

Briefing note for Overview and Scrutiny Committee

10th September 2019

Chichester Vision, Chichester BID and the retail offering and Southern Gateway

Members of the Committee are asked to note that, with the knowledge of the Committee Chairman, no member or officer will be present to address this item. The paper is therefore to note.

When presenting the Visions for the Council we must also remember, in addition to the Chichester Vision, there are four other vision groups in the District in Midhurst, Petworth, Selsey and East Wittering and Bracklesham.

The key aims of the Chichester Vision are:

1. To deliver the objectives within the 'Vision' for Chichester which takes account of current and likely future economic, cultural, heritage, lifestyle, technological, social and planning policy factors and influences.
2. To ensure that the Vision is at the heart of future economic and planning policy for the City, and accordingly to inform and guide the Council's Corporate Plan, Economic Development Strategy and Local Plan review, and to guide and where appropriate, future decision-making.
3. To ensure Chichester competes strongly against other towns and cities by being:
 - A popular and forward-thinking location attractive to entrepreneurs, employers and employees
 - A first-class 'destination' for shoppers
 - A popular and attractive destination for day and staying visitors
 - One of England's cultural and heritage 'centres of excellence'
 - An important administrative centre for West Sussex

The Vision has three themes and all of the projects relate to these:

1. 'Living' – An Accessible and Attractive City
2. 'Working' – A Vibrant and Growing Economy
3. 'Visiting' – A Leading Visitor Destination

The four larger and transformational projects are part of the Growth Deal with WSCC which sits under the Vision these are; the Southern Gateway Regeneration, the Transport feasibility study, the Northern Gyratory and the Gigabyte projects.

- **Southern Gateway Regeneration Project**
This project is being led by Chichester District Council. The largest regeneration project in the city for a generation it will transform the Southern entrance point to the City and the development of 30 acres of largely

brownfield land in and around the railway/bus transport hub, including land owned by the District Council, the project has the potential to deliver 21,600 m² business/leisure/retail floor space, create 1,137 new jobs and deliver 365 dwellings. The Local Enterprise Partnership has awarded £5m to the District Council to support the project. A collaboration agreement has been signed with WSCC and the project is now out for the procurement of a master developer under a competitive dialogue process the results of which are due to come back to OSC in November before being reported to Cabinet and Council.

A separate attached presentation provides further detail for members.

- **Transport Feasibility Study**

This project is being led by WSCC. A Chichester Sustainable Transport Plan and Chichester Vision Transport Feasibility Study is nearing completion, following workshops with stakeholder. The Study will seek to prioritise transport interventions in the city to support Local Plan growth and improve access, improve air quality and reduce severance to areas of the city. The study will also help to inform any future work for West Street and the Hornet.

- **Northern Gyratory**

Following the completion of the transport study, WSCC will look to undertake a feasibility study of the land on the Northern Gyratory, its connection to North Street and the Northgate car park

- **West Sussex Gigabyte Project**

The project being led by WSCC will deliver gigabyte capable fibre to public buildings in order to support future delivery of public services. Core Network Construction is currently being undertaken and will be completed this summer. All sites are expected to be handed over upon completion in September and all connections are due to be completed towards the end of the year. Following this business vouchers will be rolled out to enable local business to connect to the fibre significantly increasing their connection speeds.

A number of smaller projects under the Chichester Vision that help to transform the city include:

- An improvement to the **'Look and Feel' of the City** - this sub group led by the BID has enabled a number of improvements to the city centre, which has included additional street and furniture cleaning, improvements to a planting scheme and removal of some clutter in the centre. Signage options have been considered for the city centre and a way finding specialist has been engaged to present options back to the next vision steering group meeting.
- The condition of the **pavements** is now a priority and the partners WSCC, Chichester City Council and the BID have met with the District Council to review options, costs and funding opportunities. WSCC have confirmed that they only have budget to continue with Health and Safety repairs.

