

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL



15 JULY 2013 - 2:30PM

PRESENT: Councillor Chambers(Chairman), Councillor Mrs French(Vice-Chairman), Councillors Archer, Mrs Bucknor, Cornwell, Hodgson, Stebbing, Sutton and Swan
ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Councillors Murphy and Seaton.

APOLOGIES: Councillor Miss Hoy

Jane Bailey, Clive Gibbon, Anna Goodall, Phil Hughes, Alan Pain and Vicki Whittingstall

OSC7/13 PREVIOUS MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 3 June 2013 were agreed and signed.

*** FOR INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL ***

OSC8/13 PROGRESS OF CORPORATE PRIORITY - OPEN FOR BUSINESS INCLUDING FENLAND TOURISM BOARD UPDATE

Members considered the Progress of Corporate Priority - Open for Business including Fenland Tourism Board Update Report presented by Councillor Seaton.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

1. Councillor Mrs French stated that she has received complaints in the past when there is a planning application where employment is involved, Planning Officers should be aware of this type of information, but have stated that they are not always aware. Councillor Seaton confirmed that he was aware of an application with these issues that was refused, and stated that this will be made clear in the future;
2. Councillor Archer stated that a planning application should not automatically go through because there will be employment offered in the area. Councillor Seaton agreed and stated that these applications should be passed by him before a final decision is made, not automatically approved;
3. Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked how the Council is measuring value for money on grants that have been awarded. Councillor Seaton stated that this is for us to do once the money is awarded;
4. Councillor Sutton stated that the funding is to support the businesses to expand and recruit asked if there is any data available with regards to this. Councillor Seaton confirmed that the data is not contained within the report and agreed to circulate following the meeting;
5. Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked how Tinfish Creative was selected. Councillor Seaton confirmed that Tinfish Creative was selected following the standard procurement process. Alan Pain stated that he is happy to contact the procurement team for more details, and to circulate this to members following the meeting;
6. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that so many people still do not about the great start up facilities and the benefits on offer at the business centres. Councillor Seaton stated that the Council have to look at ways to improve the occupancy rates at the business centres and this is why Tinfish have been commissioned to assist with the marketing project;
7. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that the report refers to the business centre's conference

facilities, which in the last financial year created a turnover of £147,580 hosting 1475 events, and asked for clarification of these figures. Councillor Seaton agreed to look into the figures and feedback to the Panel;

8. Councillor Mrs French stated that with regards to the use of Tinfish, why have the Council not used any local agents? Councillor Seaton confirmed that local agents have been used in the past and the results have not been what we had been expecting. We really needed to get this expertise from out of the area;
9. Councillor Sutton stated that Tinfish are referred to as Local Marketing Experts in the report, but they have no web presence. Councillor Mrs French confirmed that currently the website is being re-built;
10. Councillor Sutton stated that the report refers to a financial surplus of £75,000 and asked why this figure is differs from data received at the Corporate Governance Committee meeting last week. Alan Pain stated that he was unsure which report the Councillor was referring to from the Corporate Governance Committee, but agreed to get clarification and feedback to the panel;
11. Councillor Mrs French stated that the report refers to 46 enquiries for business centre accommodation, and asked what the outcome of these enquiries was, and if there was any data available. Councillor Seaton confirmed that there had been 4 new occupants as a result of those enquiries and agreed to circulate more details;
12. Councillor Mrs French stated that in future it would be useful to have more detailed data with regards to businesses moving in;
13. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that she believed that wind farms would be more supported if the return was going to the local people and asked if FDC would benefit from the renewable wind farm projects referred to in the report, or if they would consider this approach. Councillor Seaton stated that he was unable to confirm if FDC were to benefit from these projects, but agreed to investigate further and feedback to the panel;
14. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that this approach has been implemented elsewhere in the country. Councillor Mrs French stated that other sites contribute financially towards education and community projects, so FDC are getting something back for the local people;
15. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that we should be looking at ways of cutting the cost of people's use of electricity. Councillor Seaton agreed to investigate further and feedback to the panel;
16. Councillor Archer stated that the applicants say that they would be happy to increase the size of the wind farm area to benefit the local community. Councillor Seaton agreed to investigate further and feedback to the panel;
17. Councillor Archer asked if there is a wider implication of not investing in the port. Councillor Seaton confirmed that FDC are going to invest in the Nene Frontage including the Port, however there is not a business case to invest the £1 million on the port alone;
18. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that some time ago investigations were made into attracting ships from the Eastern Block, as these ships were smaller than 90 feet long. These ships have not changed and this is an opportunity that we should still be investigating. Our port charges are attractive, even though we are a little further. Councillor Seaton confirmed that there are very few shipping lines who use that type of ship as it is not economical to run them;
19. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that she would like to feel confident that Fenland are being proactive with regards to international investment. Councillor Seaton confirmed that this is in hand, stating that progress has been a little slower than usual due to some personnel changes;
20. Councillor Stebbing stated that he noticed that there had been no mention in the report about the Kings Dyke Railway Crossing. Councillor Seaton stated that this is a long report, and that just a few points had been highlighted within it;
21. Councillor Stebbing asked for a Broadband update. Clive Gibbon stated that we are dependent on BT who are the supplier, we are reliant on their roll-out programme;
22. Councillor Mrs French asked if the an update can be provided to the panel next month. Clive Gibbon agreed;

