maintain and improve its position amongst the best places to do business at the heart of the Thames Valley. It will be an inspirational place for families to grow and thrive. The council itself aspires to be recognised as being amongst the most business-friendly in Europe.

Section Two: The council's role in supporting economic growth

2.0 Local growth: realising every place's potential.

In October 2010 the coalition government published a white paper entitled "Local growth: realising every place's potential" dealing specifically with matters of local growth. This was a significant publication which signaled the creation of the local enterprise partnerships focusing upon three areas. The BES will address these issues through its work over the coming months:

- shifting power to local communities and businesses and enabling places to tailor their approach to local circumstances;
- promoting efficient and dynamic markets, in particular in the supply of land and provide incentives to places that go for growth;
- support investment in places and people to tackle the barriers to growth.

2.0.4 The government or councils themselves cannot create private sector growth but they can create the conditions that enable UK businesses to be successful.

2.1 The Council's role in supporting growth

Local authorities have an important role in supporting the economy and have a range of levers at their disposal. The Council is uniquely placed, via politically accountable leadership, to bring stakeholders together from across all sectors. The white paper (Local Growth: realising every place's potential) specified the following roles:

- **leadership and co-ordination** – using the community leadership role and planning powers to set out a clear framework for local development, helping to provide certainty for business and investment, overcoming co-ordination failures and managing competing interests;
- **supporting growth and development** – through provision of a supply of land that supports business growth and increases housing supply;
- **using land assets** – wherever possible, to leverage private funding to support growth;
- **directly and indirectly influencing investment decisions** - via the use of statutory powers, particularly through the planning system, which are key determinants of businesses ability and confidence to invest;
- **supporting local infrastructure** – transport investment, in particular, is a key enabler of growth.
- **support for local people and businesses** – including regeneration, business support and employment programmes, working with nationally led schemes;
- **providing high quality services** – such as schools and transport, that directly support business investment confidence and individual's life chances;
- **keep markets fair** – by maintaining trading standards and provide wider services and investment that increase the attractiveness of an area;
- **leading efforts to support and improve the health and well-being of the local population** – promoting independence and rehabilitation to ensure that all individuals have the maximum opportunity to benefit from work, and to contribute to the local economy.

2.2 Achievements to date

During the previous two years there has been many key achievements and notable successes in Bracknell Forest:

currently being readied for roll out and a major launch

- A member workshop was held endorsing a borough vision for business;
- The Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (TVB LEP) was established securing some £3.8 m of Local Growth Fund highway works improvements. This includes the improvements to the A322/A329 Coral Reef corridor and the Warfield link road all contributing to unlocking land suitable for additional housing;
- The Council, as part of the Sites Allocation Delivery Plan has delivered sites to enable the building of some 11,000 new homes all supporting and underpinning the borough's growing economy;
- Secured funds to create an economic impact study for improved rail links to Waterloo;
- The ESDP produces an Economic Strategy up to 2014;
- Established economic links with China;
- Introduced improved superfast broadband through participation in the Superfast Berkshire initiative;
- Attracted a number of key inward investments including Honda Europe and Telogis;
- Build upon existing positive relations with key business groups such as the FSB, Thames Valley Chamber and the local commercial property agents;
- Commissioned a major Bracknell Forest "branding" programme which is

Section Three:

The work plan

The work plan sets out the key activities that the BES will be involved with within the first months of becoming operational. There is a strong desire for the council generally to become even more business friendly and this will require increased cross-departmental working and even more effective co-ordination throughout the organisation – this will be particularly evident with inward investment, and promoting the skills agenda, particularly relating to apprentices.

The BES will focus its energy for the remainder of 2014 on seven “foundation” projects:

- 1 Business Contact Programme and account management;
- 2 Develop and implement an inward investment, reinvestment and business branding strategy;
- 3 Create a new Local Business Partnership scheme helping business and regulators (including the Police) to work more effectively together;
- 4 Undertake a business survey of infrastructure needs;
- 5 Contribute towards the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership Growth Deal
- 6 Progress both strands of the City Deal programme including apprenticeships and Elevate Me and the growth accelerator programme;
- 7 Establish necessary background systems and databases including a new business web site for the Council.

In 2015 the attention will be turned to developing an Economic Framework and Plan for the Borough and this will take some months to develop and consult upon.

3.1 Develop a Local Economic Framework and Plan for the borough:

There needs to be a comprehensive, far-sighted strategy to develop the local economy which builds on the firm foundations already established but which enables the borough to position itself as one of the most enterprising and business friendly areas in Europe. .

EP ONE: RETENTION AND ENGAGEMENT. Retention of and engagement with local business.

EP TWO: PROMOTION AND INVESTMENT. Attracting suitable inward investment through effective promotion and marketing

EP THREE: GENERATING ENTERPRISE. Generating indigenous enterprise and supporting existing small and medium sized businesses.

EP FOUR: SKILLS.

Ensuring the borough’s residents are equipped with the necessary skills that local business needs to remain competitive

EP FIVE: INFRASTRUCTURE.

Ensuring that the infrastructure within the borough is capable of meeting the needs of business.

3.2 Enhanced business engagement, the Business Contact Programme (BCP) and account management (Contributing to: EP ONE)

As a priority, a report will be taken to the council’s Corporate Management Team (CMT) establishing a comprehensive and advanced Business Contact Programme. This will provide a step change improvement in the Council’s engagement with local businesses that are of strategic importance to the borough. **Target for programme to be operational: September 2014.**

3.3 Undertaking comprehensive ongoing business surveys (Contributing to EP ONE)

Undertaking high quality business surveys will be a key work plan priority for the BES. The surveys will inform policy and ensure that actions and resources are directed to the areas most needing attention; sound research, information and knowledge base are of fundamental importance. The current thinking is to produce a series of subject focused surveys. The first two surveys will focus upon the subjects of: 1 infrastructure needs and 2 skills needs. **Target for the first survey to be conducted: November 2014 and results analysed before Christmas. An event will be organised to disseminate results during the first quarter of 2015.**

3.4 Supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and generating local enterprise (Contributing to EP THREE)

This is an important area of work because the majority of businesses in the local economy employ less than 10 people. This sector forms the “prosperity spine” of the borough. The council has a very good track record in supporting local SMEs. During 2012-2013 some 81% of the 3,531 suppliers the council uses were SMEs and this represents 52% of total spend on goods and services (average for other south east authorities is 46%). Furthermore, over 35% of spend was with business based in Berkshire and 7% (Equating to c£6.5m) with businesses within borough boundaries. So the council is already playing an important part but much more can be done both to support existing businesses and to encourage enterprise and entrepreneurs generally. A range of projects will be devised and new alliances forged to stimulate activity in this important area of work. One tangible outcome of recent work might be the introduction of an annual programme of pan-Berkshire “meet the buyer” events and this is being worked on. *(Quick win: work with Enterprise First, the foremost enterprise agency in the south east of England to find immediate and practical ways to support this sector of the economy. Also, the Council has just agreed the Facilities*

Management Category Strategy to work with local businesses.) Target: May 2015

3.5 Create a new partnership between business and all statutory regulators and enforcement agencies within the borough (Contributing to EPs ONE, TWO and THREE).