The options to consider, but not limited to, will be reported back through the steering group are:

1. Continue to patch repair to address Health and Safety concerns
 2. An interim measure i.e. the use of coloured tarmac down the centre of the streets (following a discussion with planners around the historic setting of this option)
 3. To produce a full public realm scheme for the City.
- **Retail** - Members may have heard of the “Refurbishment and Improvement to Shop Fronts and Facades” scheme. A number of independent retailers have participated in a workshop programme organised by the District Council through use of Pooled Business Rates. These workshops were designed to increase knowledge and skills, and provide a rounded view of retailing best practice, enabling changes within business, to see increased growth and improve productivity. In total across the district, 126 in store sessions have been delivered and 51 businesses have attended workshops. Retailers who have attended the Retail Training Programme have been able to apply for a shop front grant to improve the frontage of their shops.
 - With the Vision partners there have been a number of discussions around improving the **student offer**. The College is very enthusiastic about working with the partners to develop the student’s curriculum to bring student markets or street theatre to the City. The University has said that they could potentially provide music students for key activities or events in the future.
 - The **culture and tourism** offer is essential for the economic vibrancy of the City and surrounding area, the district is supporting and working with Pallant House Gallery and the Festival Theatre on a number of projects. A key project that is emerging is a celebration event for the anniversary years in 2020. We will look for grant funding to support this. In addition to this the District is also financially supporting Visit Chichester and they will be in attendance today to share their activities in this area. Cllr Francis Hobbs is the District nominated director on the Board of Visit Chichester.
 - An **Events and Promotions Officer** has been appointed by the District Council and a survey is being undertaken to understand the types of events which are required to benefit the area. The Events and Promotions Officer has been working with key partners to raise the profile of the area through events. Responses from the survey will be considered later in the summer and will feed into the Events Strategy. A summer street food event was held on the 22nd of August and a new style Christmas market is being investigated for this Christmas.
 - The **night time economy** is essential for supporting the day time retail offer as well as supporting the local economy, under the lead of the BID, late-night shopping in the lead-up to Christmas continues to be offered, with Christmas Lights and events. The Christmas Park and Ride will be provided for this period to assist customers and retailers.

Under the vision there are also a number of longer term projects including the potential pedestrianisation of West Street and an appraisal of the Hornet/St Pancras as well as Market Avenue car parks. This work would need to follow the completion of the Transport feasibility studying being undertaken by WSCC and would help to transform the city by calming the traffic as well as providing an entertainment area.

In addition to the Chichester Vision there are four Vision groups across the district working in Midhurst, Petworth, Selsey and East Wittering and Bracklesham Bay. In summary details of each are as follows:

Midhurst Vision

The vision group is now well established in Midhurst and a number of smaller projects have been completed by the partnership including general upkeep of the Green spaces by a very active green spaces group, the resurfacing of the North Street car park and painting of street infrastructure is due to start soon. The Midhurst vision group felt it was important to deliver some of these smaller projects as well as refreshing the vision for the Town.

The vision group has developed its own logo and website and the partnership have launched a community consultation exercise and will be holding a number of stakeholder workshops to update the vision and delivery mechanism in the future. A number of the partners have contributed financially towards this process.

Petworth Vision

Petworth already has an established community interest company and vision delivery plan. The Town Council also has a number of smaller projects that the district is supporting, for example, the provision of a skate park. The district is working with both organisations to help improve the appearance and bring employment opportunities to the town. The key action is an option appraisal of the Old Bakery property to convert and enhance the entrance point from the car park to provide a refurbished facility to accommodate retail, offices and possibly accommodation. This will be reported back to Cabinet at the end of the year.

Selsey Vision

The Selsey Vision group have looked at existing vision documents and plans and created a new action plan, this action plan embraced five of the actions from the Selsey Haven work completed by Royal Haskoning and Marshall Regen in 2017:

1. Develop trails and improve signage
2. Provide New Temporary Commercial Units or Concession Opportunities
3. Employ a Seafood Sales & Marketing Champion
4. Develop and Host Crab and Lobster Events
5. Improve the Public Realm at East Beach, including Wayfinding between East Beach Green and Selsey High Street.

The partnership group, led by Selsey Town Council, also agreed that some additional consultation work should be carried out with the community and developed a logo and a website to communicate the actions of the vision.

