



Hastings Area
Chamber of Commerce

Notes of the Hastings Area Chamber of Commerce: Thursday 28th January 2010.

Hastings Borough Council – Annual Budget Consultation

Presenters:

Cllr Peter Pragnell, Leader Hastings Borough Council
Neil Dart, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources, HBC
Jane Hartnell, Head of Policy & Performance, HBC

Councillor Peter Pragnell, Leader of the Council, presented their budget within the broad headings of:

- Context;
- Priorities;
- Targets.

The presentation was accompanied by a screen presentation, and the slides of that presentation are attached.

A full report can be found at:

http://www.hastings.gov.uk/consultation/current_consultation.aspx#corporate

Cllr Pragnell was keen to note:

- This process was started immediately after the last budget agreement in 2009;
- Income has reduced due to the current economic climate;
- Central Grant Payments may be reduced next year;
- A deficit of £1m has been managed through efficiencies and constant reviews;
- There is a capital programme for spending, governed by many considerations;
- In future budget years there are apparent gaps in the budget;
- Some additional expenditure is being planned as a result of a VAT refund;

The HBC element of the Council Tax Increase is limited to 1.9% - the lowest for 10 years, but the County Council and the Police and Fire proposals are still awaited.

The consultation on this Budget continues to 10th February 2010, with a full Council Decision due on the 24th February 2010.

All members are invited to feedback on this consultation, in writing or through the website.

A lively question and answer session followed and discussed:

- The Visitor Economy;
- The Strategy for attracting new business to the Town;
- The Environment and Climate Change challenges;
- The effect of a cap on expenditure on street furniture / items in the public realm;

- The Council's policy on encouraging re-cycling;
- The potential effects of expenditure cuts in 2011-2012;
- The impact of the last 4 years of spending on "regeneration".
- The state of the seafront decorative lighting;
- The degree of HBC's / local control in projects which attract "matched funding"?
- The plans to improve Queens Road and the Town Centre;
- How does the Council reconcile cuts in expenditure with lowest council tax increase;
- Day visitors to the proposed Jerwood Gallery are not encouraged to explore the wider offer in the town;

Cllr Pragnell accepted the offer that Business should be consulted at the start of a process, and has agreed to re-visit the Chamber of Commerce later on this year.

Any Other Business.

The chair confirmed that the discussions on the 1066 Sports Network were ongoing at William Parker School. The Chamber has already provided strong support for the Jerwood Gallery, and members are asked to continue to voice their support for this through the Council Website, or by handing in a letter to the Town Hall.

The Chamber Manager, Jonathan Dolding, mentioned some "housekeeping" notes:

1. A Resource Table at future meetings will be made available for brochures etc. but we ask that members do not place promotional leaflets on the tables and ensure surplus items are removed;
2. Please do let the chamber know of "Good News" stories so that these may be publicised through the Business Matters Page Monthly.
3. An RSVP to meetings is requested to ensure catering is properly organised;
4. All members are encouraged to ensure their membership subscriptions are current and paid to date.

A warm welcome was extended to seven guests at the meeting and it is hoped they will join the Chamber of Commerce.

Date of Next meeting: 25th February 2010.