A new partnership will be set up which will encourage closer working between business and all statutory regulators and enforcement agencies within the borough. The regulators (for instance development control, environmental health, business rates, social services, trading standards and we would hope to include the Police and Fire and Rescue Service) will come from within the council but other agencies such as the police and fire and rescue services will also be invited to get involved. The aim of partnership will be to foster greater understanding between the two groups and also (for the regulators, in particular) better joined-up working and co-ordination, improved customer care leading to greater effectiveness. **Target to become operational: November 2014.**

3.6 Draft an Inward investment, re-investment and business branding strategy (EP TWO).

BES will pick up the work already done in this area (following work commissioned by the council on branding, and deepening established relationships with bodies such as Link to China and others) and develop it further. The inward investment strategy will mesh closely with the TVB LEP Strategic Economic Plan and significant efforts will be made with the Berkshire Economic Development Officers Group (BEDOG), Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce (TVCC) and United Kingdom Trade and Investment (UKTI) to ensure that an appropriate, effective and coordinated inward investment programme is put in place. *(Quick win: produce a welcome pack for any new investor coming into the borough).* **Target: October 2014.**

3.7 Branding and promotion (Contributing to EP TWO).

BES will pick up the work already done in this field (following work commissioned by the council) and develop it further and then use it as the key vehicle to promote the borough as a first choice business location. As part of this work, a suite of targeted marketing materials and initiatives will be produced and undertaken; this will be undertaken as part of and supporting the inward investment strategy. *(Quick win: produce a key facts for business about Bracknell Forest as an ideal business location.)* **Target: April 2015.**

3.8 Develop a business-centric web site (Contributing to EP ONE, TWO and THREE).

The council's website already provides information for local businesses including links to advice from business support agencies, information on business rates, tax, licensing and other statutory services access. Given that the web is now so critical for all businesses and will be a key entry point to access the BES an early priority will be to assess whether the existing information provision is still fit for purpose and satisfying the needs of business users and customers.

It is expected that a major redesign will be required and work will be started (as soon as possible). *(Quick win: as a short term measure, whilst the main work is being undertaken, introduce a Bracknell Forest branded business micro-web-site).* **Target: April 2015.**

3.9 Efficient and effective handling of commercial property enquiries (Contributing to EP ONE and TWO)

The BES will work closely with the Council's Property team and key commercial property agents to acquire a deep and unrivalled understanding about Bracknell Forest's commercial property offer to enable the creation of an efficient first-point-of-contact for any commercial property enquiry whether it originates from an existing business, developer or potential investor or indeed any other source. The team will also actively promote the borough as part of its promotional work and where appropriate, organise and co-ordinate visits and tours of the borough for potential investors and to involve representatives from appropriate supporting external agencies and partners and departments from within the council. **Target: Ongoing.**

3.10 Efficient and effective handling of business enquiries (Contributing to EP ONE, TWO AND THREE).

Systems will be established (see BIIS and also protocols created within the Council) whereby any business or organisation contacting the Council looking to move to Bracknell Forest (if not already based within the borough), or those businesses looking to expand (or, indeed, contract) will be directed to the BES. The team will help with identifying available premises, working with the local property agents and accompanying potential investors on visits (if deemed appropriate). A property and local business database will be developed (as part of the Business Information and Intelligence System) and this will be kept up to date and accurate. **Target: Ongoing.**

3.11 Communication: events, meetings seminars and dissemination of relevant

news through appropriate channels (Contributing to EP ONE)

As part of the general increased profile of the council in business matters locally, and the supporting the key objective of increased engagement with the business community there will be a new focus on communications (in a wide range of formats) and an increased frequency and quality of business related events; the BES will be at the forefront of this work whether leading or supporting others. The events, in particular, will help inform, raise awareness and help create a renewed sense of community amongst the borough's businesses. *(Quick win: Organise a seminar of business rate payers; see above.)* **Target: Ongoing**

3.12 Encourage the development of business groups and clusters within the borough (Contributing to EP ONE).

The creation of a self-sustaining network of business groups within the borough is important for a number of reasons. Most importantly, it assists understanding between companies and with the council; for mutual benefit. The groups could be geographically, sector or functionally-based (as in the case of the Facilities Managers.) The BES will support the creation of these groups and will work proactively to sustain them. **Target: Ongoing**

3.13 Progressing employment and skills (Contributing to EP FOUR).

Through the business surveys, BCP and other information gathering exercises the BES will gain an understanding about where the skills shortages and needs are. The team will work with local providers and agencies about how to fill the gaps. The BES will consider how residents, businesses and providers can be brought together to share information and understand the business community and their needs, and be able to react quickly to training needs. Further, the BES will work with partners to identify current and future skills needs, and link to the TVB LEP, for example, where there are opportunities to draw down funding for training. The Elevate programme and the introduction of the Business

Relationship Co-ordinator will play an important part in pioneering new ways of working with the business community and amongst providers. A range of initiatives will be created including the new IAG (Information, Advice and Guidance) Hub for the 16 to 24 cohort, the new Elevate web site, the Careers Fair, a new drive to enable apprentices to get access to a wider range of opportunities and exploring the possibility of setting up an Aspire centre at the Open Learning Centre. **Target: April 2015.**

3.14 Provide relevant and appropriate policy support (Contributing to all EPs)

The BES will help the council to establish an effective policy framework and supporting infrastructure. Market evidence will be fed into planning and transport policy-making so that decisions can be based on the most up-to-date market intelligence. Our work with business will also provide a major opportunity to link up with local partnerships, training organisations and employment providers to ensure business investment most benefits Bracknell Forest's residents.

3.15 Deliver key programmes from the Thames Valley Berkshire City Deal programme (Contributing to EP FOUR).

This partnership is important because it brings together key partners to work together in new ways which will equip young people with the necessary skills and experience to help them find meaningful employment.

3.16 Develop a comprehensive, well co-ordinated apprenticeship programme within the Council and borough generally (Contributing to EP FOUR).

The BES will lead on the issue of apprenticeships both within the council and externally; in particular, investigations will be made to encourage construction contractors to make extensive use of apprenticeships in

relation to the town centre redevelopment.
Target: April 2015.

**3.17 Initiate closer and more co-ordinated working with key partners to maximize benefit to the local economy and minimize duplication, including supporting businesses to deliver their corporate social responsibility objectives by working in partnership with them and the voluntary and community sector locally.
(Contributing to all EPs)**

For a small team, such as the BES, it is essential to harness the expertise, energy, and resources of like-minded partners, to ensure that everyone is “pointing in the same direction.” Done well, partnership working can achieve remarkable results and building and sustaining such relationships will, therefore, be a key priority. According to the need and circumstance, the BES will adopt appropriate roles which will vary between leading, supporting, influencing and monitoring. In addition to building external relationships, it will be crucial to ensure that colleagues within the Council itself are contributing to creating a truly business-friendly authority and programmes will be devised to help develop and sustain this way of working and thinking.

