

# Council Meeting – 8 October 2019

## Report of Councillor Marcus Kravis – Economic Development

### Section 1 – Asset Management

**1.1** Estates Surveyors continue to provide specialist expertise and guidance on Commercial Investment's Special Projects, notably on developments at Coal Orchard and Firepool and Commercial acquisitions.

**1.2** Individual achievements for quarter to date include:

Successful conclusion of the Leisure Procurement exercise with Council's 5 Leisure Sites now managed by SLM (trading as Everyone Active) for the next 8 months and 10 years. This lengthy exercise has resulted in a commercially beneficial arrangement for the Council moving from a Council funding arrangement to a positive financial contractual agreement of significant benefit to the Council.

**1.3** Land at Seaward Way – Heads of Terms of lease to Snazaroo. Heads of Terms are being negotiated for the second unit, rent to be agreed. The parcel of land to be transferred to Magna now has agreed Planning Permission for 40 homes.

**1.4** Taunton Technology Park refurbishment is near to completion upon which Assets will execute an agreed lease with Novanta for occupation of a second building.

**1.5** Taunton Garden Town – The team continue to provide support in implementing the Garden Town status with focus on formalising the agreed terms of management of the Country Park in Monkton Heathfield with the relevant Parish Councils, inputting in to the Public Open Space Improvement Plan by way of upgrading street furniture and bus shelters by way of digital advertising.

**1.6** The programme to acquire additional Housing Revenue Account dwellings for social rent, in order to increase the Council's stock of Affordable Housing and to utilise additional Right to Buy receipts continues. Properties are acquired at market values in areas where the Council already holds stock. Since June, 8 purchases have been completed and a further 7 purchases where terms have been agreed.

### Section 2 – Major Projects

#### 2.1 Coal Orchard

- Start on site 27<sup>th</sup> August, with a Spring 2021 completion.

- Initial diversions and site security established and being monitored as the site settles in
- Hoarding to be completed w/c 23<sup>rd</sup> Sept ready for promotional material
- Petition lodged to reopen Riverside Path
- Two “meet the builder” sessions held, well attended by residents and traders
- Awaiting news from Homes England fund bid. “Shovel Ready” bid for HSF being prepared for 27<sup>th</sup> Sept, following encouragement from MHCLG.

## **2.2 Firepool**

- Acquisitions completed, asbestos surveys undertaken to allow demolition quotes to be completed. Utilities disconnected.
- 2x Exec Firepool strategy monthly meetings held
- Next report due for December 19
- Multi-disciplinary design team appointed (BDP) 8 week programme for initial draft of revised masterplan work
- Commercial and Residential agents appointed.
- Brief for multi-purpose venue with Exec for comments
- Plans for community engagement sessions (public facing) for October underway, details tbc.

## **2.3 Brewhouse**

- TTA to briefed members on their offering and request for additional revenue support 2<sup>nd</sup> September
- Full council decision 8<sup>th</sup> October

## **2.4 Reconstruction of Watchet East Quay**

Soil Investigation (by Solis Ltd) and Structural analysis (by Crouch Waterfall) are being undertaken to ascertain the current structural integrity of the marina, including the East Quay Wall. The results of this are due in late October. These will be reviewed by our Consulting Engineer, Pick Everard.

Following on from this an Option Analysis will be developed to present the results of the structural analysis and present Executive with options in order to make a decision on the level of maintenance/reconstruction that will be carried out.

We forecast a timeline of:

- 3 month 2 stage procurement of a main contractor
- 3 month design of wall solution, led by main contractor, supported with consulting engineer

- 6-9 month construction/maintenance period

The intention is that we will approach Executive this year to report an outline project budget and to request a fee for design. Design is the basis upon which we will appoint our contractor to ensure that the procured solution is deliverable. This is based upon a previous procurement exercise that did not achieve what it intended. We aim to achieve a well thought out, fully designed, fully costed solution that is deliverable by our chosen contractor.

## **2.5 Seaward Way**

We intend to commence construction on our half of the site in mid-October of the two light industrial units. We have appointed Gates consultants to manage the delivery of the scheme and Devon Contractors to construct. The build programme should conclude by early June next year. We are delivering shell and core units, allowing for leases to carry out their own internal fit out.

We are currently agreeing heads of terms with two local companies who intend to take leases. One of these have had support from us to design their fit out and we know they are very keen to take out a lease due to the time they have already invested so we expect the units to be occupied very shortly after completion.

