

# **REGENERATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**29 JANUARY 2015**

## **ATTENDANCE OF THE LEADER**

Report from: Rodney Chambers OBE  
Leader of the Council

### **Summary**

This report sets out activities and progress on work areas within the Leader's Portfolio which fall within the remit of this Committee. This information is provided in relation to the Leader being held to account.

### **1. Background**

1.1 The areas within the terms of reference of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee and covered by the Leader are:

- Inward investment
- Regeneration
- Strategic Partnerships

### **2. Achievements for 2014-15**

#### **2.1 Inward Investment**

Inward investment and business start-up support

In 2013/14, 482 jobs have been created and 183 protected through inward investment and business support.

In 2014/15, 217 jobs have been created and 146 protected through inward investment and business support.

551 workshops and advice to businesses have been delivered. Medway Council has worked closely with partners, including Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, BAE Systems and the University of Greenwich, to deliver business networking events, including:

- Kent 2020 in May 2014, the premier B2B event in Kent and Medway
- 600 delegates attended the second manufacturing and engineering expo at Detling Showground in July 2014
- 30th anniversary of the Medway Business Awards, culminating in a gala evening in November 2014 with exciting new electronic games developer Dovetail Games taking the top prize.

## 2.2 Rochester Riverside

Rochester Riverside is a flagship project in Medway Council's regeneration programme. The site comprises 32 hectares (74 acres) of brownfield development land, stretching from Rochester Bridge to the north and Doust Way to the south. Whilst meeting the Council's objective of providing new homes and jobs for Medway, the development at Rochester Riverside will bring other benefits including a range of publicly accessible open spaces, retail and leisure facilities as well as improvements to the 'Gateways' between the River and Rochester High Street.

In September 2014 the Council adopted a new Development Brief and Masterplan for Rochester Riverside. The Development Brief establishes the key planning and design parameters for the development, including land use components, urban form, density, open space and sustainability. It outlines the previous use and history, the policy context and physical constraints. The Development Brief has been adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document to the 2003 Medway Local Plan, providing planning and design guidance to developers and informing future development management decisions.

With the adoption of the Development Brief, the priority for the Council, and its partner the Homes and Communities Agency, is to ensure the continuation of development on site. The Council issued a contract notice on the Official Journal of the European Union on 23 January 2015 seeking a sole development partner to deliver the remaining phases of the scheme. It is anticipated that a preferred developer will be appointed towards the end of 2015.

## 2.3 Chatham

### Sun Pier Pontoon Phase 1

**Project Summary:** Fabrication and installation of a fully operational pontoon at the end of Sun Pier, Chatham. Part of the Council's drive to rejuvenate the river walk and provide better access to the Medway, one of Chatham's greatest assets.

**Progress:** Pontoon complete and in place, officers are considering future use of the pontoon with existing and new river users. Additional Phase 2 works are to follow; including refurbishing Sun Pier and additional anti-climb measures to protect the pontoon. Completion is expected by the Spring 2015.

## River Walk Phase 1

**Project Summary:** Refurbishment of river walk from Gun Wharf to Chatham Waterfront Pumping Station including repainting of guard rails, replacing benches, bins, light lanterns and cannon carriages. Uplifting area and encouraging positive use of the river walk and access to views on to the Medway.

**Progress:** Works are complete apart from the renewal of the gun carriages, fabrication of the new steel carriages has begun. Completion and installation is expected by Spring 2015.

## River Walk Phase 2

**Project Summary:** Refurbishment of the river walk from the Chatham Waterfront Pumping Station to the new Golding Homes development and Pier Chambers; the path from Medway Street to the river walk and Sun Pier. Works will include a new lighting scheme, surfacing, guard rail, tree planting, benches and improved CCTV.

**Progress:** Detailed design of the scheme is near completion and works are expected to be commissioned by February/March 2015.

## Master Plan

**Project Summary:** The Chatham Civic Space is an area encompassing part of the river walk, Chatham Waterfront Pumping Station, bus station, Paddock and the north-western entrance to the Pentagon Centre. The new bus station and the potential for developing the Chatham Waterfront Development site partnered with improvements to the river walk create an opportunity to deliver a Chatham/Medway gateway. The proposed master plan will capture this opportunity, as well as the wider High Street and station approach and provide a blueprint for how the various areas within the site will function and interact with visitors and shoppers.

**Progress:** The tender process has begun and consultants are expected to be commissioned by March/April 2015 with a master plan produced by autumn 2015.

## Chatham Waterfront Development Site; Land Acquisitions and Medway Street Demolitions

**Project Summary:** Acquisition of various ownerships and interests in the area to provide a significant town centre development opportunity. Purchase and demolition of Medway Street shops adjacent to Globe Lane Car Park to prepare the Chatham Waterfront Development Site.