3.18 Create the Business Intelligence and Information System

This forms the foundation system to enable effective responses to business and property enquiries and will incorporate a Customer Relationship Management system.

3.19 Publish an annual Business to Business Directory for the Borough

This is will generate sales and also provide essential local contact information for the BES.

3.20 International business incubator project

This will provide work space on cost effective terms to enable potential investors from China or other countries to find out how Bracknell

Forest could become their new UK base and enable them to grow their business here.

3.21 Bracknell Forest Ambassador scheme

This will encourage key business people within the borough to communicate the Bracknell Forest “offer” to other countries and disseminate the message that we are a leading place to base their businesses here.

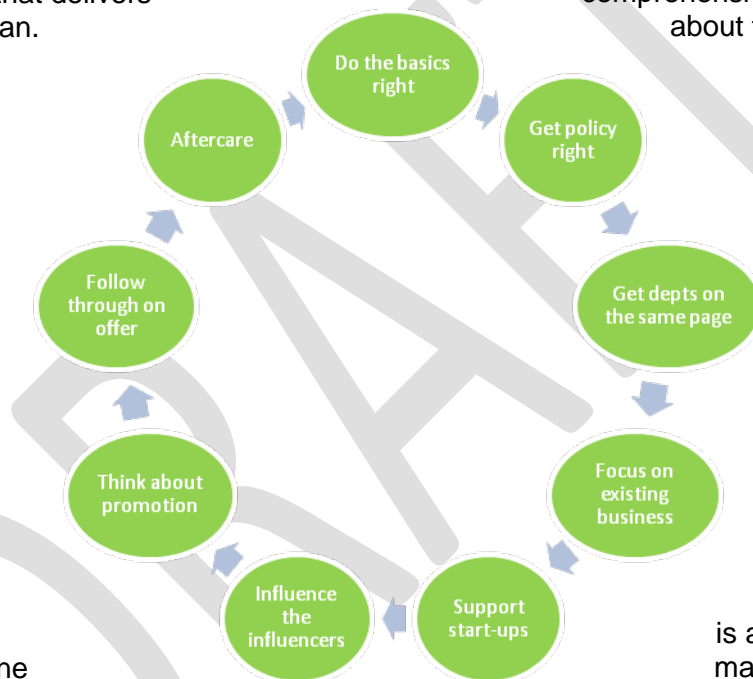
Section Four: Creating an effective Business and Enterprise Service

This section focuses upon key stages required to create an effective business and enterprise service that delivers against the work plan.

Each of the stages are:

4.1 Do the basics right

It is essential that business enquiries are handled correctly whether the enquiry originates from an existing business or from one looking to relocate into the area. Enquiries can arrive via telephone, web site, word of mouth, even personal visits. Furthermore, they can also arrive at the Council via other departments so it is important to establish a robust and workable system with a set of simple procedures whereby business enquiries can be properly routed to the correct person within the Council and dealt with professionally and effectively. Part of this work will be to significantly improve the capacity of the Council generally to respond to business enquiries, whatever their nature, scope or magnitude. In addition to handling enquiries in the right way, “basics” covers a much wider set of parameters. It is important that key systems are put in place as soon as



practically possible to ensure that the Service has a firm foundation from which to work and that a clear culture and ethos of accuracy, efficiency and responsiveness is established where the customer (whether internal or external) is at the core of everything that the Service is involved with.

4.2 Getting policy right

The fundamental key to creating an effective business and enterprise service is to gain a good grasp and insight into the needs of the Bracknell Forest business community. Good policies are based on a strong evidence base. One of the priorities, therefore, will be to undertake a series of surveys to gain a

comprehensive understanding about the current needs of existing businesses in the borough, whether small, medium or large.

The results will inform strategic plans and policies of the Council and its

partners. There is a risk, at the margins, that some of

the needs expressed may be unrealistic or unaffordable so expectations will need to be managed carefully but experience has shown that, on the whole, many of the issues raised are both manageable and deliverable. The fundamental point is that the borough’s business community is a key stakeholder and the Council needs to gain a better understanding of current and future needs so that informed decisions can be made about resource allocation, taking all things into account.

4.3 Working effectively across the council

Whilst the BES will act as the focal point for business in the borough, an aspiration is that every employee and member of the Council

(whether formally or informally) has a role to play, in some way, supporting the business community. A range of transformational programmes will be introduced, including establishing a partnership between local business and regulatory enforcement agencies within the borough. Concerted work will be undertaken with the Corporate Management Team (CMT) to implement the programmes throughout the organisation.

4.4 Supporting the existing business base

It is better to retain existing customers than it is to find new ones. The key is to establish contact, and build ongoing, productive relationships together. It is the same in economic development. Bracknell Forest is in the enviable position that it has some of the world's finest businesses already based here and this is why retention of business will be the number one strategic economic priority in the forthcoming new Strategic Economic Plan for the borough. The BES will develop a sophisticated set of information systems to enable and capture key information about our businesses to better understand their individual needs and circumstances and to introduce a business contact programme (BCP) underpinned with proper account management principles and business customer relationship management system (BCRM).

4.5 Supporting start ups

This is an important and broad based area of work; but it is one that is also very difficult to get right. The Council will introduce a range of measures specifically designed to help start-up businesses. At the most basic level this will be to facilitate the provision of information, advice and guidance (including how and where to get access to funding including grants and business loans and other government schemes designed to help small businesses). In more advanced programmes the Council will work with partners to explore how to encourage and generate enterprise particularly in high growth technology and knowledge based businesses.

4.6 Influence the influencers

The BES will embark upon a concerted set of initiatives to build closer relationships with key movers and shakers within the borough. In

addition, every opportunity will be taken to raise the profile of the borough as a prime business location with external agencies such as United Kingdom Trade and Investment (UKTI), Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (TVB LEP) and with individual key decision makers and influencers.

4.7 Promotion and potential large investors

The Council has already commissioned important pieces of work relating to business branding and inward investment. This work will be utilised to inform and develop the roll out of effective promotion and marketing within the borough. An outline promotional plan is outlined in Appendix III.

4.8 Following through on the offer

The BES will concentrate upon creating proper systems and procedures to ensure that all enquiries and opportunities are followed through to completion wherever possible.

