

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2014 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Hogarth (Chairman)

Cllr. Horwood (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Ball, Mrs. Bosley, Butler, Fittock, Maskell, Miss. Stack and Miss. Thornton

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Ayres, Mrs. Ayres and Mrs. Cook

Cllr. Mrs. George was also present.

1. Appointment of Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr. Hogarth be appointed as Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

(Cllr. Hogarth in the Chair)

2. Appointment of Vice Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr. Horwood be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

3. Minutes

With reference to the Volunteer Award Scheme, the Chief Officer Communities and Business advised that she had attended a meeting the previous week and the voluntary sector were fully supportive and happy to promote it. It was hoped to launch this towards the end of November/early December 2014.

Resolved: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 1 May 2014, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. Declarations of Interest

No additional declarations of interest were made.

5. Actions from Previous Meeting

The actions from the previous meeting were noted. A Member advised that it should be made very clear that 'Escalate' was not for 'start-ups' but employment generation for existing businesses.

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6. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder for Economic and Community Development and Chairman of the Committee, advised that the Buckhurst 2 Car Park consultation had been progressing and the Economic Development Strategy was on the agenda, on the were moving in a positive direction. Last financial year the budget had been approved for a Business Development Manager. It had not been possible to recruit a suitable calibre of candidate and therefore the approach to this was being reconsidered.

7. Referrals from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

8. Confirmation of Working Groups

Members considered the previous years working groups and whether the groups were still required and if so reviewed the membership and terms of reference.

Resolved: That

- a) the Rural Broadband Working Group not be reconfirmed; and
- b) the Car Parking Technology Working Group be reconfirmed with the original membership and terms of reference as agreed on 1 May 2014 (Minute 43).

Action 1: The Chief Environmental & Operational Services Officer to set up a meeting date for the Car Parking Technology Working Group in September 2014.

9. Car Parking Technology Working Group - verbal update

There was no update as the Group had not yet met.

10. Emergency Plan update

The Chief Officer Environmental & Operational Services and Head of Parking and Surveying presented a report that provided an update on current Emergency Planning practices and procedures. It was made clear that the Council had statutory responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 as a Category 1 responder, along with the 'Blue Light' emergency services, Kent County Council, the Environment Agency and the NHS. The District Council's main responsibilities were to provide humanitarian assistance during any event or evacuation, immediate care and longer term housing needs whilst aiding recovery, and throughout any event assisting with multi agency response, sharing information and mutual aid. An Emergency was defined, under the Act as an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare or the Environment

A Member remembered that at a Select Committee it had been reported that an ammunitions dump had been found at a travellers site and asked what had happened.

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In response the Head of Parking and Surveying advised that it had just been as he had taken on emergency planning. The leisure centre had been used but it had not been for long. In reality as it had been a small group it was more cost effective to put them up in a hotel than to keep them in the leisure centre.

In response to a question, the Head of Parking and Surveying advised that the speed of notification of Members depended on the scale of the incident. If it were small scale they would be notified as a matter of course, if it was a major incident they would inform at the earliest opportunity and keep as updated as frequently as they were able. Members agreed that it would be worth investigating a 'flash' service on the web pages for information on incidents to be more visible and readily available. Another Member suggested that a 'wash up' session should be built into the plan, it was clearly already carried out but should be clearly set out. The Head of Parking and Surveying agreed that more could be done on the website but that it was also a question of the information being timely and useful. Signposting was a key aspect, and he advised that they relied heavily on the Police for information.

Action 2: The Head of Parking and Surveying to meet with the Communications Working Group.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

11. Local Enterprise Partnership Regulations Bid

The Environmental Health Manager presented a report which set out how local authority regulators in the South East might work with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to help regulatory services work more effectively with business, with the aim of supporting economic regeneration. The report introduced the Better Business For All (BBFA) scheme which aligned regulators with the current push to reduce red-tape and to support economic growth. If the Council supported its regulators being involved in this initiative, it would facilitate access to skills and funding that would enable better cross working with regulatory agencies in the District, across the County and nationally. The programmes and projects that would be thus facilitated, would lead to reduced regulatory burdens and encourage greater prosperity for local businesses.

A Member queried whether there was an anonymous advice line, the Environmental Health Manager advised that it was not anonymous but business could contact then for advice but agreed that they were possibly frightened to do so. This way forward hoped to address that and have businesses see them in a more advisory role rather than just enforcement. Whilst this was a shift to promote and help there would always be enforcement and prosecution.

A Member thought it was a great initiative that she would like to see on the Council's website.

The Environmental Health Manager advised that much work was guided by government practice and protocols so there were certain restrictions to what could be achieved, for example with food standards.

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The Chief Officer Communities and Business reprised Members of the 'team around your business' approach the Council was now taking, ensuring that any contact with any department within the Council was as joined up as possible.

Resolved: That the Council's involvement in the initiative be supported and endorsed.

12. Economic Development Strategy Consultation Draft

The Chief Officer Communities and Business presented a report which sought comments from Members on the District Council's Consultation Draft of the Economic Development Strategy. She advised that it was a very early draft arising from the workshop members had attended previously. It was proposed to send the draft strategy out for consultation over the summer months with a view to bringing back a final draft to Committee in October. Members were asked to take it away and feed back any comments to the report author within the next three weeks, copying the Chairman in.

Members discussed the document. During discussions it was agreed that transport and infrastructure especially around the New Ash Green area and Swanley should be added. Comments included of quality hotel accommodation for tourists and businesses within the District; lack of training facilities and more connections needed with colleges outside the district; and transport links.

Members were asked to take it away and feed back any comments to the report author within the next three weeks, copying the Chairman in.

Action 3: Chief Officer Communities and Business to circulate the most recent health profiling information.

Resolved: That Members send in any further comments.

13. Work Plan

The work plan was noted. The Chairman advised that more items would be added as the year progressed, in the meantime if Members had any items added they should contact him.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8.00 PM

CHAIRMAN