

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL  
OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE – 28 JULY 2015

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Information Paper

Subject: Activity Report on the Leader of the Council's Portfolio

Report: Councillor Gillian Brown - Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Council Strategy

Report date: July 2015

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines the recent activity of the Leader of the Council in respect of national work on the Local Government Association (LGA) and District Council's Network (DCN), economic regeneration and Council performance between April 2014 and April 2015.

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the economic regeneration service is to encourage business growth and investment; increase employment; and tackle economic disadvantage in Arun. It aims to reverse physical, economic and social decline in the District and to intervene when the market alone cannot deliver improvement. To effectively deliver this function the Service works in partnership with a range of council services and external partners both in the private and public sector (e.g. Local Enterprise Partnership).

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

The Team's responsibilities are to oversee and support the delivery of:

- Business Support and Enterprise – for example, the provision of Arun Business Partnership, responding to business enquiries for premises and business support, delivering intermediate labour market interventions such as work experience and apprenticeships.
- Town centre management in Littlehampton and Bognor Regis.
- Publicly funded physical regeneration schemes – for example Public Realm improvements (London Road and Station Square, Bognor Regis) and Hotham Park Café.
- Strategic employment sites – for example Enterprise Bognor Regis.
- Business tourism to develop our local offer – for example maintaining the Sussex By The Sea website, preparing and distributing the annual visitor guide and linking to the wider tourism networks.

The Council also makes a financial contribution to the Bognor Regis Town Centre Manager, Bognor Regis Regeneration Board Advisor and the Director of the Coastal West Sussex Partnership.

### 3 LOOKING BACK – 2014-15

Over the past year many physical and economic regeneration projects have progressed and been completed. Highlights from the past year include:

- The Council funding and leading on the building of a new café in Hotham Park which opened in June 2015 creating a new attraction and new jobs.
- Enterprise Bognor Regis has its first occupant. Rolls Royce Motors Cars will be opening their new 40,000m<sup>2</sup> Technology and Logistics Centre on the site in early 2016. The Local Development Order for the sites will be made by October 2015. Positive discussions with Government have continued regarding our application for Enterprise Zone status.
- Works on the new Public Realm improvements for London Road, Bognor Regis have been completed. Knock-on benefits include 5+ internal and external shop refits and anecdotally higher footfall.
- £1.6m grant from the Coastal Communities Fund (CCF) to deliver Public Realm improvements in Bognor Regis town centre. Station Square has started and will be completed by early summer 2015.
- Town centre Managers are now established in both Bognor Regis and Littlehampton and are having a positive impact with a range of events taking place.
- Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership – Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) – has granted up to £13m to support improvements to the Bognor Regis A29 re-alignment.
- Successfully bid for Coastal Communities Fund Grant of £573k for enhancements to the new Public Realm on East Bank, Littlehampton.
- Developed proposals for '9 Big Ideas' to improve the public areas of Littlehampton.
- Beach on the Beach project successfully implemented on Bognor Regis Seafront.
- Worked with Southern Rail to develop proposals for the refurbishment of Bognor Regis Town Station which are likely to start within the year.

- Confirmed the delivery programme for the 'LEAP to Success' Project which will offer business start-up support, business grants and apprentice top-ups in Bognor Regis.
- New signage/monoliths providing directional/mapping information installed in Littlehampton Town centre, riverside and seafront.
- Grant awarded to deliver Department of Work & Pensions (DWP) employment support project specifically around work experience, targets exceeded.

#### 4.0 LOOKING FORWARD - OBJECTIVES

The objectives for the forthcoming year 2015-16 are:

- Review our economic strategy – Open for Business (2009) – to reflect current priorities and interventions needed.
- Complete the Station Square public realm improvements and make significant progress on implementing the remainder of the CCF scheme.
- Support the progression of the Bognor Regis Town Station refurbishment.
- Progress the delivery of the Seafront Strategy and seek Member support for a new approach to the offer on the seafront and begin procurement of new concessions on the seafront in Bognor Regis.
- To have opened the café in Hotham Park – this action is now complete.
- Complete planning briefs for the Windmill Site and St Martins Car Park and develop a marketing strategy.
- To have recruited to a new post of Economic Regeneration Officer and established their work programme – this action is now complete.
- To have raised the profile of the Developer Charter and introduced Employment and Skills Plans on new developments.
- To have secured a decision from the Council as to its preferred approach to the potential redevelopment of the Regis Centre and Hothamton sites.
- To continue work with the Coast to Capital LEP to progress the Enterprise Zone application and deliver the agreed Strategic Economic Plan, maintain dialogue with them and identify other funding opportunities.
- Enterprise Bognor Regis – complete the Local Development Order (LDO) to de-risk planning issues and work with the landowners to progress delivery and promotion of the sites.
- Progress the town centre management of Littlehampton and support the delivery of town centre management in Bognor Regis.
- Support the establishment of an Enterprise Hub in Littlehampton.
- Deliver the 'LEAP to Success Project' which will offer business start-up support, business grants and apprenticeship grants to businesses in Bognor Regis.

#### 3.0 KEY ISSUES

The economy continues to pose problems for businesses and property developers although indications are that the economic climate is improving. The structural change in retail spending towards online and out-of-town shopping will place increasing pressure on town centre retailers and it is reasonable to expect further closures in our town centres if this pattern continues.

The District's high dependence on the tourism sector and its seasonal cycle also adds to the area's economic vulnerability and the need to diversify and adapt its economic base.

Employment density rates are low (0.58 jobs per working age population) as are average wages rates, both of which reduce the life opportunities of our residents.

It is within this context that interventions and activities are being developed that will support business growth and create the conditions in which the local economy can develop and our residents prosper.

#### 4.0 GENERATING INVESTMENT

Over recent years the Economic Regeneration Team has led on or contributed to securing significant external funding to support the delivery of the Business Plan and the wider regeneration priorities of the Council - Including:

- Two allocations of £50,000 from the DWP to deliver work experience interventions to support the long term unemployed.
- Further successful bid to Coastal Communities Fund for £573k for Public Realm improvements to East Bank, Littlehampton.
- £13m Growth Deal for the realignment of the A29; award as part of the Coast to Capital Strategic Economic Plan.
- £18,000 from the Environment Agency for support to local businesses.
- £340,000 Kickstart money to cover Enterprise Bognor Regis implementation costs (particularly the LDO).
- More than £350,000 Section 106 funding, £180,000 Kickstart funding and £1.6 million Coastal Communities funding to cover Public Realm work in Bognor Regis.
- Section 106 money of £50,000 to cover the costs of the Littlehampton Regeneration Officer.
- £75,000 Section 106 funding to cover the marketing and procurement competition for the proposed St Martins Car Park development.
- £100,000 of Section 106 money to cover smaller scale interventions in Littlehampton town centre.

#### 7.0 ROLE OF THE LEADER AS ECONOMIC REGENERATION PORTFOLIO HOLDER

##### The Bognor Regis Regeneration Board

The Council was instrumental in establishing the Board back in 2007. It is an independent public-private partnership which brings together all the key regeneration stakeholders in the town with the aim of maximising any regeneration benefit to the town through partnership. Its objectives mirror those of the Arun District Council Economic Regeneration Department, and it is chaired by the Leader of the Council.

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