4.9 Aftercare

Aftercare will be an important priority area for BES. Whenever a company chooses to invest in the borough the team will keep in touch to help make sure that everything is being done to support their economic success

Section Five: Building firm foundations

Before any meaningful work can commence it is important to assemble the right ingredients:

- Assemble financial (and other) resources;
- Recruiting the BES team;
- Put in place the essential operational systems.
- Evaluation and performance indicators

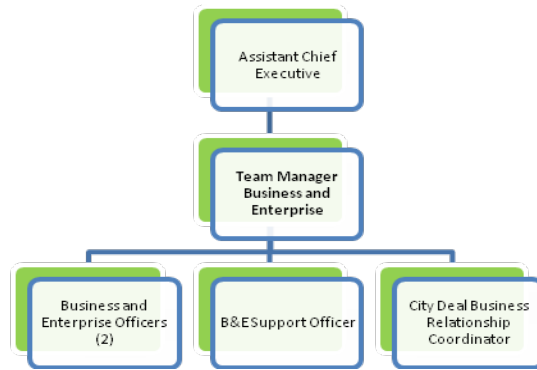
5.1 Assemble financial (and other) resources;

Significant work in the field of economic development and regeneration has already been achieved by the council and its various close partners and stakeholders. The council has recognised that if it wishes to tangibly help to improve the local economic prosperity (which is a key strategic priority for the council) then it needs to invest in the appropriate expertise and structures to bring this about. The result is the establishment of the new Business and Enterprise Service. A revenue budget provision has been allocated from within existing resources and this is shown in Appendix Two.

5.2 Recruiting the BES team

The BES team will initially consist of five dedicated members of staff reporting to the Assistant Chief Executive.

The team have been recruited during the spring and summer 2014. Three of the staff are in post by the middle of 2014 and the emphasis will be upon “hitting the ground running.”



The staff functions will be as follows:

5.2.1 Team Manager - Business and Enterprise

The Team Manager is responsible to the Assistant Chief Executive for the delivery of, and securing the resources for, programmes set out in the work plan and also the Strategic Economic Development Plan. This will be achieved through the creation of a skilled, adaptable, dynamic and motivated team primarily focused upon achievement. The manager will lead on helping to raise the profile of the council amongst the business community and partners and represent the borough in discussions with existing and potential investors. In addition, this will include overseeing the development of the Bracknell Forest ‘brand’ and promotion and Marketing generally. The manager will also be responsible for developing first class working relationships with the BES’s partners, particularly the TVB LEP, and other regional, national and international agencies.

5.2.2 Business and Enterprise Officers (X2)

Two Business and Enterprise Officers will be primarily responsible for delivering the activities set out in Section Three and Four of the work plan. The work style will be a variable mix of progressing and delivering planned work projects, responding to enquiries, meeting with businesses and partners, ensuring targets are met and quality standards maintained. The officers will use, and interpret information generated from the BIIS. Whilst the core of the two roles will be similar one officer will be assigned to the lead in supporting the ESDP and the sub-groups and other local partnerships. The other will focus on

external partnership working such as the BEDOG group. The officers will be responsible for responding to the majority of enquiries generated by the team which will include undertaking site visits and tours as necessary as well as co-ordinating promotional campaigns and business events.

5.2.3 Business and Enterprise Support Officer

This role will predominantly lead on establishing the systems and databases necessary for the Service to function effectively. This will include working with other members of the team to establish the BIIS and administer the Business Contact Programme. This officer will ensure that the business and property databases are properly managed and maintained. The other vital function is to work with the Team Manager to ensure that all programmed work commitments are delivered on time and within key tolerances.

5.2.4 Business Relationship Coordinator (City Deal Officer)

(This post is fixed term until 31st March 2016.)

The primary focus is to co-ordinate the partner's activities in delivering the Bracknell Forest element of the Thames Valley Berkshire City Deal relating to skills development amongst young people. It will make an enormous contribution towards ensuring that duplication is minimized and also contribute to the overall objectives of increasing engagement with the local business community and the skills agenda.

5.3 Put in place the essential operational systems

5.3.1 Business Information and Intelligence System (BIIS) and database

The most important, non-visible, provision for BES will be to create, as quickly as possible, an effective Business Information and Intelligence System (BIIS). The system will be the "eyes and ears" of the BES and a full specification will be drafted at the earliest opportunity; wherever possible this would integrate with existing systems. It will consist of (inter alia) a business database, a property

database, a business contact programme, a Business Customer Relationship Management system and a range of other elements designed to inform and assist the team in their work. The aim will be to integrate the system so that it is capable of producing reports and management information as well as trigger early warning actions, where necessary. In the first instance, the system may have to bring together disparate products and databases just to get the system off the ground and functional. In the fullness of time, the system will be fully integrated and evolve into a sophisticated tool to underpin all aspects of BES's work. (*Quick win: introduce the Bureau van Dijk MINT business database pending further work on the main system*). **Target: October 2015.**

5.4 Evaluation and measuring success

The BES will be a learning service which will measure, evaluate and build on its successes and experiences. All work will have SMART (specific, measurable achievable, realistic and time-bounded) objectives. Furthermore, this will be grounded within the context of how the work of the service impacts the wider local economy. **Target: December 2014.**

Section Six

Essential Partners

The BES is a small, focused service, but capable of significant positive impact and this can be significantly enhanced and assisted through close collaborative working with partners, such as:

6.1 Economic and Skills Development Partnership (ESDP)

Perhaps the most significant partnership concerned with the borough's economic prosperity is the Economic and Skills Development Partnership (ESDP). This is a well-established and enormously influential body. The membership of the main group brings together key senior leaders from the business community, education as well as the public and voluntary sectors. It is a public-private partnership and the BES works closely with all of the partners. The BES provides the secretariat support for the meetings and sub-groups. The Strategic Economic Plan will be endorsed by the partners and much of the work of the BES is reflected in and supported by the ESDP. It is, therefore, a symbiotic relationship. The BES will provide further support to the main group and strengthen the partnership wherever possible. There are currently four sub-groups: Employment and Skills; Infrastructure; Promotion; and Community.

6.2 Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership

The Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is a public/private economic development partnership set up to support and sustain economic growth at a sub-regional level. They have produced a Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and considerable government and European funding will be channeled through this organization and so it is of fundamental importance that the BES works closely to promote the borough's key assets and opportunities. The borough's Strategic Economic Plan will take account of the TVB LEP's SEP

6.3 The other five unitary authorities in Berkshire

BES will work together with the other five unitary authorities on a range of pan-county issues of importance. This would include areas such as superfast broadband, CityDeal (Elevate programme), inward investment, skills, the growth agenda and above all, infrastructure needs. There are significant areas of mutual concern and collectively, wherever appropriate and possible, this is potentially a powerful alliance. The BES work in this area and at this level will be channeled through the Berkshire Economic Development Officer Group (BEDOG) and via the TVB LEP.

6.4 UK Trade and Investment (UKTI)

UKTI is a central government department working with businesses based in the UK to ensure their success in international markets, and encourage the best overseas companies to look to the UK as their global partner of choice. Owing to the structure of UKTI, they work regionally with representatives from the LEPs. The BES will find ways to build effective links and relationships within UKTI to maximize the profile and visibility of the borough.

6.5 City Deal

The Thames Valley Berkshire City Deal is commissioned by the LEP but requires delivery from all its member boroughs to meet its objectives. Key priorities include reducing youth unemployment, generating new employment opportunities, developing new approaches to reducing churn in the labour market, and delivering new work experience placements and apprenticeships. The BES has a significant role to play in supporting the LEP and Bracknell's Economic and Skills Development Partnership (ESDP) in delivering on the City Deal's aspirations.

