

BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT UPDATE

Business support

Key employer visits - This continues to take place in Leighton-Linslade and includes visits to BE Aerospace and Calnex Electronics by the HM Lord-Lieutenant. Peli Bio Thermal was visited by Richard Carr, Chief Executive and Jodie Yandall, Head of Investment and Employment from Central Bedfordshire Council, at a launch event for its new Service Centre serving the global pharmaceuticals sector including the reconditioning of the innovative Crêdo Cube™ range.

Innovation Bridge - this ERDF project which links businesses to university support ended in the summer. An independent evaluation of this project is taking place, however several businesses from Leighton-Linslade have been involved in the project including a brewery and a cake shop. CBC has submitted an application for funding for Innovation Bridge 2 which would allow the project to continue. Feedback from the Funding body on whether the bid has been successful is expected in April 2016.

Business networking event - The business support team are working with the Town Council to help plan for the Spring Networking Event on the 20 April 2016 at Astral Park. We will continue to promote attendance through our local networks and newsletters.

New Businesses – According to figures supplied by EGi, there have been 27 commercial deals completed in the Leighton-Linslade area since April 2015. The split per quarter is as follows:

Q1:	9
Q2:	8
Q3:	8
Q4:	3

The business type split is as follows:

Mixed Industrial	11
Distribution	4
Retail	6
Office	5
Medical	1
Café	1

In the last quarter there continued to be much interest in the Leighton Linslade area across all business types but there has been a slight tailing off of completed deals in the last quarter. The feedback from the commercial agents is that there continues to be a shortage of any freehold land or industrial units but they are receiving positive feedback about Leighton's proximity to the new A5 – M1 link, which should create further interest in the area as a result of the improved connectivity to the M1.

At the time of writing we believe that one of the UK's largest independent Transport businesses will shortly be moving into Spinney Park, creating potentially up to 100 new jobs for the area. Further details will be provided in due course.

Be Central Bedfordshire – The ‘Be Central Bedfordshire’ inward investment campaign continues to go from strength to strength. Since the launch of the website www.becentralbedfordshire.co.uk, there have been more than 10,000 visitors to the site and in excess of 950 property and development searches. As a result of this and a strengthening of our working relationships with local and national property agents, the Be Central Bedfordshire website the Business Investment team has managed 167 enquiries so far this year (April 15 – March 16) which is a 94% increase from the same period in in 2014/15.

Employment and Skills

From the start of this year’s academic year in August to the end of March, 140 Leighton Buzzard residents had attended courses run by the Central Bedfordshire Council’s Employment and Skills Service. The Service supports those who are unemployed, or those who have below a level 2 qualification. To date, 11 of the 37 employed learners have gone on to further learning and of the 109 unemployed learners, 4 have gained employment, 23 have gone into further learning and 12 are now working as volunteers.

Work Clubs, supported by the Service, offer information, advice, guidance and practical support with activities such a CV creation to people looking for employment. Throughout the academic year, the Leighton Buzzard Work Club has run on Tuesdays and Thursdays attracting 156 visitors in the period September 2015 to March 2016.

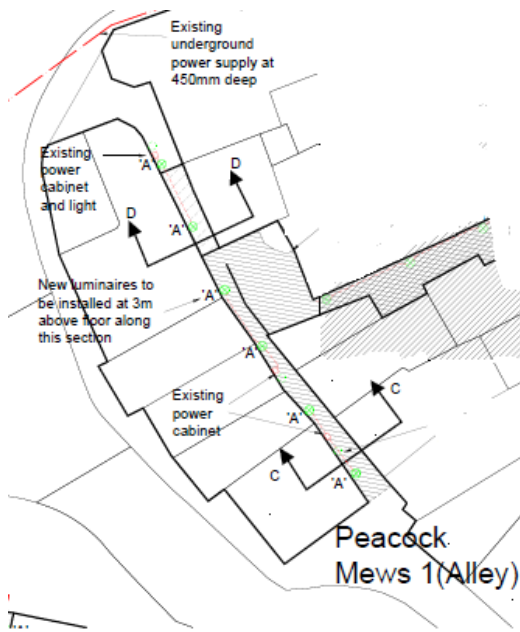
Market Towns Programme

Market Town Regeneration Fund

The Council received a total of 11 bids for the Market Town Regeneration Fund. The Assessment Panel met on 4th April to review the bids and agree recommendations to go to the Executive Committee on 7th June 2016. Each bidder will receive feedback in April.

Alleyways and Mews – Pilot lighting project at Peacock Alley

CBC and the Town Council have been working together on lighting improvements to Peacock Alley as part of a pilot improvement scheme.



A contractor was selected and delivered the new light fittings in December 2015. The new lighting has increased the attractiveness of the alley and the businesses within it.

2. Regeneration of the land south of Leighton Buzzard High Street

CBC has published a development prospectus, a Strategic Delivery Framework for Leighton-Linslade. This document highlights areas for investment/development as well as promoting Leighton-Linslade's individual culture, heritage and strengths.

The document is on our Be Central Bedfordshire Website, link:

http://www.becentralbedfordshire.co.uk/Property_and_Development/Enabling%20delivery.

3. New Enabling Delivery Team

A new team has recently been established in Central Bedfordshire Council's Regeneration and Business Directorate to enable the delivery of key investment and capital projects. The Enabling Delivery Team will work across the council, with stakeholders and businesses to ensure regeneration and development in our towns are taken forward efficiently and delivered in a way that maximises the benefits for our communities.

Marc Howard is the Programme Manager for Leighton-Linslade. Marc is in the process of meeting stakeholders and can be contacted on the details below.

High Street Vacancy Levels

The national town centre vacancy rate was 8.7% in January 2016, down from the 9.1% rate reported in October 2015 (BRC/ Springboard Footfall and Vacancies Monitor). This is the lowest reported rate since such rates were first collected in July 2011. Caution regarding this data is needed, as there is evidence that the pop-ups and temporary lets seen in vacant units in the run-up to Christmas have remained in-situ.

Monitoring "High Street" vacancies by counting all vacant A class premises within the town centre boundaries has shown a total of 78 vacant units (8.6% of all units) in town centres in

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Central Bedfordshire. This is an increase of 9 units since the previous quarter, with both Biggleswade and Leighton Buzzard seeing increases. Dunstable remains the town with the most vacant premises, but has seen a fall of 3 since August 2015. Data from the BRC / Springboard Footfall and Vacancies Monitor shows that the national vacancy rate in January 2016 was 8.7%, meaning that Central Bedfordshire as a whole and all towns, except Dunstable, are below the national rate.

Town Centre Retail Vacancies, February 2016

Town	February 2015	May 2015	August 2015	November 2015	February 2016	% of all A class premises
Amphill	2	1	0	2	2	2.2
Arlesey	1	1	1	1	1	6.7
Biggleswade	11	7	4	5	10	6.9
Dunstable	52	47	50	47	47	17.7
Flitwick	1	1	1	1	1	2.6
Houghton Regis	1	2	2	1	1	3.4
Leighton Buzzard	7	7	4	7	11	5.4%
Sandy	4	4	4	3	3	4.5
Shefford	1	0	0	1	1	2.5
Stotfold	0	0	0	1	1	5.6
Total	80	70	66	69	78	8.6%