

Yeovil Vision and Area South Regeneration Board Update

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Purpose of the Report

To provide members with an update on the work of the Area South Regeneration Board and the Restructured Yeovil Vision Board, as agreed at the Area South Committee in June 2016.

Public Interest

The Council works closely with Partners, including business representatives, to improve the vitality of Yeovil town centre. It is also actively seeking investors to bring back into use vacant sites and increase the retail and other facilities wanted in the town centre.

Recommendation

That members note the work of both the Area Regeneration and Yeovil Vision Boards.

Background

SSDC is seeking to strengthen the delivery of major regeneration and infrastructure projects in South Somerset through the establishment of Area Regeneration Boards feeding into the Strategic Regeneration Board. The Council set aside a pot of up to £8m to support ED & infrastructure two years ago. Extra staff were also recruited into the Economic Development Team. This team works closely with SCC Growth Board and the Heart of the SW Local Enterprise Partnership.

The Area South Regeneration Board met for the first time 6th April 2016 and have met a further 3 times to date. It is chaired by the Portfolio holder for the Economy and resourced through the Economic Development team, with input from Area Development and Spatial Planning staff. Its remit includes bringing forward significant sites in Yeovil and to progress/ negotiate on major highways improvements serving the town. The Area South Chairman and Councillor Lock from Yeovil Town Council are members of the Board.

Taking into account of the remit of the newly established Area South Regeneration Board, members agreed in June 2016 to better integrate Yeovil Vision with the Town Centre Partnership. This was to ensure that the Yeovil Vision Board could secure the maximum impact from local arrangements and remove any duplication. This integration included an increase in the number of business representatives on the board and the creation of a Love Yeovil Marketing Group, to take forward the work previously undertaken by the Town Centre partnership.

The Love Yeovil Marketing group is one of the three themed groups that report to the Yeovil Vision Board. The other two groups focus on Community Safety and Environmental Enhancement work.

Update

Area South Regeneration Board

A key project for the board is the Yeovil Refresh. The Refresh is a Yeovil Town Centre Development Strategy, which will identify creative and deliverable strategies for a number of key sites within the town centre. JLL, Element Urbanism and Hydrock have been commissioned to produce the document and the inception meeting for this project took place in December 2016. The first stakeholder engagement meeting will be taking place on 30th January.

This is a large detailed piece of work that is required in order to provide achievable options for each site and to understand the wider implications of the site developments on the wider infrastructure within the town centre. Therefore, work on this will be taking place over a number of months, with the finished report expected June 2017.

Another key project has been the establishment of a Work Hub in Yeovil. The Work Hub is being trialled at the Yeovil Innovation Centre and it opened in December 2016. Students from Yeovil College were asked to create a name and logo for the space and the winning design was 'The Hive'. The Hive is a highly flexible workspace for home-based and mobile workers, business start-ups and entrepreneurs.

Users of The Hive will have the option of either hot-desking or taking a permanent desk and will have access to superfast broadband, free parking, free business advice and opportunities to network with like-minded businesses. Take up has been low to date but there are plans for more marketing, a new website and open days in order to increase awareness.

Yeovil Vision

The Board meets at least quarterly prior to the Area South Regeneration Board meetings so that priorities beyond the scope and resources of Yeovil Vision can be put forward by the Chairman for consideration for corporate resources as appropriate. The Yeovil Vision Board also provides a sounding board for emerging infrastructure or regeneration projects.

The revised structure also now provides a clear line of access and greater influence at the more Strategic Regeneration Board and hence to the LEP and Growth Board, which can provide access to certain funding streams.

The three Yeovil Vision Groups have been performing well:

Yeovil One

- Is a strong partnership with good results from its first 2 years of operation. It is focussed on Yeovil Central Ward but is in the process of expanding to take in Yeovil East.
- Work is being undertaken to convert the Designated Public Protection Order into a Public Spaces Protection Order, although this will require additional resources from SSDC through its enforcement services
- Successes of the group include: reduction in crime, diverting young people in to positive activities and tackling the begging issue in the town centre.

Environmental Enhancement Group

A full schedule of cleaning and enhancement works is undertaken by the Town Centre Ranger, who is paid for through combined funding from Yeovil Town Council, Yeovil Without Parish Council, SSDC and a contribution from the previous Town Centre Partnership budget.

It is coming to the end of the 2nd year of a 3-year pilot. Funding is agreed each year and this does need to be finalised for 2017-18.

Love Yeovil Marketing Group

- The group have focussed on three main events: Super Saturday; Lanterns & Christmas Lights and the Yeovil Half Marathon, March 2017.
- Anecdotally footfall has been up as a result of these events, although it's difficult to quantify it as only the main stores keep detailed records.
- The membership drive has led to a number of key stores coming onto the Group. This is vital in order to sell the value of joint marketing and events in the town centre
- The group are currently finalising their plan for 2017 including the programme of upcoming events.

The Yeovil Vision Board is also developing a brief for an annual/bi-annual shopper experience survey. The survey will help to better understand user experiences of the town centre and will also use online surveys to understand why people don't use Yeovil and instead choose to go to other centres. A detailed proposal and costings will go to the next board meeting on 28th February.

Work on the Reckleford Improvement Scheme has been completed and the maintenance agreement is being finalised. The board have recommended that the remaining £73,000 is returned to the Old Town Station Car Park reserve and ring fenced for highways improvements at the bottom end of town. The Chairman and relevant officers are due to meet senior highways officers to discuss how to further improve traffic flow in this area and this will be synchronised with the findings of the Yeovil Refresh.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. A number of funding streams are ring fenced for projects that help to deliver Yeovil Vision's objectives. The Board has delegated authority for allocating these budgets.

The Town Centre Partnership member fees remain ring-fenced to resource the Love Yeovil marketing and events programme.

Corporate Priority Implications

Work will contribute to the following specific actions in the Council Plan

- Progress key strategic projects in Yeovil
- Work with Regeneration Boards to deliver local projects eg improve access/ regeneration of Yeovil Town Centre
- Work hub in Yeovil

- Maintain levels of street cleanliness and increase joint working with parishes through parish ranger scheme
- Bring empty properties back into use

Carbon Emissions & Adapting to Climate Change Implications (NI188)

None directly arising from this report

Equality and Diversity Implications

None directly arising from this report

Background Papers: *Review of Partnership Arrangements Yeovil Vision report to Area South Committee June 2016.*