6.6 Bracknell Regeneration Partnership

The Bracknell Regeneration Partnership (BRP) was established in 2003 as a 50/50 joint venture vehicle between Legal & General's Life Fund and SEPUT (Schroder Exempt Property Unit Trust). It is currently redeveloping the town centre providing new retail, housing, workspace and parking. The

BES will work closely with the council's Regeneration Team (who are the main link to BRP) to ensure that good communications channels are maintained and opportunities explored. BRP is also a key member of the ESDP

6.7 Local business representative bodies

The various local business representative bodies such as the Chambers of Commerce and Federation of Small Business represent the interests of their business members in the area, and there is a shared desire to make Bracknell Forest an excellent place to do business and to improve the opportunities for their members. Many of these bodies are represented through the ESDP.

6.8 Key Commercial Property Agents

The BES will identify and work with the commercial property agents who are most active throughout the borough and ensure that the council establishes and maintains positive relationships with them. In particular, the BES will aim to build a reputation for adding value to the work of the commercial agents so that there is the best environment for both parties to more effectively promote Bracknell Forest.

6.9 Further and Higher Education

Bracknell Forest Council has a long standing and established good relationship with surrounding colleges including Bracknell & Wokingham College and the University of Reading. In order to progress the priority area of skills development these links need to be strengthened further. A major selling point of the borough is the superb innovation and research and development opportunities afforded by the local colleges and universities.

6.9 Bracknell Forest Council departments

The BES will establish close working with all relevant council departments - planning, building control, property, transport, learning & skills – in order to provide a wraparound service to Bracknell Forest's businesses. It is imperative that businesses are not passed on to different departments and get lost; the BES has a crucial role in making sure that the proper systems and fail-safe's are established, maintained and function correctly.

6.10 Voluntary and community sector partners based within the borough.

The voluntary, community and faith sector play a vital role in the local economy through direct delivery of services and volunteering. It would be advantageous to assist the process of harnessing both business and the voluntary and community sectors.

6.11 Partners and partnerships of the future...

This is not an exhaustive list of partners, by any measure, but if the BES is successful and effective then new alliances and partnerships will be formed, sometimes with bodies or businesses that do not even exist yet. That is the really exciting and challenging aspect of this work – helping to create the future.

Appendix One: Business and Enterprise Service Action Plan 2014 – 2016

Ref	Supporting EP	Action	By whom	Start	Finish	Comments
BES1	One	Enhanced business engagement, the Business Contact Programme (BCP) and account management	BES	July 2014	Sep 2014	This will be one of the first products of the new team and will involve setting up Account Management systems, developing procedures and designing appropriate training. This is an ongoing programme once the initial set-up is complete.
BES2	One and Five	Undertaking comprehensive ongoing business surveys.	BES/ESDP	July 2014	Nov 2014	The first of these surveys will be related to infrastructure as part of the ESDP infrastructure sub-group.
BES3	One, Two and Three	Create a new local business partnership between business and all statutory regulators and enforcement agencies within the borough.	BES and regulators	July 2014	Nov 2014	This is an important project because it simultaneously increases engagement with businesses but also helps to spread the business-centric message throughout key areas of the council. This is an ongoing programme once the initial set-up is complete.
BES4	Two	Draft an Inward investment strategy	BES/ESDP	Jul 2014	Oct 2014	This will build on the work already commissioned by the council. This is an ongoing programme once the initial set-up is complete.
BES5	Two	Branding and promotion	BES/ESDP	Jul 2014	Oct 2015	This will build on the work already commissioned by the council and will involve establishing a new ESDP sub-group called “promotion” which will amalgamate the inward investment and communications sub-groups.
BES6	One, Two Three	Develop a business-centric web site	BES/ Customer services	Aug 2014	Apr 2014	This is extremely important and work has already started on this. This is an ongoing programme once the initial set-up is complete, although the new site should be operational in July 2015.
BES7	All	Develop a Strategic Economic Plan for the borough	BES	Jan 2015	Jun 2015	This document will have a near medium and long term perspective. It will be published on the web but also printed. (This will be a replacement for the current ESDP economic strategy and will require significant partner and business input and consultation).
BES8	Three	Supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and generating indigenous enterprise	BES	Sep 2014	Ongoing	Initially we will work with agencies such as Enterprise First to put in place appropriate programmes.
BES9	One and Two	Efficient and effective handling of commercial property enquiries	BES	Jul 2014	Ongoing	This has already started and will become easier once the systems are put in place This is an ongoing programme once the initial set-up is complete.

Appendix One: Business and Enterprise Service Action Plan 2014 – 2016

Ref	Supported SEP	Action	By whom	Start	Finish	Comments
BES 10	One, Two and Three	Efficient and effective handling of business enquiries	BES	July 2014	Ongoing	This is already happening and will increase in frequency once the service becomes better known.
BES 11	One	Communication: events, meetings seminars and dissemination of relevant news through appropriate channels	BES/ESDP	Oct 2014	Ongoing	This will increase in frequency once the main projects are underway or delivered
BES 12	One	Encourage the development of business groups and clusters within the borough	BES/ESDP	Sept 2014	Ongoing	This will come about through networking and making the right connections with movers and shakers.
BES 13	Four	Progressing employment and skills initiatives	BES/ESDP	Sept 2014	Apr 2015	This will be developed in conjunction with the ESDP skills sub-group. The aspiration is to undertake a skills survey of businesses (similar process to the infrastructure survey) during 2015.
BES 14	All	Provide relevant and appropriate policy support	BES	July 2014	Ongoing	This will be provide as a matter of course and be underpinned with an evolving intelligence system.
BES 15	Four	Deliver key programmes from the Thames Valley Berkshire CityDeal programme	BES/CD Partners	Sept 2014	Mar 2016	This will be largely funded through the City Deal partnership and is significant because it engenders new ways of working amongst external agencies and promotes better co-ordination generally.
BES 16	Four	Develop a comprehensive, well co-ordinated apprenticeship programme within the Council and borough generally	BES	Jul 2014	April 2015	The BEM will be calling a meeting of a Task and Finish group to address the issues within the council and will work with the ESDP skills sub group and the City Deal steering group to improve matters externally.
BES 17	All	Initiate closer and more co-ordinated working with key partners to maximize benefit to the local economy and minimize duplication	BES	Jul 2014	Ongoing	Partnership working is a key aspect of the work of the new Service and significant progress is already being made.