**Progress:** Negotiations are underway with all the landowners and interests on the site. Subject to these 3<sup>rd</sup> party landowners being in agreement the Council is aiming to acquire the interests on the site by Spring 2015. If this cannot be achieved the Council will consider making a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) to acquire the site. Demolition of the Medway Street shops is complete and the site has

been cleared. Options to include the area as part of the existing Globe Lane Car Park are being developed.

## **2.4 Strood**

The Council has been awarded £4million of Public Works Loan Board funding from the Treasury to enable the construction of a new river wall at Strood Riverside. Subject to due process and approvals the works are scheduled to take place in 2015, and will enable the site to be taken forward for mixed used development (housing, public realm and some commercial space) in 2016.

## **2.5 Rochester Railway Station**

The Council is working with Network Rail to enable the delivery of the new £26m Rochester Station at Corporation Street, in recognition of the economic benefits the new Station will bring to Rochester and Medway. The station will include a new pedestrian subway, which will link to Rochester Riverside.

Network Rail has now commences construction of the new station building. The build programme for the new station building will take a year, with the station opening scheduled for December 2015.

## **2.6 Lower Thames Crossing**

The Secretary of State for Transport announced on 15 July 2014 the government's response to consultation on options for a new Lower Thames Crossing.

The response set out the decisions government has reached taking into account the numerous and diverse points raised during consultation. Namely, it:

- confirmed there is a need for a new crossing;
- advised that, as there is as yet no clear preference, government will develop and appraise route options for both location options A and C before choosing where to site a new crossing. (Option A is at the existing crossing and Option C is a new link connecting the A2/M2 with the A13 and M25), and
- advised that government expects to consult on a proposed solution in late 2015 or early 2016.

The Department for Transport (DfT) has appointed a consultant to progress route options for both location options A and C. A Stakeholder Advisory Panel has been established to engage key interests, including local authorities, in the assessment work to produce shortlisted options for the public consultation in late 2015/early 2016. Medway Council is a member of this stakeholder panel.

The Highways Agency and LTC consultants arranged a meeting with transport and planning officers at Medway Council on 14 January

2015 to discuss the process and timetable for work leading up to the next stage of public consultation on options for the Lower Thames Crossing. This considered information required from Medway on development proposals to inform the modelling and assessment of potential scenarios. The assessment will include consideration of how options contribute to economic success, as well as environmental impacts.

Further details will be released later this year and the LTC project consultants will work with Medway Council in making arrangements for local venues for the public consultation.

## **2.7 Estuary Airport**

The Davies Commission set up by the Government to assess where airport expansion should take place in the UK have now wholeheartedly agreed with Medway and others that the development of an Estuary Airport is not something which should be taken forward. In the Davies Report issued in September 2014 Sir Howard states:

“Perhaps surprisingly the Commission has found in its enquiries that few people outside the direct advocacy groups support the idea. The aviation industry doubts the viability of the plan, local Councils are opposed, and business groups are similarly unenthusiastic. Nonetheless the Commission has examined the proposals very carefully over the last eighteen months and commissioned a number of studies specifically designed to assess its feasibility, impact and risks in more detail.

The delivery risks of such a massive project including its surface transport links are very great and the economic disruption would be huge. No other city has moved the operations of an airport on anything like the scale of Heathrow anywhere near as far as would be implied here. There are environmental hurdles which it may prove impossible, or very time consuming, to surmount. There are also challenges in relation to the practicality of operating a very large hub airport in the estuary; for example in relation to airspace management and the risk of birdstrike. The implications for passengers are unfavourable.

The average rail journey to the airport on opening would be 20 – 25 per cent longer than is the case today. Even the least ambitious version of the scheme would cost almost £70 billion to £90 billion with much greater public expenditure than in most other options – probably some £30 to £60 billion in total. More ambitious schemes would cost considerably more. Whilst future governments must make their own decisions on priorities we cannot see that the additional infrastructure investment in the South East on the scale implied, with uncertain economic benefits, would be likely to appeal to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in a Government of any political colour.

There will be those who argue that we have missed an opportunity for a Great leap Forward, and that the Commission lacks ambition and

imagination. Our response is that we are ambitious for the right solution. The need for additional capacity is urgent. To roll the dice on a very risky project, where delays and overruns are highly likely, would be reckless. We need to focus on solutions which are deliverable, affordable, and set the right balance for the future aviation of the UK”.

I am please that Sir Howard listened to all the arguments we put forward against this ridiculous idea. I also pay tribute to the people of Medway who stood behind us on this and to the cross party consensus and support of Councils like Kent County Council.

## **2.8 Victory Pier**

Berkeley Homes are continuing to develop out the site. The hotel along the frontage is nearing completion. Berkeley will also be submitting a planning application shortly for the final phase of the development, which includes apartments alongside the pier and including a residents gym and commercial operations such as cafes, art studios etc which will add to the attraction of the Council's pier.