The “Sea’s the Day” project linked to the Haven actions has recently been completed to re-engage the town with its fishing heritage, producing a book, short film and recipes cards. There is also an exhibition at the Novium Museum to highlight the importance of the Selsey fishing Industry to the local heritage.

Work has also started on an options appraisal to transform the East Beach kiosk and toilet facilities to improve the offer to residents and tourists and provide local employment.

East Wittering and Bracklesham Bay Vision

This is a latest vision group to be formed starting this financial year. The Parish Council have a number of projects that they would like to develop further with the support of the District Council. They have developed an outline vision statement and are planning to consult with the community in September.

They have already registered a website domain and designed a logo for the consultation. The option appraisal in Bracklesham Bay is underway looking at the development opportunities for the Foreshore Office, café facilities, toilets and open space. This will provide suitable accommodation for our services as well as enhancing the offer to residents and tourists and providing employment. The option appraisal work will be completed in the autumn and will be reported to Cabinet.

Chichester BID

The Chichester Business Improvement District was voted in for a second term in October 2016 for a period of four years to deliver four main priorities:

1. Partnership working
2. Business Opportunity
3. Safer and more Organised Streets
4. Promotion of the City Centre

The Chichester BID area is made up of approximately 675 city centre businesses that are statutorily required to pay a 1.25% levy of the rateable value of their premises into the BID.

Colin Hicks is the Chairman of the BID and Cllr Martyn Bell sits on the Board. The Chairman meets quarterly with the Chief Executive and Director of Growth and Place. In addition to this regular meetings are held with the Divisional Manager for Place and the Economic Development Manager with the BID officers to discuss projects and consider issues of mutual concern.

The Chairman also presents the annual performance of the BID to OSC and he will be attending the next meeting of OSC on the 19th of November.

The District, West Sussex and the City Councils provide a number of baseline statements setting out the level of services provided currently in the BID area, for example street cleaning. The BID levy must only be used to provide services over and above these baseline statements.

The BID allows the businesses to decide on the services and projects to be implemented within their trading environment using the funds generated from the BID Levy.

The BID is currently leading on a number of the Chichester Vision projects as mentioned earlier i.e. The 'Look and Feel' and the night time economy. They are also working with us on the retail training workshops. They have created a customer facing business directory and work closely with the Chichester Chamber of Commerce and industry.

Recently they have expanded the independent month, introducing the independent passport advertising the 190+ independents in the City and they worked with us to promote the District Council Summer Street Party in August. They have also introduced Chichester Gift Card Scheme which you can buy at a number of independent stores in the City and we must not forget the fabulous Christmas lights.

We are all aware of the changes effecting the high street and work with the BID to support the high street offer – this is a national trend and is not peculiar to Chichester. Retailers are trying to come to terms with:

- The shift to online shopping - 20% retail sales currently online and expected to rise to 30% within a few years.
- lower consumer confidence
- consumer preference for out of town options
- increasing staffing costs leading to cut backs on staffing at a time when the consumer is more demanding
- consumers looking for 'experiences' - younger consumers in particular moving away from owning things to spending on experiences.

Nevertheless, Chichester city is performing better than most with the current vacancy rate of 8.2% being lower than the South East average and lower than the national average at 11.5%.

To summarise therefore, the current work to support the High street, coordinated through the Vision group includes:

- Supporting the local tourism sector with £50k pa for five years, of investment in Visit Chichester.

- An appointment of a temporary Events and Promotions Officer for two years to attract visitors into the City and to coordinate an events programme working with national retailers and the BID.
- Reviewing the provision of street markets, supporting the farmers market and introducing a new Christmas market
- mentoring programme to support independent high street retailers in our City and rural towns and centres
- Grants to improve the external appearance of independent retail businesses
- An enabling grant programme open to all small businesses
- Business contact programme provided by our Economic Development Officers
- A way finding and signage project being led by the BID
- Improvements to the street furniture being led by the City Council
- Pop up Shop project – to be reported to the Cabinet meeting in September
- Review of the retail polices within the new local plan
- The delivery of a social media campaign – “Countdown to Christmas”.