

107/EC REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS

No requests for dispensations had been received from Councillors.

108/EC PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no questions from members of the public.

109/EC MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Sub-Committee received the minutes of the Economic Development Sub-Committee meeting held on 14 May 2014.

Minute reference 99/EC (Economic Development Plan): it was questioned whether the ownership of the Waterborne Walk land had been clarified. S Hughes would try to determine whether Central Bedfordshire Council owned the land.

Minute reference 100/EC (Local Business Economy): a query was raised regarding whether the Chamber of Commerce had been contacted about their summer event. Contact had been made and the event had similar aspirations to the informal Business Networking Events run by the Partnership Committee over the last two years.

Minute reference 101/EC (Market Bursary Scheme): it was clarified that officers should be advising applicants and ensuring documentation was in order, prior to seeking approval of applications by the Chair and Town Clerk. The Sub-Committee requested that an update be brought to the next meeting regarding how many of the 2013-2014 bursary recipients were still trading. It was noted that one or two bursaries were still available for 2014-2015 and that the Christmas Market might present an opportunity to promote the scheme to potential new traders.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Economic Development Sub-Committee meeting held on 14 May 2014 be approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly.

110/EC RESIDENTS' SURVEY

By invitation, Lisa Mason of M-E-L Ltd attended the meeting to present data and conclusions arising from the recent telephone and face-to-face surveys undertaken with residents.

Following an inception meeting in July 2014 to discuss the brief for the survey, 400 face to face interviews had taken place at key locations in the town centre and a further 200 telephone interviews had taken place. 73% of those questioned lived within Leighton-Linslade. A comprehensive report with full analysis of the data obtained was being finalised and would be circulated within the next week.

In addition to the interviews, three focus group meetings had taken place in three different locations and targeting different age groups.

The overall aim had been to find out people's perceptions of the town centre and why they visited it, or not.

A very positive 72% of respondents saw the town as a good place to shop, visit and do business. A significant number of respondents (24%) used the town centre on a daily basis. This tended to be mainly younger people and those who walked into the centre. A trend indicated a more frequent shopping pattern, with people buying little and often.

67% of respondents felt the town centre was very easy to get to from home, with a further 25% stating it was fairly easy. However, access by public transport was a potential issue, particularly in the evening and partly due to services being provided across county boundaries. Parking was felt to be sufficient, but traffic congestion was a factor preventing some respondents from accessing the town centre.

Overall, respondents expressed a preference to support their local market town and enjoyed the traditional High Street layout and the number of independent shops. 92% agreed that the market made a positive contribution to the town. The main factor in deciding to shop elsewhere was the lack of variety of shops and in particular the lack of clothing stores or national chain stores. Respondents felt forced to shop elsewhere in order to have sufficient choice.

The Sub-Committee noted the positive overall comments and thanked those involved for the quality of the data captured. A full report would be available before the next Partnership Committee meeting. It was noted that there would be a significant amount of data to review in order to formulate future action plans.

RESOLVED to note the information and await the full report on the residents' survey.

111/EC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

The Sub-Committee received an updated work plan from Central Bedfordshire Council, providing information on progress to date on the agreed actions for the year, including key employer visits, Business Timebank and Let's Talk Business activity and other business engagement projects.

Discussion took place regarding promotion of the apprenticeships programme in order to help local employers recruit those with relevant skills. This could potentially be promoted at the 2015 Business Networking event and officers would discuss further with local business networking groups.

RESOLVED to note the information.

112/EC FOOTFALL SURVEY

By invitation, Steve Lakin (Walking and Cycling Officer, Central Bedfordshire Council) attended the meeting with regard to footfall information obtained during a recent survey undertaken through the Travel Choices initiative.

Two footfall surveys had been undertaken per year for the last two years, in April and September. The four surveys, when compared to historic data, showed a consistency in trends.

Surveys indicated highest footfall in the immediate town centre area of the High Street and Waterborne Walk. The results highlighted the need previously identified in the Signage Strategy for improved signage to the mews and alleys.

Information on the main routes used to access the town centre was not included and it was discussed that commissioning a survey to determine this could be very useful.

RESOLVED to note the information.

The meeting closed at 2105 hours.

I HEREBY CONFIRM THAT THE FOREGOING IS A TRUE AND ACCURATE RECORD OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6 OCTOBER 2014.

Chair

8 JANUARY 2015