



Champions' Annual Report

2014-15

Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 2 |
| Corporate Business Champion – Councillor Heydon | 3 |
| Commuters’ Champion - Councillor Harrison | 5 |
| Older People’s Champion - Councillor Thompson | 9 |
| Small Business Champion - Councillor Wade | 11 |
| Voluntary Sector Champion - Councillor Finnie | 15 |

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to appraise all Members of the work and progress undertaken by the Council’s Champions during the year 2014-2015.

The report informs Members of activities and their outcomes and outlines proposed future activities.

Corporate Business Champion Councillor Heydon



a) Introduction

Bracknell Forest Council's (BFC) published **Priorities** and **Medium Term Objectives** continue to feature "Sustain the economic prosperity of the borough".

Being in the south east of England, and the Thames Valley, we are blessed as we lie at the hub of UK PLC being in the centre of innovation, technology, location, government, and communications. In addition BFC has a well skilled work force, excellent educational facilities and it is a great place to live.

There are a number of world class organisations based in BFC, and we are gaining more new organisations - both established UK, and overseas, companies looking for UK and even European headquarters. This represents an asset and reputation which we are keen to protect, nurture and grow.

There are over 30 international (and truly global) organisations who have based their European and UK operations within the borough. These include Fortune 500 companies such as Dell, HP, Avnet: major specialist organisations such as Brocade Communications, Maximiser: and other technology and pharmaceutical leaders such as 3M, Fujitsu, Syngenta and Boehringer Ingelheim.

Whilst we have lost BMW we have gained Honda, in addition to other well known names ranging from Ocean Spray to Lloyds Shipping Register. Finally – we are truly proud of having HM's own grocer based here, namely Waitrose.

b) Objectives

These continue to be:

1. Establishing a working dialogue with our major corporate organisations based within the borough: so that we understand their requirements and ensure that we grow our reputation as a great borough for business.
2. Understanding why so many organisations are based in the borough and why we are continuing to attract new organisations – this will then become a key input into the Borough's Economic Development planning.

Meeting these objectives demands a great deal of co-ordination with other "interested" bodies and depends upon close interworking with the officers of the Economic Development Group and other Members. The establishment of BFC's Economic Development team and their plan is key to managing a successful multi layered communication strategy and ensuring proper co ordination with other key bodies such as LEP and ESDP.

c) Scope

The Corporate Business sector is identified as those organisations with 200+ employees, i.e. the organisational sector above SMEs. There are approximately 40 organisations in the borough falling into this category.

In addition there are a number of other significant organisations with UK HQs in the Borough.

Some of the detailed activity will remain a matter of commercial confidence – however the scope covers:

- a. Major UK operational headquarters – Waitrose and TRL.
- b. Major international organisation such as Vodafone, HP, Dell, 3M, Syngenta, Honda, Boehringer, Fujitsu and Panasonic.
- c. Major companies operating in the UK primarily from the technology and software businesses such as JDA, RSA, Cadence, Brocade, Software AG and Sharp Telecom.
- d. Significant locally based organisations which are growing quickly such as Redwood Technologies and Content Guru.
- e. Major UK based operations with administrative functions based in BFC such as Towry Law, Rowney, and Lloyds Register.

Major employers:

BFC itself is the largest employer in the borough. Additionally the major retailers in total are also the largest combined employers – this includes J Sainsbury, Morrisons, Marks & Spencer and the largest of them all Tesco. We currently do not include any of these organisations in the contact plan.

d) Modus operandi

The modus operandi is to follow the tasks and activities defining Community Champions as published, i.e.

- Liaising with local organisations concerned with the community to establish effective and regular consultation arrangements
- Acting as an advocate on behalf of the community represented
- Representing the views of the communities to the Council, executive, overview and scrutiny and other committees and to Council officers
- Becoming familiar with the needs and priorities of the community or the range of activities concerned and to weigh up interests expressed in order to provide sound advice on the implications of alternative courses of action
- Feeding back decisions of the Borough Council and explaining the Council's position on specific issues of concern to representative organisations and to individuals involved
- Publishing an annual report on work carried out each year for consideration by the Council.

Councillor Peter Heydon

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Commuters' Champion Councillor Harrison



1 Rail Networks – In their own words

“Commitment to boost peak time capacity by 30 per cent by 2018”

- **South West Trains – Network Rail Alliance announces biggest investment for decades on South West Trains Network.**

Without great fanfare, Network Rail and South West Trains have formed a joint venture that integrates the track and train services in the SWT area, led by a single Chief Executive.

Working alone, neither the rail operator South West Trains, nor the track owner, Network Rail could deliver the improvements in service that Bracknell Forest commuters expect. Working together, SWT and Network Rail are aligned to deliver better services.