Appendix One: Business and Enterprise Service Action Plan 2014 – 2016

Ref	Supported SEP	Action	By whom	Start	Finish	Comments
BES 18	All	Create the Business Intelligence and Information System (BIIS) incorporating the business database, available commercial property database, CRM and other key elements.	BES	Sep 2014	Ongoing	Work is progressing internally to identify a delivery path which will enable the vital systems to be set up and function effectively and efficiently in the shortest possible timescales.
BES 19	One, Two and Three	Publish an annual Business to Business Directory for the Borough	BES	Sep 2014	Sep 2015	The proposed business to business directory is distinct from conventional (and often ineffectual) “paid-for-by-advertising” business directories. This will enable and stimulate closer inter-trading opportunities amongst businesses of all sizes in the borough and will be published in a variety of media including printed booklet, web and other popular means of accessing data and information.
BES 20	Two and Three	International Business Incubator project	BES	Jul 2014	Jul 2015	This is a speculative project which could enable Chinese and other potential FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) companies to tip their toe in the water and hopefully decide to set up their new venture in Bracknell Forest.
BES 21	All	Bracknell Forest Ambassador scheme	BES	Feb 2015	June 2015	This is an innovative scheme whereby local companies and other influencers who travel overseas spread the message about Bracknell Forest as a serious potential place to base their UK and European operations from. This would be a structured and well organised operation closely allied to the Business Contact Programme and Inward Investment Strategy.

Appendix Two
Indicative budget for Business and Enterprise Service (BES) to be drawn from ED Reserve

Item	July 2014 to 31 Mar 2015	2015-2016
Staffing	151,080	157,290 ¹
Economic Priority 1: Retention and Engagement	52,000	57,000
Economic Priority 2: Promotion and Investment	26,000	20,000
Economic Priority 3: Generating Enterprise	15,000	20,000
Economic Priority 4: Skills and Learning	4,000	19,000
Economic Priority 5: Infrastructure	12,000	
Foundation systems (BIIS) ²	15,000	10,000
Totals	275,080	283,290

¹ Figures provided by the Council's Group Accountant.

² This item is capital, whereas others are revenue.

Appendix Three: Promotional Plan

Communicating Bracknell Forest's offer

Promotion via an effective marketing strategy requires an understanding of an area's offer, target audiences and mechanisms for reaching that audience. Our track record of delivery should be our most important tool in terms of attracting further investment. Below is a starting point for the new Business and Enterprise Service (BES) to ensure Bracknell Forest remains a first choice destination for businesses.

Introduction

BES will produce promotional work in two stages. Initially, as the Business and Enterprise Service finds its feet, the council should raise awareness of the service, as well as building on any general place-marketing literature the Borough already produces. After 18 months of operation (or sooner, if possible), additional and more specific materials should be developed, based on intelligence, and geared towards specific sectors and audiences.

These are a series of recommendations for focussed and targeted communications; they are founded on the fundamental principles that underpin effective place marketing.

Place identity – developing a distinctive and compelling brand

The process of brand building and place marketing usually starts with a strategic analysis of place. BES will need to develop Heavenly's branding into a comprehensive investor-focused message.

There are some very positive characteristics above in terms of locational decision-making. BES will then identify what is really distinctive about Bracknell Forest and identify a business-friendly brand.

Bracknell Forest's offer as an attractive business location is proven by the quantity of existing high value skill/technology industries already located in area. BES will draw out messages around what advantages the area brings to existing businesses.

Key messages/ audiences – saying the right thing to the right people

BES will assemble and organise intelligence that various departments within the council hold into a set of coherent and consistent business messages that can be used in more business/investor facing marketing and communications.

It will be important to avoid a 'kitchen sink' policy of listing dozens of reasons why a business should locate in the Borough. This is a typical 'Invest in Anywhere' approach, which will fail to distinguish the borough or promote its key business proposition in a credible manner.

Target Audiences – BES's success, to a large extent, is dependent on ensuring key messages reach and influence target audiences. Another priority for the team will therefore be to undertake a comprehensive stakeholder mapping and market segmentation exercise. This will help to ensure that the Borough effectively prioritises and targets communications activity at where it will have the greatest impact. For example, if we want to encourage growth in the digital economy or in manufacturing and logistics then carefully targeted communications to these sectors/markets will be key.

Property agents and business support agencies in the borough and wider sub

region should be a priority as they are pivotal in supporting and attracting businesses into the area.

Approach to communications

BES's primary focus will be improving the experience of existing businesses to ensure the borough is providing a good level of service. Once BES is confident it's getting the basics right, it can move on to attracting new businesses – the promotion.

Fig 1, below, demonstrates which marketing and communications mechanisms have proven to be most effective at reaching corporate decision makers and location advisors. This outlines the effectiveness of seven conventional marketing techniques used by economic development groups. Given borough resources are tight across the board it will be important to keep this in mind in terms of prioritising activities.

Figure 1– Successful marketing techniques

Technique	2011
Planned visits to corporate executives	57%
Internet/website	55%
Hosting special events	35%
Trade Shows	35%
Media Relations/ Publicity	33%
Advertising	16%
Direct mail	15%
Telemarketing	4%

(Figure 1: Winning Strategies in Economic Development Marketing by Development Counsellors International September 2011)

Some of the techniques and products suggested have the potential to be cost neutral or at least subsidised by securing funds through the private sector, for example a social enterprise business magazine funded through advertising/sales revenue etc. BES will consider the feasibility of these so the Borough can explore more collaborative approaches to marketing and communications with local businesses in the future.

Communications

i. Website

The single most important communications tool to support business growth in the Borough will be the development of an independent, business centric website.

Anecdotal research shows that independent 'third party' business websites have much more credibility with target audiences than Borough owned / branded websites. This is usually because the business 'voice' is more dominant and therefore overall it's more of a business-to-business experience.

There are lots of excellent online sites to provide inspiration:

- <http://investilford.co.uk>
- www.welcometosheffield.co.uk
- www.opportunitypeterborough.co.uk
- www.investinmanchester.co.uk
- www.invest-in-hackney.org.uk
- www.businessbirmingham.com

Common features and information include:

- Intuitive architecture with clear landing pages/sections e.g. Why Bracknell Forest?, key sectors, business support, property, developments, procurement etc.

- Good local news stories, testimonials and business case studies to inspire and motivate local SMEs and investors
- Up to date online advice, guidance and signposting to business support services
- High quality images and (interactive) maps of the Borough
- A resources/intelligence page with downloadable publications and documents such as key facts & figures, 10 top reasons to invest in Bracknell
- A calendar of business engagement events such as networking breakfast meetings, workshops and other themed events
- Procurement portal with council and other tender opportunities advertised and support for collaborative pitching/bidding
- Facility to match buyers and suppliers; with an email alert service for informing companies of business opportunities as they arise
- Business to business directory offering businesses the opportunity to create their own mini web pages to showcase their products or services
- An e-commerce/payment function so businesses are able to pay and book for services online.

For Bracknell Forest - a business website should be aspirational as well as informative and serve as the critical 'front door' to both the Borough as a business location but also the services on offer to prospective businesses and investors. Ideally it will be a high quality, fully animated site with RSS news feeds, interactive maps, podcasts, virtual tours, 3-D fly throughs and business forums etc. to demonstrate that Bracknell Forest really does mean business – but if resources are limited then a basic 'shop front' website that is independent from the Borough and carries basic information on the Borough's business support and

investment offer will suffice. It should also include a comprehensive listings/links page to relevant sites such as the Reading Diamond.

