

Joint Horsham Town & Local Economy Policy Development Advisory Group
13 JULY 2022

- Present: Councillors: Christian Mitchell (Chairman), Jonathan Chowen (Chairman), Toni Bradnum, Jon Olson, Stuart Ritchie, David Skipp, Cilve Trott, Roger Noel, Matthew Allen, Gordon Lindsay, Mike Morgan and Martin Boffey
- Apologies: Councillors: Andrew Baldwin, Karen Burgess, Peter Burgess, Christine Costin, Billy Greening and Colin Minto
- Absent: Councillors: Ian Stannard, Chris Brown and Nigel Jupp

13 **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

- a The notes of the meeting of Horsham Town PDAG held on 16 March were received.
- b The notes of the Local Economy PDAG meeting held on 26 May were received.

14 **HORSHAM MARKETS - SERVICE REVIEW AND FUTURE OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

The PDAG received a presentation on the Horsham Market Service Review and Future Options Appraisal from consultants Quarterbridge Ltd.

Members were advised the study had considered current Horsham markets, including food and drink offered and current product lines sold. Residents and local market traders also completed a survey with a good response rate.

Residents were very positive about the Saturday and Thursday markets held in the Carfax as well as the additional Bishopric and Piries Place markets - these would continue.

The consultants reported that although Horsham had a high number of food and drink outlets, the popularity of street food in the markets identified a demand for high quality independent food offered within Horsham. Survey feedback identified a gap in the market for a permanent Food Hall offering an evening and late night food provision targeted at a younger audience and space for a wider variety of small businesses.

By focusing on locally established independent food and beverage businesses rather than chain restaurants, it could create a distinct casual indoor dining space and attract visitors at different times of the day.

There would be potential for an 'inside out' concept with outside seating and flexible space for multi-functional community and 'Pop Up' events with a community focus.

The presentation described how the street food could drive footfall for a range of local micro-business stalls, along with small scale events and promotions. This could provide a focal point, increase variety to the town centre and act as a hub for the local community.

Three potential locations had been identified for the Food Hall and were discussed at the PDAG. Further information would be available at future meetings.

Members were extremely positive and interested in future proposals for the Food Hall. The Economic Development Officer advised that during the Covid pandemic over 300 new Food and Beverage businesses started up and registered with Horsham District Council.

Members were keen to explore further examples of modern Food Halls and Quarterbridge would send these to the PDAG.

It was felt the current markets offered the town a strong base and future plans needed to strengthen the experience and value for traders and visitors.

Members were keen to pursue next stages of the proposal to include developing the business case further, additional consultation, funding and management plans.

15 **A BOARDS POLICY**

The Chairman updated the PDAG on the draft 'A' Boards policy.

The draft policy was circulated after the last PDAG to Members and district wide stakeholders for feedback and comments. He thanked those who had provided feedback.

The final document would be considered at Cabinet in September and Council in October.

Members were asked to advise any further comments as soon as possible so the finalised document incorporated all feedback prior to the meetings.

16 **UPDATE ON ECONOMIC DATA, TRENDS AND PROJECTS**

The Head of Economic Development provided an update on current projects and data relating to the local economy.

Current projects included Horsham District Mystery Trails, Retail Training Programme providing free training for independent retailers and hospitality businesses and Hospitality Skills Buffet working in partnership with Mole Valley District Council and Chichester College offering free skills development for businesses and individuals supporting employment in this sector.

Additional projects included LEAP – small business grants where applications are currently being appraised, West Sussex Retail Hub offering a free online virtual training hub in conjunction with WSCC and all West Sussex Local Authorities, and a potential new local market in Billingshurst. The fortnightly Business Newsletter was proving successful with nearly 18 000 emails had been opened in the last year amounting to 45% of those sent out.

Graphs were presented indicating West Sussex business incorporations and dissolutions/liquidations. It was noted that up to May 2022 marginally within the Horsham District more business started up than were dissolved. The greatest start up activity was in the Business Services sector followed by Travel, Personal and Leisure.

Business survival rates were also presented and reflect a predominant trend for Horsham being higher than both national and Coast-to-Capital levels. In line with other local authorities within West Sussex, Claimant rates have increased from March 2020 to May 2022.

Due to a recent change in supplier, footfall data information will be circulated as soon as available to the PDAG.

The Economic Development Officer informed the PDAG of High Street Trends and feedback from a recent conference.

Areas covered included; High Streets and businesses focusing on experiences not available online, polarising between lowest cost and premium; new strategies to attract midweek footfall; and the rise in on line home delivery options. Landlords were looking at more flexible lease terms to attract independent businesses and Councils were pro-active in driving strategic location investments.

Emphasis was placed on investing in the Youth to make places relevant and focus on the customers of the future. Constant monitoring was required to understand trends as well as getting the basics right by providing clean, safe, well maintained and welcoming high streets.

17 **UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND**

The presentation went on to update the PDAG on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSP). Horsham District have been allocated £1 million over the next three years.

Horsham District Council has responsibility for developing an investment plan for approval by the government.

Consultations have taken place with a wide range of stakeholders including Parish Councils, Police and Community Partnerships and projects and proposals are under consideration. Investment submissions are due to government by the beginning of August.

Further information will be shared at future PDAGs.

18 **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TEAM RESTRUCTURE**

The Head of Economic Development advised Members there had been a restructure in the Economic Development team. Details would be circulated to the PDAG after the meeting.

19 **PLATE UP LOCAL**

The final element of the PDAG was receiving information on the Plate Up Local initiative.

An event had taken place in June at Wiston Estate to help the Council understand how we could support local hospitality businesses and producers in the Horsham District to use local produce to be served on local menus.

The forum included local guest speakers; Kenny Tutt, Nick Hempleman and Rachel Knowles who championed the wealth of good food and drink within the district and although prices were higher there was no compromise on quality.

Breakout sessions reported that local food in hospitality was an important player in the visitor economy, an up to date and comprehensive directory would aid caterers within the district and there could be potential for a cluster of businesses to buy together and arrange a one-stop delivery.

Recommendations arising from this event will be to produce a Local Food and Drink Online Directory & Networking Platform for businesses, Horsham Six Local Products Campaign where local business would stock six local products to encourage buyers into their businesses and further training and networking events.

The PDAG were extremely positive about the initiative and looked forward to finding out further progress in future meetings.

20 **FORWARD PLAN EXTRACT FOR THE HORSHAM TOWN AND LOCAL
ECONOMY PORTFOLIOS**

The forward plan was noted.

The meeting closed at 7.05 pm having commenced at 5.30 pm

CHAIRMAN