

Economic Development Board
19 September 2012
**A MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD
WAS HELD ON 19 SEPTEMBER 2012**

The Mayor (Dickson) (ex-officio); Chairman of the Policy and Organisation Board (Councillor Hook) (P), Councillors Allen Chegwyn (P), Edgar (P), Forder (P), Geddes (P) Mrs Hook (P), Lane (P), Langdon (P), Philpott and Mrs Searle (P).

It was noted that in accordance with standing orders Councillor Hook had been nominated to replace Councillor Allen for this meeting.

15. APOLOGIES

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were received from the Mayor and Councillor Allen.

16. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Hook and Mrs Hook declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 7 Gosport Town Team & High Street Innovation Fund

17. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Economic Development Board meeting held on 20 June 2012 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a true and correct record.

18. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations.

19. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no public questions.

PART II

20. REVIEW OF STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Consideration was given to a report of the Borough Solicitor and Deputy Chief Executive, detailing the Statement of Community Involvement following a period of consultation on a draft Statement of Community Involvement.

In answer to a Member's question the Board was advised that applicants were encouraged to consult with the wider community following any alterations to pre-application proposals before the submission of a planning application.

A Member advised that they had noted that Network Rail was a statutory consultee for proposals, but that local bus companies were not.

The Board was advised that bus companies were covered under bodies which represent the interests of persons carrying out business in the Borough and had not been specifically named as they were liable to ownership changes. It was clarified that consultation with bus companies had previously taken place on the draft Core Strategy and consultation would continue to take place with such companies on the forthcoming local plan.

It was proposed and agreed that Appendix A of the report be revised to reflect the importance of travel providers in the Borough to read bodies which represent the interests of persons carrying out business including transport providers in the Borough.

RESOLVED: That

- a) the Statement of Community Involvement as set out in Appendix B of the report of the Borough Solicitor and Deputy Chief Executive be approved; and
- b) the amendment of Appendix A of the Report of the Borough Solicitor to read bodies which represent the interests of persons carrying out business including transport providers in the Borough, be approved.

21. GOSPORT TOWN TEAM & HIGH STREET INNOVATION FUND

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Executive updating Members on the establishment of a Gosport Town Team. This included progress to date and advised Members of a grant received from the Government's High Street Innovation Fund and recommending a process for approving the allocation of this grant in partnership with the newly formed Gosport Town Team.

Members were advised that a meeting of the Town Team had taken place on Tuesday, 18th September and that the Terms of reference had been agreed. In addition, the voting representatives had been agreed to ensure fair representation.

In answer to a Member's question, the Board were advised that the £100,000 funding had been awarded to address empty units in the High Street, North Cross Street, and the shopping precinct, but that the Town Team stretched wider and was open all interested parties.

A Member requested the figures be made available of the number of total units in the High Street and surrounding area and the amount of Units that were currently vacant or under offer.

Members debated the number of properties vacant in Gosport High Street and how it compared to other High Street areas.

The Board was advised that there had been approximately 25 people at the Town Team meeting and that 7/8 of these were High Street Traders.

A Member expressed concern that only a few High Street traders had attended, the Board were advised that there had been a cross representation from traders and the public and that it was felt this was a good mix to move the High Street forward,

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Members were advised that the meetings of the Town Team were intentionally held on a Tuesday to make it more convenient for market traders to attend. Members were advised that Principal Environmental Health Officer was now responsible for the management of the Market.

Members queried whether concessions could be made to allow Market traders to utilise empty units. Members recognised that the market was one of the most successful on the South Coast,

A Member advised that markets had been in decline for 20 years and that Town Centres would always struggle with vacant properties due to the large level of tax charges on them. This was contrary to large out of town units that paid less.

A Member questioned whether a similar scheme to Fareham could be operated in that a unit had been let – rent free - and a collaboration of businesses for the wedding market had moved in.

Members recognised it was difficult to attract larger branded stores because of the potential customer base and that focus should be given to independent shops. Members recognised that Gosport compared favourably to other high streets as it only had 10% of units vacant compared to a national figure of 25%.

Members recognised that it was a significant task to regenerate the High Street and that the Town Team would help staff to identify where the £100,000 award would be best used.

Members requested further information on the landlords of the vacant units.

RESOLVED: That;

1. the Board noted the report and confirmed their support for the newly established Gosport Town Team; and
2. the process for allocation of the High Street Innovation Fund grant, as detailed at Paragraphs 3.2 to 3.6 of the report of Chief Executive be approved.

22. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman advised that he should Members of the Board wish to contact him he would not be available to answer enquiries as swiftly as normal in October.

CONCLUDED: 6.43PM

CHAIRMAN