Berkeley have continued to build throughout difficult economic times, delivering a high quality development that has significantly improved the environment of Gillingham waterfront and has been and will be the catalyst for further regeneration of the Gillingham waterfront area. Berkeley acknowledge that their continued construction on site over the last 5 years has been greatly assisted by the positive relationship that they have development with both Planning Officers and the Planning Committee.

## **2.9 Chatham Waters**

The Chatham Waters redevelopment has commenced, encouraged by the success of the adjacent Berkeley development. The first phases include highway improvements to Dock Gate roundabout, an ASDA supermarket and the University Technical College. These developments are due to open in 2015 and will add to the vibrancy of the area and are the start of a significant development at Chatham Waters which (alongside the Berkeley development) will change the face of Gillingham Waterfront providing high quality regeneration for the area. Initial discussions have commenced with Peel Holdings over the next phases of development and it is anticipated that further applications will be submitted in 2015.

## **2.10 Rochester Airport**

The Masterplan for the redevelopment of Rochester Airport was approved by Council in January 2014, and a new lease to the airport operator for a 25 year period granted in February 2014. Consideration of the current planning application to improve the airport's operational infrastructure and install a hard paved runway was deferred by Planning Committee for a site visit in mid January 2015, and will be brought back to Planning Committee on 4th February 2015.

Several high value businesses have expressed an interest in building their own high spec premises on the land at Rochester Airport.

## **2.11 TIGER**

The TIGER business loan scheme ended in October 2014. It lent a total of £14.5m, of which £4.3m went to 13 businesses in Medway, creating 328 jobs and safeguarding a further 115, at an average cost per job of £9781, compared to the BIS target of £22,500. Three of these businesses were new inward investments into Medway: Digital Contact (analytics of Big Data); Feed Me Bottles (manufacturer of innovative technology for baby feeding bottles); and Bates Offices Supplies (stationery office suppliers)

## **2.12 Apprentices**

The EU GAPS project (£392K) met its target of 50 apprenticeships for 2013 –14, and has this year secured 40 apprenticeships, in the following sectors:

- Business Administration
- IT Software & Professional
- Customer Service
- Sign making
- Early Years
- Horticulture
- Microsoft Systems and Networking

## **2.13 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)**

Medway was at the forefront of the disbanding of regional bodies such as the South East England Development Agency and the South East England Regional Assembly. I was not sorry to see their passing. The Coalition Government set up LEPs across England – ours is the South East Local Enterprise Partnership – a private/ public sector board covering Medway, Thurrock and Southend and the counties of Essex, East Sussex and Kent. I have always maintained the geography should just be Kent and Medway or arguably Kent, Medway and East Sussex because of the interdependencies of these economies. However we are well engaged with the LEP and have a good relationship which has brought favourable outcomes including:

£4million to invest in flood defences for Canal Road Strood to deliver new homes.

£11.1million for the area around the Four Elms Roundabout to improve traffic flow.

£2million to improve the traffic situation on the Medway City Estate

£2.99million for Chatham Waterfront

£4.4million for Rochester Riverside

£9million to improve traffic flows and the environment in Strood

£4million for Chatham Town Centre

A £20 million business growth fund called TIGER for delivering interest free business loans.

I will continue to engage with LEP to seek further funding opportunities for Medway.

## **2.14 Great Lines Heritage Park (GLHP) and Command of the Heights**

Projects and events which support the heritage of the area continue. Highlight achievements of 2014 – 15 are as follows:

- The Command of the Oceans £8.75m Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) project continues to be supported by a sub-group of the Chatham Dockyard and its Defences Heritage Co-ordination Group (chaired by Medway Council), and by the Heritage and Social Regeneration Manager on secondment.
- The £2m Command of the Heights HLF application for Fort Amherst and Chatham Waterfront was submitted in August. Initial feedback is that the project is supported. Work is ongoing to increase our match funding contribution and to resubmit the application in March 2015.
- The Chatham Dockyard and its Defences Planning Policy Document was adopted by Full Council on 22 January following an extensive period of preparation and consultation.
- The EU funded Walls and Gardens and At Fort projects have both come to a successful conclusion, having delivered over £300,000 of heritage investment in Medway, including RSME Bicentenary Bridge at Fort Amherst, a free mobile phone application for trails around Fort Amherst and the GLHP, an ecological management brochure and e-booklet of heritage terminology. At Fort delivered the feasibility report for the proposed Command of the Heights project at Fort Amherst.
- The EU Linking the Lines project was awarded funding worth over £50,000 in August. It will deliver a mobile phone guided tour for Chatham Dockyard and its Defences, and training and reference material for tourism professionals and volunteers.

### **Lead Officer**

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### **Background papers**

None