23. Councillor Archer stated that there have been reports in the press that say that superfast broadband will reach 95% of the population by 2017, 2 years after the 2015 target. Clive Gibbon confirmed that he would investigate these reports further at the next meeting;
24. Councillor Mrs French asked when the next meeting taking place. Clive Gibbon confirmed that the next meeting is scheduled for August;
25. Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked for up to date figures of the Moy Park employees made redundant, and stated that following this redundancy the company recruited 60 agency staff last week. Councillor Seaton confirmed that 150 have attended on site meetings with providers to get advice on self-employment, housing and council tax benefit, and to attend training with a view to secure future employment.
26. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that there have been a lot of people affected by this and asked that this level of support continues. Clive Gibbon confirmed that FDC have been keeping communications open with Moy Park, and will follow this up.

Fenland Tourism Board Update

Councillor Cornwell presented an update from the Fenland Tourism Board, thanking staff and members for their support and reminding everybody that this Board is a direct product of this Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Members asked questions, made comments and received responses as follows:

1. Councillor Mrs French asked for clarification on the events organised by the Tourism Board asking them to be mindful of events that are already arranged in towns and villages. Councillor Cornwell confirmed that the Tourism Board Fairs will take place on different days;
2. Councillor Mrs French stated that the report makes no mention of the St Georges Day event in March. Councillor Cornwell stated that the Board decided that they would support one event in each town, but we were too late for the St Georges Day event so agreed to support the summer event;
3. Councillor Mrs French stated that she has had a report from a lady who owns a bed and breakfast in Wisbech, that a member of staff in the Wisbech one stop shop informed a tourist, making enquiries, that there was no bed and breakfast accommodation in the area. Councillor Cornwell agreed that this was a concern but stated that we are looking into training opportunities in the one stop shops;
4. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that people could just have been directed to the tourism shop in Wisbech. Councillor Cornwell confirmed that the two outlets hold the same information, and there are brochures in both;
5. Councillor Mrs French stated that she has been trying to get an agreement that March can hold a Christmas Market. Councillor Cornwell stated that he was not able to confirm this either and suggested that it was not a question for the Tourism Board;
6. Councillor Mrs French stated that the Christmas Market had been discussed at the Town Council Meeting, and everybody is agreed that it would be a great event for March to hold. Councillor Cornwell agreed that the Christmas Market, if done correctly, would bring people into the area, but suggested that this matter be raised with the Events Team;
7. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that Tesco had agreed to provide and put in place 2 tourist information terminals, and asked if this was still planned. Councillor Mrs French confirmed that under section 106 Tesco have to provide the terminals as agreed by law;
8. Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked what sort of terminals were going to be installed, and where would they be placed. Councillor Cornwell stated that he did not have the details, but that if there was an opportunity for something to be provided free, then the Board had no problem with it. Councillor Mrs French confirmed that Tesco are to provide touch screen terminals inside the shop;
9. Councillor Mrs Bucknor asked about tourism opportunities within the Wash. Councillor Cornwell stated that there are a number of harbours within the Wash itself, and that Kings Lynn are using their water frontage to attract visitors; a meeting has taken place to look into the possibility of joint marketing. We are considering targeting the boat users to see what

opportunities there are to better promote the Wash. We have articles in boating magazines and we have had a tremendous amount of publicity. We are also looking at promoting Fenland in the Netherlands, looking to convert the wind farms into tourist attractions;

10. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that she has heard that there is an antique and collectors fair, but has not seen the event advertised anywhere. Councillor Cornwell confirmed that the Board works through third parties and not directly organising that event. He stated that he presumes that everything is in hand, things will get better, we as a board are learning all the time;
11. Councillor Archer asked who is responsible for the gateway signs into the towns, as they are often overgrown and untidy. Councillor agreed to look into this;
12. Councillor Archer asked how the Cambridgeshire Fens are being promoted. Councillor Cornwell stated that the board took the decision that they would have to produce some hard copies of the brochure, which contains lots of information about the website, there are distribution figures available for the brochures. There have been a reasonable number of hits on the website, these could be improved on. The board want to encourage everybody involved to use the Cambridgeshire Fens logo and website links, and confirmed that these are being used more and more;
13. Councillor Archer stated that Cambridgeshire Fens promotion is focussed out of towns. Councillor Cornwell stated that we are trying very hard to make connections with businesses within the towns, who are related to tourism, to talk to us and get involved;
14. Councillor Mrs French asked if the March Society are in touch with the Tourism Board. Councillor Cornwell confirmed that they are in touch, and that the heritage days are very successful events. There is a volunteer for this area and she passes on any information she thinks we will find useful;
15. Councillor Swan stated that Whittlesey is part of Fenland, yet when it comes to promoting the Straw Bear Festival which is a huge event in this area; it is Peterborough City Council that promotes this event as their own. Councillor Cornwell confirmed that the board are planning to meet with the Straw Bear Festival Committee to look at promotion. We are here to help and want to be involved, but our resources are limited;
16. Councillor Swan informed members that bronze age log boats that were found in Whittlesey have been moved and will be displayed in Peterborough, in all the publicity around the find, there has been no mention of Fenland. When visitors come to Whittlesey and ask about the log boats, we have to send them to Peterborough. Councillor Cornwell agreed that this was an opportunity for Fenland and agreed to investigate further;
17. Councillor Swan stated that there also needs to be tourism links with the RSPB on the Wash, he suggested that the Tourism Board contact Charlie Kitchin;
18. Councillor Swan stated that this year Whittlesey held a very successful cycle race day, next year's event will take place just 2 weeks before the Tour De France comes to the UK. Cycling is a fast growing sport, and from a tourism point of view, there will be a lot of people that will be interested in this. Councillor Cornwell stated that the board heard about the cycle race in Whittlesey a little late, but that they are hoping to be more involved in this event next year. Councillor Swan stated that we should not be letting Peterborough take ownership of these successful events;
19. Councillor Mrs Bucknor stated that with regards to food producers within Fenland, she met a butcher in Wisbech who has won the best black pudding in the world, we should be making the most of these opportunities and use them to promote the area. Councillor Cornwell agreed, and stated that if anyone has information about a local food producer, please pass their details onto Vicki Whittingstall.

Councillor Chambers thanked the Officers and Members for attending the meeting today and answering the questions put to them from the Panel.

Councillor Swan declared a non-pecuniary Interest in this item by virtue of that fact that he is employed by Hanson Brick.

OSC9/13 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2012/2013

Members considered the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2012/13 presented by Anna Goodall.

Members approved the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2012/13 for submission to Full Council.

OSC10/13 FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the Future Work Programme 2013/14 for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

- Members had been asked if they would be happy to change the date of the October meeting as the Council Chamber was not available, or if they would prefer to change the venue. Members decided that they would prefer to change the venue as the date was already secured in their diary

Members agreed the Future Work Programme 2013/14 for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel subject to the amendment above.

4.20pm

Chairman