On the other half of the site which also has planning authority delegated to the local planning officer, we remain with the intent to sell this land to Magna Housing so that they can develop 40 homes for affordable rent adjacent our own half of the site. We have prepared a contract for the sale of land to Magna. They are continuing their due diligence e.g. design, costing, funding, of their scheme and are seeking further funding to support scheme viability. We continue to work with Magna and support them in their aim to build out their part of the scheme. Timescales are very much dependant on them.

## **Section 3 – Economic Development and Inward Investment**

### **3.1 Economic Development Strategy commission**

- Good progress on the economic development strategy is being made. Over 20 1:1 key stakeholders interviews will have been completed by the first week of October and surveys despatched and returned.
- 4 workshops have been arranged – one internal staff workshop and three others in Taunton, Williton and Wellington between 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> October.
- Some of the initial findings of the stakeholder engagement and surveys will be shared with us towards the end of September and introduced at the workshops.

### **3.2 European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) bid for Digital Innovation Centre on Firepool**

- We are working with the County Council on submitting an Expression of Interest for capital funding to build the first phase of a digital innovation centre on Firepool. The Expression of Interest (EOI) will be submitted by the end of September, but there is no guarantee of success and if we do proceed, a more detailed business plan will need to be developed.

### **3.3 Climate change programme**

- The team are working with the County on two workstreams related to the Climate Change programme which include the Business and Industry and Transport workstreams.

### **3.4 Business Rates Pilot**

- Somerset was successful in its application to Government to act as a national pilot in 2019/20 for Business Rates Retention, with the Somerset Growth Board being identified as providing strategic oversight for the Economic Growth and Productivity part of the funding.
- The anticipated total gain generated is circa £4m and business cases have been developed and taken to the Somerset Growth Board for approval.
- Somerset West and Taunton have been on the steering group shaping and informing the intended plans and future calls for proposals which are likely to be launched in September 2019. The areas covered include contributions towards:
  - Business support and Innovation – start up, entrepreneurship and scale up
  - Supply chain and business clusters
  - Inward Investment
  - Enabling and unlocking growth and development
  - Skills and apprenticeships
- Final sign off is expected in Autumn 2019 with funding calls likely to be announced from November onwards.

### **3.5 Inward Investment**

#### **Customer relationship management system**

- A customer relationship management system (CRM) has been procured which will be embedded within our Council website, with a banner to direct businesses to. This is expected to be launched in early October and staff training has been arranged for the economic development team.
- This system will allow us to engage more effectively with businesses and capture details related to their growth intentions and issues and follow up actions.
- It will also host a property search function and web based commercial property register for any prospective investor to be able to search through.

Monthly updates of properties will be provided by local agents and developers, enabling us to handle any property enquiries in a streamlined and effective manner. 90% of council enquiries are attracted by a good quality commercial property register.

### **3.6 Businesses looking to invest in the District (inward investment)**

- Since June 2019 through engagement with agents/developers and intermediaries, a pipeline of 34 good quality inward investment enquiries has been received, including 6 foreign direct investment enquiries with a potential to create several hundred jobs if they are converted.
- Engagement has been made with the Department for International Trade (DIT), the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Innovate UK to which has delivered:
  - 6 foreign direct investment enquiries for Somerset West & Taunton
  - access to DIT's pipeline of enquiries to pitch to more investors
  - export support and possible funding to our indigenous businesses to enable them to grow through exporting to new markets (Somerset has historically been largely overlooked by both DIT and Innovate UK)
  - joint working with the LEP to create a soft landing package to make it easier for investors to relocate to this area

### **3.7 We are making the most of our membership of Nuclear South West to:**

- Attract new inward investors to base themselves in Somerset West & Taunton on the back of their work at Hinkley Point C – 2 enquiries received so far.
- Provide the main contractors with information on the attractiveness of our area as a base for sub-contractors – costs provided showed locations in Somerset West & Taunton in a very favourable position.
- Work with local businesses to engage with the HPC project and pitch for contracts.

### **3.8 Business engagement with strategic businesses**

- We are engaging closely with key employers to better understand their current needs and priorities, help and/or signpost them to support available and create more and better jobs in the area.
- The first 5 visits of a new rolling programme have been undertaken as a result of which there has been assistance provided by the Council for 2 expansions/ relocations.

### **3.9 Affordable Employment land**

- The team is working on the development of the Somerset West and Taunton Local Development Order (LDO):

- Consultants have been successfully appointed after a competitive tender process to deliver a local authority wide LDO to provide small scale light industrial and office units for businesses, saving them time and money.
- The first draft report is expected early October 2019 and expected to be out for wider consultation during Autumn 2019.