Annex 1 details the plan that the South West Trains Network Rail Alliance have announced they will deliver.

Last year, the Commuters' Champion reported to Council on the top three main issues of concern for rail commuters using Bracknell.

These are:

- Overcrowding on peak services
- Slow service between Bracknell and London Waterloo (compared to other towns at a similar distance)
- The rising cost of train fares

Since that report, Bracknell Forest Council representatives, including the Commuters' Champion, the Executive Member for Transport and Planning and the Executive Member for Economic Development and officers from the Planning and Transport Department have held regular meetings with the SWT-Network Rail Alliance and separately with the Berkshire Local Transport Body and the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to push forward the priorities of commuters and businesses in Bracknell Forest.

2 Addressing Rail Overcrowding

Since January, the Commuters' Champion has been travelling into London from Bracknell for work and experiencing the same frustrations and overcrowding as many Bracknell commuters. As some new “Juniper” carriages have been introduced, this has relieved some of the crowding on the inner London stops and this means that seats tend to become available as passengers leave the train from Feltham outwards. The full benefit of longer trains will only be felt once the longer platforms at Waterloo are opened and ten car trains are run on the Reading line.

The South West Trains – Network Rail Alliance now needs permission from the Office of the Rail Regulator and Department of Transport to progress the service

improvements which will help commuters in Thames Valley and boost the economy of the South East.

It is the Commuters' Champion's recommendation that Bracknell Forest Council supports the SWT-Network Rail Alliance proposals to lengthen platforms and invest in new rolling stock and inform the ORR and Department of Transport of our support for the proposals.

Councillor John Harrison

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ANNEX 1

18 March 2015

Biggest investment for decades on South West Trains network moves a step closer

- **Consortium appointed to support delivery of multi-million-pound improvement programme**
- **Projects include extended and re-opened platforms at UK's busiest station, London Waterloo**
- **Work already underway on associated delivery of extra trains and better track and signalling**
- **Commitment to boost peak time capacity by 30 per cent by 2018**

The biggest investment for decades on the UK's busiest railway has now moved a step closer with the appointment of a team of contractors who will be responsible for planning and carrying out major improvement works at London Waterloo.

An agreement between the South West Trains-Network Rail Alliance, Skanska, Colas Rail, AECOM and Mott MacDonald has now been agreed following a detailed and stringent procurement process. The consortium will now work with the Alliance to scope out plans to boost capacity at London Waterloo and other inner London stations. These detailed plans will then be submitted to the Office of Rail Regulation and Department for Transport.

The railway from London Waterloo is the UK's busiest, carrying more than half a million passengers every day and more than 222million every year, an increase of more than 100% in just the last 20 years. London Waterloo is also the UK's busiest station, with 98 million passengers in 2013/14 and a train arriving or departing virtually every minute during peak times.

In order to boost capacity for passengers and prepare for the continued growth in the coming years, the South West Trains-Network Rail Alliance is planning to invest hundreds of millions of pounds in the next four years to provide a 'step change' increase in capacity. The agreement aims to develop detailed plans, including:

- Reopening the former Waterloo International Terminal to be used regularly by commuter services. These platforms were closed in 2007 when the Eurostar services moved to St Pancras International.
- Lengthening Platforms 1-4 to allow 10-car services to run on suburban routes for the first time ever.

Alongside this major investment, the South West Trains-Network Rail Alliance is continuing to press ahead to deliver capacity improvements in the short term. This includes the ongoing rollout of 108 additional and refurbished carriages, the first of

which have already been introduced into service. A further 150 brand new carriages will also start to be introduced in 2017.

Stations have also been improved, with platforms lengthened at 60 stations to accommodate the longer trains and facilities and accessibility improved at many others.

Christian Roth, Fleet Director of the South West Trains-Network Rail Alliance, said: "This is an important step forward in our commitment to boost peak time capacity by 30 per cent by 2018. Waterloo is the country's busiest station, with 98m people using it every year and South West Trains has seen passenger numbers double in 20 years.

"A huge amount of work has already been carried out to improve services and increase capacity but we know we need do to much more. The unique alliance between South West Trains and Network Rail allows a project of this size to be delivered efficiently and it will have a real impact on passengers' journeys."

James Richardson, speaking on behalf of the consortium of contractors, added: "An investment of this size is excellent news for rail passengers in the region and, of course, an exciting opportunity for our alliance team. Working through a unique collaboration model, we will be able to combine and integrate the skills and expertise of a strong supply chain to deliver this challenging programme."

South West Trains and Network Rail will now work closely with Skanska, Mott Macdonald, AECOM and Colas Rail to plan and scope the work and present those plans to the Office of Rail Regulation and the Department for Transport.

Older People's Champion Councillor Thompson



My remit as Champion is to represent the interests of older people to the Borough and to seek to explain matters to older people.

