

Briefing Notes on Bognor Regeneration Board Meeting 30th January 2019 Tech Park, UOC, Bognor Regis Campus

1. Tour of Tech Park facility

The Board thanked Professor Seamus Higson for the interesting tour of the exciting new Tech Park facility.

2. BID Update – Paul Wells Chair BID Board

The BID map was displayed, and it was confirmed that, as voted for by businesses, all eligible business rate payers within the area have to pay the 1.5% levy on business rates. There are 11 BID Board directors, and 4 key priorities:

Welcoming – including branding and promotion via commissioned agency Vinco Marketing (Love Bognor Regis brand) and events. Vacancy rates seem stable – audit being done soon, with some churn. Events at Halloween and Christmas went well, with more planned for 2019. Christmas media campaign co-ordinated all town activities for the first time, very successful, with footfall up on last year bucking national trends.

Clean and safe – Community Warden working with Police and making a difference, Shopwatch radios now being used by 32 outlets and soon going digital. The BID purchased the DISC system for centralised and secure reporting of crime and antisocial behaviour which is working well. A formal Business Crime Reduction Partnership being developed as a governance framework for the Police to share intel back to the BID

Evening and Night-time economy – promotional support for food and drink businesses

Better parking – free parking 20,000 new discs sold in first month including a voucher booklet to promote local spending.

Levy collection is undertaken by Arun DC and is going well with high rates of collection and a defined escalation process for late payment. Vulnerable national chains were mentioned such as New Look and Bon Marche, however most outlets are already independent with more moving in and they are more resilient to national retail trends.

3. Gardens by the Sea Progress

Hothamton Site: Pavilion Park: aiming to achieve planning consent during 2019 and work to be completed on the new park by 2021. It will create a better space and be more of an attraction than the current provision, and designs include entertainment & events space, play area and car parking in a well-lit environment. Landscape designers LUC have been appointed to undertake detailed design and planning, and their previous experience of similar work is impressive.

Phase 2 will be the residential development to the west of the site with commercial ground floor. Arun DC has been working with NHS Property and the Clinical Commissioning Group to try and get a decision regarding their future plans.

Regis site is continuing in the background via liaison with stakeholders.

4. The Track creative digital hub

This is the newly named Creative Digital shared workspace at Bognor Regis railway station. An update was received from WSCC. The 20 year lease is close to be finalised with Network Rail, planning is granted, operator Town Square in place and working with the sector group and contractor Kier appointed. There will be 1 month mobilisation followed by 5 month contract period so targeting opening later in 2019. Designs are by HemingwayDesign for 2 ground floor spaces (195m²) and a mezzanine (147m²) providing c 50 desk spaces, offices plus ancillary facilities. Total investment circa £1.2m with strategic links to University as there are clear connections with Tech Park subjects.

5. Saltbox

After the failed LEP bid for gap funding the scheme was recast for feasibility and deliverability and is resubmitted to planning currently. It comprises 300,000sq ft of space creating up to 500 new jobs, and will deliver all required infrastructure for the site. Landlink hope to start on site in May for Phase 1 of the scheme; signed up tenants are Warburtons (distribution centre) and Aldi. A car dealership is close to being agreed. There are 2 drive-thrus with Starbucks and a hot food outlet are lined up for, and other B1/B8 space. Arun DC was thanked for referring businesses seeking premises. Potential transport issues were raised and it was reported that WSCC Highways traffic impact was “modest”,

and the change of use to retail would spread traffic more evenly across the day. There are wider and more serious traffic issues locally – A29, A27 etc. Tendering will include the requirement for local engagement to keep local money within the area. It was agreed the Board would support the planning application.

6. Royal Hotel

Nick Laurence presented their plans for the landmark building which have been submitted to planning. Previous local projects were Ashley House and St Joseph's which were converted for Butlin's staff accommodation and have been well received by all. Nick viewed Bognor Regis as a place on the up where they would pursue other investment opportunities. The proposal is that the Royal Hotel will retain a restaurant on the Jack Rabbit Slims site, and the rest of the building plus an extension over the restaurant site would be good quality apartments. The parlous condition of the building means this is an expensive process. It was agreed the Board would support the planning application.

7. University Student Accommodation

The investment in the new facility was £30.4m There are 300 new students now and will be 1200-1500 when fully occupied. The Uni has actively engaged with 120 businesses locally and sub-regionally around consultancy, work experience, degree courses and apprenticeships and is targeting 280 more. There is a planning application submitted for 176 student accommodation units on the campus near the Tech Park; it is a rework of a previous app for 136 units as students are increasingly self-funding and more cost-sensitive, thus preferring a smaller and cheaper unit. It would be planned to be open for September 2020 intake. It was agreed the Board would support the planning application.

8. London Road lorry park development

This Arun DC owned land is much underused and will be marketed for sale for student accommodation via appointed agents GVA – please direct your interest to property.estates@arun.gov.uk. Car parking will be retained and there will be a new entrance to the adjacent Hotham Park. It was asked where existing lorries would go and this is still under consideration.

It was agreed that there continues to be a positive investment environment and activity in the town.

9. AOB

Caroline Wood from Coastal West Sussex Partnership reported that 12 University of Chichester students have signed up to become STEM Ambassadors.

Caroline also confirmed that they had secured funding for a project to promote the area as a watersports destination, and the person has recently been appointed.

It was reported that Arun DC was applying for the Future High Streets Fund for Bognor Regis; if successful at Expression of Interest phase, application could be up to £25m, but more likely £5-10m for transformational capital projects. The Expression of Interest process requires a statement of challenges for the town centre and the high-level vision in place to address these challenges. The Chair reported that as part of her role on the national District Council Network Planning Executive, they were visiting a town in Belgium cited as an example of good practice in the recent Grimsey 2 Report.