### 3.10 Enterprising Minehead Update

- **Eastern Esplanade Development** – Phase One works started in March 2019. The developments include hard and soft landscaping work, two play areas, enhanced seating, planting, enhanced lighting and event space. The seafront enhancements have now been completed.

A proposal for Phase Two funding to roll out enhancements further east toward the Golf Course will be progressed this autumn. Pending bid decisions (expected over the winter), it is hoped the Phase Two enhancements can be developed in 2020 to include the following:

- Public realm enhancements to further section of seafront, new seating, enhanced lighting, landscaping, planting and roundel event space
  - Competition to refresh gabion open air gallery artwork
  - Support for a calendar of events
  - New beach activities and seafront esplanade pavement games
  - New eastern esplanade shelter (subject to funding/planning permission)
  - New event/notice board incorporated within existing shelter on seafront. (plus demolition of old Victorian event board in central plaza)
  - Minehead Bay branded artwork installations in poly carbonate to weather proof existing Edwardian shelters
  - Activity products / marketing
- **Artisan Markets** – these were held in 2018 and are continuing in 2019, running from Easter through to September. Feedback from visitors and stallholders has been really positive. This programme ran over a two year period and has now finished. Review of this scheme will be undertaken in the autumn to ascertain if the markets can continue without support.
  - **Guided Walk Ambassador Scheme** – 10 walks took place between March–Sept 2018 which exceeded expectations with over 70 people attending. Walks have continued throughout 2019. Details of guided walks can be found on [www.mineheadbay.co.uk](http://www.mineheadbay.co.uk). Guided walks will continue to be ongoing coordinated by the Minehead Tourist Information Centre.
  - **Minehead Bay website and branding** – the new Minehead Bay website was launched in June 2018. Minehead Tourist Information Centre (TIC) has received really positive feedback from the industry regarding the new destination website [www.mineheadbay.co.uk](http://www.mineheadbay.co.uk). The Minehead Bay brand was developed and launched in 2018 to attract new target markets and support programme of events activity. The intention is to re-position the

town in the minds of visitors. It provides a set of high quality professional branding tools and guidelines. Also branded merchandise is available in the Minehead TIC.

- **Minehead Maritime Mile Heritage Interpretation Trail, with Open Air Gallery & Augmented Reality App** – a new waymarked seafront heritage trail, gallery and App launched in June 2018. The mile long heritage trail was created to attract visitors and the community to use the seafront, encouraging them to walk all the way along to the harbour. The trail showcases Minehead's history and heritage of 'then and now' and how the resort has evolved over the last Century. Minehead TIC has received many favourable comments about the trail and relayed that visitors and residents alike have commented on finding it interesting comparing the Town to 'then and now'. Subject to funding (EM Phase Two) the open air gallery may evolve next season with a competition to replace the artwork.
- **Edwardian Shelter concession** – One of the Edwardian shelters has had one half converted in to an enterprising opportunity. A pilot deck chair hire concession was run over the 2019 summer holiday season. We have received feedback that the pilot was not as busy as anticipated, however the weather impacted greatly. The scheme will be reviewed with a view to proceed again next season.

### **3.11 Tourist Information Centres**

- A report was submitted to the Executive Committee in June 2019 for draw down of Hinkley Point C 106 money for a 3 year phased payment plan.
- Minehead, Porlock and Watchet TIC's receive funding in line with the Hinkley Point C Development Consent Order.
- Service Level Agreements (SLA's) are in place for the next 12 months with Minehead, Porlock and Watchet TICs. SLA's will be renewed annually for the 3 year period.

### **3.12 Employment Hubs**

- There are a range of offers being provided by the Hubs which include: fully funded distance learning courses with tutors to help. This includes courses as diverse as: Childcare and Education. Business Leadership and Management. Health and Social Care. Retail and Hospitality. Personal Development and Employability. Health and Well being.
- These courses hope to meet people's needs and requirements and are also mapped to the West Somerset Opportunity Area's (WSOA) Identified needs.
- There is a need for future funding to ensure the sustainability of the hubs and the role of a hub co-ordinator to facilitate and build on their success and future. A bid is being submitted to the Community Impact Mitigation (CIM) Fund team to extend the funding of the employment hubs beyond December 2019.

- The hubs have also continued to accommodate Hinkley Point C drop ins for people to find out more about future and current roles at HPC and how to register for work