



Minutes of the Meeting: 25th March 2010

Venue: The High Beech Hotel

Attendance: 65

Speakers: Abigail Gilbert, Communications Office, Sea Space
Paul Adams, Transport Manager, Sea Space
Virginia Gilbert, Head of Amenities, Waste & Leisure, Hastings Borough Council

Sea Space Projects Update

Abigail Gilbert gave updated the Chamber on Sea Space's projects:

- Lacuna Place
- One Priory Square
- Priory Square
- University Centre Hastings 2
- Enviro21
- The Exchange

- **Lacuna Place** is now 40% full.

- **One Priory Square & Lacuna Place** have been built for Inward Investment and are actively marketed across the region to attract 'external' businesses.

- The following have taken up residency: Heringtons, Tesco, Bibby Financial Services, Skills Training UK.

- Cost of space is £16.50 / sq ft.

Priory Square: Sea Space is in discussion with a restaurant group. It is hope this facility will open in late 2010

UCH2: work has begun on the expansion of UCH. UCH2 will be an extension to the back of the existing post office building. It is anticipated that the premises will be open for the start of the academic year in 2011. UCH2 will increase the capacity to 1200 student places. The Post Office will remain on the ground floor.

Enviro21: 4 units are now complete (2 large and 2 small). The units are targeted at light manufacturing / environmental technology

The Exchange: this facility will be located on the Enviro21 and will offer meeting space for local businesses and a restaurant. It is anticipated the facility will be open for business in Sept 2010.

Abigail also highlighted the **Sea Space networks:**

- Regular events
- Updates on business news, grants & funding, legislation
- Sector focus – digital media, manufacturing, environmental technologies

Sign up at: www.businessinhastings.com/networks

Questions posed to Abigail:

Pelham – is the project considered viable?

The Taskforce have indicated that the project will be only considered if it's viability can be

The Exchange – will it be open to all businesses?

The facility will be open to all local businesses during the week and the local community outside of the working day / week.

Queensbury House / Priory Street car park – what does the future hold?

The area is all part of the Priory Quarter 10 year master plan.

Sea Space Transport Update

Paul Adams gave an update on the following:

Link Road

- Planning permission granted
- Public Inquiry Nov/Dec 2009
- Compulsory Purchase Order decision awaited, but will now not be made before general election
- Preliminary early works (archaeological / wildlife) were due to start in summer 2010
- The road is crucial to the regeneration of Hastings & Bexhill. It will alleviate congestion around north Bexhill. It provides access to an 'environmental business corridor and much needed land for future housing.

A21

- The improvements of the Tonbridge – Pembury section are "on their way". There will be a public enquiry later in the year. It is hoped that construction will start in 2 years.
- Other A21 improvements: Kippings Cross – Lamberhurst – start 2013 and Baldslow Link – start 2013/14

Baldslow Link

- The two options for linking Queensway with A21 – the Northern and Southern options – have been deemed too expensive by the Highways Agency, who are now considering a third option – improving the line of the existing road.

Rail

- Network Rail is proposing to cut the existing Cannon Street service from 2015, reducing the service from 3 trains per hour to 2.
- Sea Space and partners are lobbying hard to prevent this happening.

Paul Adams indicated the current fastest journey times to London:

Hastings – London (Charing Cross / Canon Street) is 91mins

Hastings via Ashford to London (Kings Cross / St Pancras) is 87mins (includes connection)

Comments / questions that arose from Paul's presentation:

- There is a premium fare for the service from Ashford to London.
- The time allowed for connections on the 'via Ashford' route is too short.
- There are also capacity restrictions with single track sections on the line from Hastings to Ashford.
- The hindrance of rail services to and from the city were holding back regeneration significantly
- How do commuters groups feel about the service on offer?

- There is also the need for better routes to attract people to the town.
- Primary concern about poor communication links against physical investment expenditure – nice shiny buildings that people can't get to.
- Will the Link Rd simply shift congestion?

East Hill Café Proposal – Virginia Gilbert

Architectural plans were drawn up 2 years ago to use the existing structure at the top of the East Hill lift as a café facility. Proposed expenditure was £110,000.

This proposal was linked to HBC's desire to increase revenue generation from the lifts.

HBC has received a VAT £1.672m (net of fees), £200,000 of which was allocated to the development of an East Hill café.

HBC is currently looking at the commercial viability of the scheme, but does expect a 3 year payback on the £200k investment, through income from lift tickets and the café lease.

Concerns from the Chamber of Commerce regarding the proposed development centre around:

- Concerns re: the commercial viability and commercial acumen of HBC as an operator.
- HBC's poor record on running such amenities, e.g. West Hill Café.
- Seasonality and weather dependency of such a venture
- Continued investment in the Old Town area at the expense of other areas of the seafront / town
- Current vacant premises - cafes / restaurants plus another one proposed for the Jerwood development
- Planning issues re: country park status. Any development there must surely be outside the building line?
- Litter creation / maintenance of immediate area
- A few years ago, the council actively stopped promoting the Country Park as it was becoming over used and certain areas were suffering from too many walkers. Why try to attract more usage?
- Complete apparent lack of maintenance of current attractions – West Hill Café, Pier, and seafront water features, etc.
- The relatively high level of budget committed to the project.

The Chamber feel that £200k could be invested more productively in other areas.

AOB

Grahame King, Kings Stationers, asked how waste & recycling is handled by the local authority and raised concerns to Virginia Gilbert about trade cardboard recycling going to landfill.

Virginia Gilbert indicated that HBC was solely responsible for residential waste and recycling.

John Hodges updated on the following projects:

- 1066 Community Supports Network
- Olympics – the website is being updated
- Let's go to town initiative – there is a test case in the pipeline.
- Jobs & business growth – work being undertaken on improving the quality of HBC's existing industrial stock.

Date of next meeting: From 7.30am on Thursday 29th April at Italian Way Hastings.