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**ECONOMY AND LEARNING DIVISION'S CURRENT ACTIVITIES IN RURAL
MILTON KEYNES**

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 To inform the Assembly of the current activities of Milton Keynes Council's Economy and Learning Division, in rural Milton Keynes.
- 1.2 To provide contact details of Officers and encourage the Assembly to comment on development opportunities.
- 1.3 To request support from the Assembly for specific actions outlined within the report.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The Economy and Learning Division of Milton Keynes Council comprises the Economic Development, Lifelong Learning and the Tourism Development Units. Each unit is currently involved in a number of initiatives that will benefit the communities of rural Milton Keynes. A list of key officers is attached as Annex. A. The teams are led by Council strategic development plans covering work in their areas.
- 2.2 The Economy and Learning Division would like to, with the communities, associations and councils of rural Milton Keynes maximise the potential of these areas.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 The Assembly is invited to:
 - (a) note the range of current activities set out in the report;
 - (b) comment on issues raised;
 - (c) support the specific actions outlined

4. Background

4.1 The Economy and Learning Division implements the Council's policies in several key areas embedded in the:

- (a) annual Economic Development Plan
- (b) annual Lifelong Learning Plan
- (c) 3 year Tourism Strategic Plan
- (d) 3 year European and International Policy and Strategy

The officers involved in the work are listed in **Annex A**.

4.2 At the Rural Affairs Consultation Assembly in February 1999, Deborah Cooper, Economy and Learning Manager, tabled Milton Keynes Council's Economic Development Plan 1999/00 Consultation Brief. Discussions followed and comments from the meeting were noted and used in review of the Plan.

4.3 At the Assembly meeting of 14 October 1999 Darren Gray, Assistant Economic Development Officer, presented details of the funding location service and of a feasibility study into staging an employment fair in a village linked to employers providing transport for employees recruited at the fair.

4.4 Previous Rural Affairs Consultative Assemblies have received papers and information about the Tourism Development Plan, European Strategy and the Lifelong Learning Development Plan.

5. Issues and Choices

(a) Economic Development Plan for 2000/01

5.1 It is a legal requirement (Local Government and Housing Act 1989) for all Local Authorities intending to commit funding to economic development activity to produce an Economic Development Plan on an annual basis.

5.2 This Economic Development Plan incorporates regional, national and European perspectives as well as showing how direct funding and activity will be focused on important local issues. It is a document that proposes action for Milton Keynes Council to reinforce its position as a key economic influence in the South East region and beyond.

5.3 The Economic Development Plan for 2000-2001 reflects how the Council will respond to the many challenging and exciting changes that are taking place in Milton Keynes.

5.4 Milton Keynes Council has always been a key player in activating local and regional partnerships. Milton Keynes is therefore well placed to tackle increasingly complex and inter-related economic development issues. It cannot address all the issues that arise from within its own resources but, together with partners, takes an integrated approach to problem solving.

- 5.5 A copy of the draft Plan will be circulated at the Assembly Meeting.
- 5.6 Members of the Assembly may wish to comment on this plan. Comments will be noted and taken account of both in the implementation of this plan and in the formulation of future plans.

(b) Employer Transport/Rural Recruitment Fair

- 5.7 One of the key issues for rural affairs, raised at previous Assembly meetings, is employment, and linked issues related to transport. **Annex B** gives some background information.
- 5.8 Officers would like to gauge the opinions of the Assembly as to the validity of the approach outlined in **Annex B**.
- 5.9 If the Assembly feels this is a worthwhile process then Officers would like to request assistance with the dissemination of publicity materials.

(c) E-commerce In Village Shops

- 5.10 The Economic Development Unit currently participates in the Village Shops Development Scheme (VSDS). This is a national scheme administered throughout Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire by Bucks Community Action (BCA) and is an initiative from the Countryside Agency. **Annex D** provides details and proposals for a further initiative.
- 5.11 The views of the Assembly are sought on the proposal. Officers would be grateful if members passed on the contact details below to stores in their area. Further information will be circulated through Milton Keynes Council and Parish publications.
- 5.12 Village stores and other agencies will also be contacted to seek their views and involvement.

(d) Lifelong Learning Plan

- 5.13 Each year, the Council produces a Lifelong Learning Development Plan that provides the Strategic Framework for its adult education and student awards services, as well as other support the Council provides through community partners. A consultation draft will be produced and circulated in March 2000.
- 5.14 The Council is currently preparing its Lifelong Learning Development Plan for 2000/01, and seeks the views of the Assembly members about lifelong learning issues that affect rural areas.

(e) European and International Strategy

- 5.15 The Council has recently agreed an European and International Policy and Strategy. This is attached as **Annex E**.
- 5.16 The Assembly is invited to comment on the document and on issues relating to rural communities.

6. Implications

6.1 Environmental

None

6.2 Equalities

None

6.3 Financial

None

6.4 Legal

None

6.5 Staff and Accommodation

None

6.6 Cultural

None

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 The Economy and Learning Division is involved in a wide variety of initiatives around employment, training, education, inward investment, competitiveness, tourism and social inclusion. It will continue to explore opportunities to work with the communities of rural Milton Keynes to tackle disadvantage and to promote the vitality of the area and improve the quality of life of its residents within the framework of its published Strategic Plans