Other options to consider include filming local residents, businesses, landowners (very inexpensive using flip cameras) as case studies to illustrate what it is like to live, work, run a business in the Borough etc. These are powerful and effective. Equally, interviews or testimonials from key influencers and enablers can help to reinforce that Bracknell is an excellent business and investment location. A well-orchestrated launch of the website also provides a good basis for a business networking event.

Website Urls: the industry norm for inward investment teams and websites has become 'Locate' or 'Invest In' so it is advisable for Bracknell Forest to follow suit.

The website should also be able to help local businesses with a range of common interactions with the Borough guiding them through transactions or helping them with problems. A good example would be the legislative process of starting a business. This aspect of the website should be fully integrated with an improved customer service offer. The website should target both potential investors and current businesses.

ii. E-Newsletter

The Borough should also consider producing a quarterly business e-bulletin. This will help drive traffic through to the website but is also a cost-effective way of reaching and informing large numbers of people – helping to keep Bracknell Forest on the radar of key stakeholders and target audiences and providing timely and relevant information for the business community. Email marketing software packages are available free to download from the internet with different options for opt in-functions or personalised subscriptions, which means

that businesses only sign up for information that they wish to receive.

iii. Social Media

The Borough should build on existing social media communications – such as Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Facebook. These offer huge potential for two reasons:

It is a proven and increasingly important route to target audiences in inward investment

A September 2011 place marketing study (www.aboutdci.com/winning-strategies) by Development Counsellors International surveyed 322 corporate decision-makers in the United States showed the growing importance of social media in the way companies' research new potential locations.

It is a cost effective tool and resource-light if implemented thoughtfully

A carefully managed Twitter feed can push out Bracknell Forest's proposition to a wide range of target audiences and it can also lend great support and help promote existing businesses and partner's activities too. A number of Councils have introduced social media accounts into their business communications strategies recently and are useful to reference:

<https://twitter.com/#!/investincroydon>https://twitter.com/#!/business_bhamhttps://twitter.com/#!/midas_mcrhttps://twitter.com/#!/L_Pbusiness

Social media is not just useful for investor targeting it can also support all aspects of investor development and aftercare e.g. Welcome to Bracknell LinkedIn groups to support recent arrivals into the Borough etc.

iv. Video Show-reel

Place promotion relies heavily on imagery and therefore producing a video show-reel to promote the Borough – such as Bracknell Forest Open for Business would be an incredibly effective tool. It could be featured on the website home page, displayed at key events and also importantly used by local

businesses and partners as part of their individual marketing strategies. Videos offer huge scope for wider dissemination through social media also – which offers the potential for a significant reach from a relatively modest initial expense.

v. Printed Marketing Collateral

Bracknell Forest needs to do an audit of its existing promotional material and ensure it has offers to encourage footfall and spend in the Borough's town centres including shopping guides, street maps, business directories, cultural calendars and promotions and discounts etc. As discussed at the beginning of this section some basic literature on the new Bracknell Business and Enterprise Service to let people know it exists, then further down the line, once the service is established, some more targeted literature of promoting the borough's inward investment proposition.

vi. Bracknell Forest Business Prospectus. Bracknell Forest must provide a clear blueprint for investors and businesses. A high quality business prospectus that introduces the Borough and answers the 'Why Bracknell Forest?' question is critical. However rather than produce a hard backed glossy publication that will become out of date/redundant very quickly another more cost effective and flexible solution is a high quality pack with loose-leaf inserts.

It is worth investing in a custom-built folder, rather than standard A4, to add impact. As mentioned earlier place promotion relies heavily on images and therefore photos should be of exceptional quality – rather than standard stock photography - and should be consistent with/reflect some of the key messages identified earlier. The prospectus will need to cater to a wide range of different audiences and should therefore include an overview of the Borough, map, key market and sector information, regeneration schemes, development sites and business support services. A top ten reasons to 'Invest in

Bracknell' insert that succinctly captures the overall offer is also an effective communications tool that can be used separately from the folder.

vii. Printed Newsletter (Bracknell Forest Business Focus)

Alongside the e-bulletin, a regular dedicated business publication would also be effective. A quarterly or twice-yearly newsletter that is circulated to all businesses in the Borough as well as at key community outlets and transport nodes will help to ensure that businesses feel properly informed and supported by the Borough. The newsletter should also be circulated to wider stakeholders – not just the Bracknell Forest's existing business base.

viii. Site Specific Propositions

Marketing materials that profile and support the Borough's key regeneration schemes are also very effective. Drafting them so that they can appeal to a wider audience including potential developers, regeneration agencies etc. will not only ensure that they are more cost effective, but also that they deliver more impact. Bracknell Forest should work with the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP to ensure their marketing materials include the 'Why Bracknell Forest?' blurb and are distributed alongside other marketing materials in Bracknell Forest's business prospectus suggested above.

Media and Public Relations

What's reported about places in various newspapers, journals and magazines etc. has a significant impact on inward investment and business confidence levels. For example, some developers monitor local newspapers for evidence of local opposition groups or to take the political temperature of an area as part of locational decision-making processes. Therefore targeting local, regional and trade press with relevant business stories will be a priority for BES. There are considerable opportunities to secure meaningful coverage, for example, any

masterplanning activity or planning application decisions and new inward investors or large employers locating in the borough. These are all newsworthy.

BES will, as part of the business planning process, compile a targeted business media distribution list as well as a forward plan that clearly sets out what stories to pitch, to which publications, and when. Outlined below is a very basic media distribution list of key trade publications for the regen/investment market:

Local Government Chronicle (LGC):

<http://www.lgcplus.com/>

Municipal Journal (MJ):

<http://www.localgov.co.uk>

Local Government News (LGN):

www.localgov.co.uk/products/LGN

Planning Week:

<http://www.propertyweek.com/>

Planning Resource:

<http://www.planningresource.co.uk>

Architects Journal:

<http://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/>

Estates Gazette:

<http://www.estatesgazette.com>

Surveyor:

<http://www.surveymagazine.com/>

Building:

<http://www.building.co.uk/>

RTPI News:

<http://www.rtpi.org.uk/>

Construction News:

<http://www.cnplus.co.uk>

Property Development News:

<http://www.propertydevelopmentnews.co.uk/>

Retail Property and Development:

<http://www.retailpropertyanddevelopment.co.uk>

Regeneration and Renewal:

<http://www.regen.net>

New Start:

<http://www.newstartmag.co.uk/>

Business Networking and Engagement

Providing meaningful opportunities

BES will develop opportunities to run business-to-business and business support events to create new opportunities to engage with organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Federation of Small Business and of course businesses themselves. Networking vehicles such as a developers' forum or property agents' network would certainly help to strengthen the Bracknell's relationship with the very agencies that can help to facilitate business growth and investment in the Borough. This could be extended to a business summit if a need was demonstrated.