In presenting this report I am conscious that older people have been to the forefront of the national agenda:

- The Carers Act, which remains to be fully implemented, addressed a number of aspects and made further provision in respect of others. These include carer's assessment, deferred payment and self funders.
- The Better Care Fund has seen the development of initiatives related to admission to hospital and discharge with the Council's officers engaged with the various hospital trusts. On public health there has been pursuance of Fall and Self Care strategies.
- On housing the newly constructed Clement House will soon be opening. It is an exemplar of housing provision and care in later life. The description extra care housing scheme speaks for itself. Its facilities are a litany of what we would hope for.
- In relation to older people other aspects which have featured include safeguarding, particularly the vulnerable and dementia.
- A feature has been the promotion of digital inclusion and courses have been run to this end. The iPad is a particular success. Age Concern Bracknell has been involved in promoting classes. Loneliness and isolation and how to counter this is ongoing but one aspect of the digital age is helping to keep families in contact and reduce isolation.

The Older People's Partnership Board continues as a focus within the Borough of various groups and organisations concerned with the interests of older people. Its terms of reference were revised at the beginning of the year. Its core members apart from myself include the Executive Member for Adult Social Care Health and Housing, the Chief Officer for Older People and Long Term Conditions Bracknell Forest, the Intermediate Care Partnership Board, representatives from older people's information advice and support agencies such as Age Concern Bracknell, Involve, the Citizens Advice Bureau and Relate, a representative for skills education and learning exemplified by the Head of Community Learning and Skills for Bracknell- Forest and a representative from Bracknell Forest Homes for housing and accommodation issues.

Other organisations are invited as relevant to particular topics such as Engagement and Equalities, Leisure Development, Community Safety, employers' organisations, University of the Third Age Community Health, Healthwatch, Public Health and representatives of minorities.

I have set these topics out at length to give an indication of the range of involvement.

The last meeting on the 18th March included an update on the digital inclusion project and a presentation and discussion on a strategy for intermediate care among other items.

Unrestricted

My other roles on the Council apart from Older People's Champion enable me to represent the interests of older people. They include membership of the Health Panel and chairman of the Access Group and of working groups. I am a Council nominated trustee of Age Concern Bracknell and of the local Citizens Advice Bureau and committee member of Bracknell Shopmobility.

Apart from my direct involvement as above I have monitored other proceedings and meet regularly with senior council officers. I have attended local conferences and events including the Retirement Fair held in August at Ascot racecourse. I visit the Look In café at its Great Hollands location regularly. In general my activities have been much as last year.

In relation to individual concerns my year as whole has been quiet. One individual issue was in relation to bus passes not working outside the Borough (which was not limited to Bracknell Forest) but this has been resolved. This could be due to the facility for residents including older people to make contact with the Council directly but it could also be a consequence of less cause to call upon the Older People's Champion.

There remain matters to be kept to the forefront. They include in no order of priority isolation and loneliness, dementia and discharge from hospital. These are also the subject of national attention.

Planning for later life is a theme which will be the focus of attention in the coming year.

I commend my report to the Council.

Councillor Clifton Thompson

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Small Business Champion Councillor Wade



1 Introduction

After promising signs last year, there are some reasons for cautious optimism - but the inescapable conclusion is that conditions remain extremely tough for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and further support is needed to yield sustainable SME growth. While exports provide a much needed stimulus to many EU economies, most SMEs do not benefit in any major way directly from the growth in foreign demand for goods and services as they are active in industries which are mainly catering to the needs of domestic demand.

Looking ahead, the outlook is moderately positive with the promise of some strengthening of the recovery on the horizon. Total value-added is expected to rise by 3.4% in 2015 with employment levels and the number of SMEs also returning to positive growth.

Annual Report on European SMEs

2 Economy

Manufacturing hit by strong pound and problems in the Eurozone in March 2015, according to the CBI's industrial trends survey. Manufacturing orders stagnated as new business from abroad collapsed at its fastest rate in more than two years. However, domestic demand remains resilient and overall factory performance was better than the average of the past 20 years.

3 Bracknell Forest Economic & Skills Development Partnership (ESDP)

The Group is involved with a range individual work streams including:

- Community
- Skills and Employment
- Infrastructure
- Inward Investment

ESDP links into the Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) communications work in order to promote Bracknell Forest as a place to do business.

4 Thames Valley Berkshire Local Economic Partnership (LEP)

The Thames Valley Growth Deal is designed to bring together business, unitary authorities, education and the community sector to drive the local economy to new levels of growth by securing better access to talented people and bright ideas, and to use both more effectively. These aims are focused on three key priority areas: Delivering essential housing; Enhancing urban connectivity; and Growing the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) skills base and targeting business support.

