

End of Market Town Project

Meeting on 18th April 2012 - Notes

Overview of MTP

1. I attended a meeting at HCC in Winchester on 18 Apr 12 to celebrate the completion of the market town healthchecks. Twenty of the 32 market towns participated in the project and subsequently received funding from the Southeast Economic Development agency (SEEDA) to the tune of £20 million. Some of this funding was used to employ full or part-time staff to run the projects.
2. A list of the 7 MTP speakers and handouts are enclosed. Notes of the key benefits obtained are highlighted below.

Alresford – Jackie Porter

3. Project run jointly by councillors, chairman of the chamber of commerce and the partnership chairman. Analysis of 5 point questionnaire revealed a community divided by the railway line. Their project aim was ‘putting pedestrians first’. Achievements:
 - a. New railway crossing.
 - b. Footpath through school grounds.
 - c. New car park.
 - d. New bus service
4. The request for a swimming pool by the young was rejected: they felt that it could be funded but they couldn’t afford to maintain it.

Bishop’s Waltham – Terry Wilson & Robert Shields

5. The project was Parish Council run with a team of 60, 40 of whom were regulars. They provided:
 - a. New bus shelters and more public benches.
 - b. A play park area.
 - c. Land suitable for allotments.
 - d. New approach road and recreation meadow.
6. They are now looking into Neighbourhood Planning.

Emsworth – Lorraine Clode & Brendan Gibb-Gray

7. Emsworth does not have a Parish Council so the project was run by local volunteers. They identified the following needs:
 - a. An inadequate community hall.
 - b. To regenerate shops and homes.
 - c. To forge closer links with the local military.
 - d. A museum and exploitation of their connection with P G Wodehouse.
8. The younger people and children wanted:
 - a. A youth club.
 - b. Somewhere to play on the beach.
9. They also tackled the need for:
 - a. More footpaths and cycle links.
 - b. An information centre.
 - c. New public toilets.
 - d. Refurbishment of an attractive 1951 sheltered seating stand.
 - e. Reopening the boarded up railway station particularly the waiting rooms. Encouraged by this SWT constructed a large and expensive ramp for the disabled.

Hythe – Helen Owers

10. They received no funding as HCC did not support this project and they couldn't initially get it going through lack of interest. However, on analysis they concluded that most of the projects were being done independently by separate dedicated groups. As a result there was no formal partnership.
11. However they soon got talking to each other over what became known as the 'Power of Tea' meetings. They also used the local youth worker and her network.
12. The Americans who manned the nearby RAF station left and 200 people lost their jobs. Following the healthcheck findings SEEDA bought the site, retained the staff and increased employment by a further 150. A Dutch company is now using part of the site to build yachts.
13. Other interesting things they did included:
 - a. A willingness to try out different things to the extent of now advising other projects.
 - b. Developing the water front as a business.
 - c. Working on projects with both young and old.
 - d. Laying on events in the town without spending any money.
 - e. Brought in professional artists to paint graffiti in certain places – they found that this stopped all further graffiti.

New Milton – Ros Bowles

14. Although the Town Plan was published in 2005 the Council did not adopt it following a relationship problem between the Council and the Town Partnership. However they did achieve things with the aid of SEEDA:
 - a. Set up weekly street market which brings in £30k pa to the Town Council.
 - b. New pavement in Station Road.
 - c. A high quality shopping area with high occupancy.
 - d. Formed friends of New Milton Station.
 - e. A history project which now has spin offs.
 - f. After updating the Town Plan it has been adopted by the Council who are now taking it forward.
 - g. New Skate Park.

Stockbridge – Hugh Saxton

15. This is the smallest town with only 600 residents and, apart from the Co-op, only local shops and small businesses. The town is located in a valley with Fens to the north and marsh to the south. Space for building is therefore limited.
16. They advertised the benefits of Stockbridge to achieve SEEDA funding. The grant was used to:
 - a. Refurbish (major works project) the town hall.
 - b. Build a new scout hut.
 - c. Provide a tourist information centre.
 - d. Purchase new speed limit signs.
17. Their next target is car parking.

Whitehill & Bordon – Bill Wain

18. They started the healthcheck in 2003 and formed their partnership in 2006, which has only one member of council on the board. They now have a Town Action Plan, which is a working document. They received £600k from SEEDA and HCC. Their achievements include:
 - a. A volunteer hospital car service because the bus journey was taking too long.
 - b. Setting up a Biodiversity Action Plan to protect the wildlife in Whitehill.

- c. Formed a Delivery Board with partnership participation – although they failed to obtain charitable status since its aim is to generate new businesses to replace the military.
- d. Some of the SEEDA funding was used to create space for events, however the area selected required the maintenance of a bus route through it thereby reducing it's viability.
- e. They set up weekly markets in the event space, but this didn't work as there was insufficient safe space as the bus route had to remain open.
- f. They also laid on a soapbox derby.

Other Speakers

19. The other speakers focussed on:

- a. The Economic Challenges and Changes taking place in Hampshire.
- b. Localism and Neighbourhood Planning which gives communities more involvement in local planning decisions.

Trevor Maroney
BLPP Treasurer
19th April 2012