Events, trade shows and exhibitions

There are a number of key international, national and regional events in the business/investment calendar. Bracknell should consider securing a prominent profile at a number of these events to demonstrate the Borough's potential to selected audiences:

Speaking engagements are usually the cheapest and most effective option. Conference producers have a relatively long lead in time and generally source their own speakers. However, they are open to suggestions and therefore it is worth monitoring which of the conferences offer the best platform for the Borough to connect with its target audience and then develop an offer that will add a unique voice or proposition to the conference and pitch it to the producers.

Business Ambassadors Programme

Bracknell Forest will continue to source credible and well-respected ambassadors to help steer and promote Bracknell Forest as a business destination. A wide range of stakeholders including local MPs, councillors, business leaders and other public and private figureheads should all be briefed provided with a 'landing pack' to give them the necessary tools to promote the borough at every opportunity.

To formalise this activity, the Borough could develop a bespoke **Bracknell Forest Ambassadors initiative**. This could be organised as either an open application process or as an invited membership programme only. Either way, business ambassadors should work to develop perceptions about the Borough. Their core aims could be:

1. Increase awareness of Bracknell Forest as a positive, exciting and inspirational place to live, work, study, and visit and invest.
2. Attract more visitors, tourists and shoppers to the Borough
3. Promotion of the Borough's business & leisure facilities
4. Retention and expansion of local businesses
5. Attracting public, private and partnership investment and stimulate growth.
6. Encouraging local sourcing and increase support for the local economy.

They would achieve this by contributing facts, positive imagery and testimonials and would need to be supported in return with promotional events, materials of a high spec and networking/forum opportunities that will enable them to become proud Bracknell Forest advocates. Ambassadors should also be integrated into the on-going marketing of the Bracknell Forest proposition, with case studies and quotes used for cross promotion.

Appendix Four: Enquiry Handling Protocol

Service Delivery Standards for BES

General Service Standards

BES will be staffed from 9.00 am until 5.30 pm and will operate a single telephone contact point which will be covered by a staff member between these hours, and will arrange for a professional message or voice mail service answer phone service to be in operation out of office hours.

BES will build a list of companies of strategic significance to the borough, and proactively contact, establish support relationships and act in an account manager capacity with these companies on an on-going basis.

Responses to all requests for general information will be provided within 72 hours or earlier as required and practical. Where appropriate, responses will be personalised with a covering letter.

Where requests are made for more specialised information a covering response will be provided within 72 hours and the rest of the information provided as soon as assembled within the timescale agreed with the client. Best endeavors will be made to ensure that this does not exceed 10 days.

Systems will be put in place to ensure that all information supplied will be up to date and accurate and that all enquirers are correctly signposted when needed.

All enquiries will be followed up with a telephone call within 4 weeks from receipt by the client of information requested.

Any dormant enquiries will be followed up every 3 months. In the case of dead enquiries efforts will be made to assess the reason why Bracknell Forest had not been selected for the relocation.

Working with relevant partners, such as the Thames Valley LEP, BES will market site development and occupancy opportunities throughout the borough.

BES will need to respect the need for confidentiality in dealing with the relocation needs of all clients. In circumstances where highly confidential information needs to be shared with a given local authority, this will be via the named Director.

Initial Equalities Screening Record Form

Date of Screening: 12 August 2014	Directorate: CXO	Section: Business and Enterprise Service (BES)	
1. Activity to be assessed	Work plan for the new BES		
2. What is the activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> Policy/strategy <input type="checkbox"/> Function/procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Project <input type="checkbox"/> Review <input type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Organisational change Service		
3. Is it a new or existing activity?	<input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Existing New		
4. Officer responsible for the screening	Robert Jolley		
5. Who are the members of the screening team?	Carlos Moreno, James Sackley		
6. What is the purpose of the activity?	To develop a new service and plan to help develop the local economy. There are five economic priorities: 1 Retention and engagement 2 Promotion and investment 3 Generating enterprise 4 Skills and learning 5 Infrastructure improvement		
7 Who is the activity designed to benefit/target.	Local businesses and employees and as the economy grows and thrives then this benefits residents generally.		
Protected Characteristics	Please tick yes or no	Is there an impact? What kind of equality impact may there be? Is the impact positive or adverse or is there a potential for both? If the impact is neutral please give a reason.	What evidence do you have to support this? E.g equality monitoring data, consultation results, customer satisfaction information etc Please add a narrative to justify your claims around impacts and describe the analysis and interpretation of evidence to support your conclusion as this will inform members decision making, include consultation results/satisfaction information/equality monitoring data
8. Disability Equality	Y	N	Positive impact With a number of the priorities including 3 generating enterprise helping to provide opportunities for disabled people to access employment and start businesses generally and the skills and learning priority 4 will also ave a beneficial effect.

9. Racial equality	Y	N	Positive impact	By growing the local economy it provides employment opportunities for everyone.
10. Gender equality	Y	N	Positive impact	Through greater engagement with the local businesses it provides the council with better opportunities to disseminate best practice in this field.
11. Sexual orientation equality	Y	N	Neutral	
12. Gender re-assignment	Y	N	Neutral	
13. Age equality	Y	N	Positive impact	As the economy grows employers will be more creative in approaches to recruitment and the council will encourage this.
14. Religion and belief equality	Y	N	Neutral	
15. Pregnancy and maternity equality	Y	N	Positive impact	Particularly with the City Deal/elevate me programme especially relating to those currently NEET
16. Marriage and civil partnership equality	Y	N	Neutral	
17. Please give details of any other potential impacts on any other group (e.g. those on lower incomes/carers/ex-offenders) and on promoting good community relations.	The work plan will help to provide and generate opportunities for all groups through targeted programmes and projects.			
18. If an adverse/negative impact has been identified can it be justified on grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group or for any other reason?	N/A			
19. If there is any difference in the impact of the activity when considered for each of the equality groups listed in 8 – 14 above; how significant is the difference in terms of its nature and the number of people likely to be affected?	N/A			

20. Could the impact constitute unlawful discrimination in relation to any of the Equality Duties?	Y	N	N/A
21. What further information or data is required to better understand the impact? Where and how can that information be obtained?	N/A		
22. On the basis of sections 7 – 17 above is a full impact assessment required?	Y	N	Please explain your decision. If you are not proceeding to a full equality impact assessment make sure you have the evidence to justify this decision should you be challenged. If you are proceeding to a full equality impact assessment please contact Abby Thomas.
23. If a full impact assessment is not required; what actions will you take to reduce or remove any potential differential/adverse impact, to further promote equality of opportunity through this activity or to obtain further information or data? Please complete the action plan in full, adding more rows as needed.			
Action	Timescale	Person Responsible	Milestone/Success Criteria
Business Contact programme	October 2014	Robert Jolley	Mentioning equality issues during meetings with senior representatives with businesses
Local Business Partnership	January 2015	Robert Jolley	At appropriate business events, ensure equality issues are mentioned.
24. Which service, business or work plan will these actions be included in?	BES work plan		
25. Please list the current actions undertaken to advance equality or examples of good practice identified as part of the screening?	N/A		
26. Chief Officers signature.	Signature:		Date:

When complete please send to abby.thomas@bracknell-forest.gov.uk for publication on the Council's website.