The Growth Deal will generate:

- £17m investment for the first year

- £90.1m indicative funding from 2016/17

By 2021 the Growth Deal will help to:

- Create at least 20,000 jobs
- Allow up to 12,000 homes to be built
- Generate up to £116.9m in public and private investment

5 Superfast Berkshire (Broadband)

Superfast Berkshire continues to improve broadband speed and coverage across Berkshire in the areas that are not commercially viable to the private sector.

However, SMEs are uncertain about the prospect of government changes, although everyone involved appear to be putting the needs of growing businesses and emphasise the importance of SMEs to the economy.

The digitisation of business and public services has transformed the landscape for SMEs over the past five years. Despite this, it seems that a 'two-speed' digital economy will continue to affect "remote" businesses.

6 3 Counties Business Breakfast Club (3CBC)

This is a vibrant networking forum promoting individuals and their businesses.

The objectives of 3CBC, which has been running for over 25 years, are to enable members and guests who are in business in Surrey, Berkshire and Hampshire to meet and discuss business and related topical subjects in a relaxed environment over breakfast.

The meetings are held every third Wednesday 7.30am and we aim to finish by 9am of the month event.

7 The Business Forum

Each Month a group of small businesses meet over breakfast at Wellington College. Apart from networking a guest speaker makes a presentation relevant to SMEs at each gathering.

Examples of the excellent presentations are:

- Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership
- Making a successful business out of innovation
- Putting clients at the heart of your business
- The Impact of Europe on SMEs - Richard Ashworth MEP
- The Human Element of your organisation, group or team
- Top tips for capital gains planning and profit extraction for the entrepreneur
- Effective partnership: One plus One equals half a million
- Cost Management - is your profit draining away?

8 Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)

The Small Business Act reaching the statute book is a landmark moment for the UK's 5.2 million small firms. For the first time, an important piece of legislation has been

devoted to small businesses. This underlines the huge economic contribution small firms make to the UK economy and recognises their distinct needs.

The FSB has been the voice of business on the Bill from the outset, proposing many of the measures that now form the Act. These include measures on late payments, access to finance and credit information. The FSB will work with Ministers to make sure that the secondary legislation and further guidance now required is drafted in the interests of small firms.

9 Bracknell Forest Council – Business Survey 2014 (infrastructure)

Bracknell Forest Council is engaging with larger business in the borough about what they like and don't like about the infrastructure in Bracknell Forest and how it could be improved. It's part of a wider consultation with businesses being conducted by the Council. Findings from the research will inform the Council as to what businesses consider being the priorities for improvements to infrastructure and recommendations will be fed into the development of the Local Economic Framework.

10 Thames Valley Expo

The Thames Valley Expo has been created to have a leading business exhibition within the region. This will be built on an exciting blend of highly respected speakers, interactive features and industry leading suppliers.

The "one-day" event is aimed to attract small businesses whose primary agenda is to improve and expand their business, develop key relationships through networking with other regional business leaders and increase their skill set through our free industry leading seminars / practical workshops.

It's free to attend and offers a huge quantity of opportunity, advice and information crucial for ongoing business growth within a challenging economic climate.

11 Bracknell Enterprise and Innovation Hub

Bracknell Enterprise & Innovation Hub is an inspiring property solution for small and growing companies, located in the heart of Bracknell's town centre, with strong transport links and a professional on-site centre management team.

Funded by Schrodgers and in partnership with Bracknell Regeneration Partnership and Bracknell Forest Council, the Hub has been created within Ocean House to provide essential flexible and low risk office and meeting facilities as part of the town's significant regeneration plans.

The centre offers a range of office sizes, shared office and virtual options, and a selection of meeting facilities. This is an optimum location for start-up and growing businesses in Bracknell.

12 Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce

The Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce is a key delivery partner for the work of UK Trade & Investment, the National Government body responsible for promoting the UK as a leading business location and supporting companies to export into new international markets. They work closely with academic institutions, Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships across the region.

The Thames Valley team are a 'Centre for Excellence' providing international trade services and global representation; committed to long-term relationships with members and providing them with relevant, value added services that help, support and regional, national and international business.

Thames Valley is a highly regarded location for North American corporate headquarters; the region provides a familiar business culture with no language barriers. The Thames Valley Chamber delivers a free service of a soft landing into a networked business community that can save time and money and help grow organisations in a tried and tested business location.

13 Conclusion

Small and medium sized businesses are a key part of the British economy and have the potential to be economic powerhouses for the UK economy, creating jobs and growth

The increased availability of finance provides greater access than there has ever been before - banks are lending more and schemes such as the Business Growth Fund also present excellent opportunities.

Further, the 'digital revolution' coupled with superfast broadband makes it easier for small companies to become more competitive, reach new markets.

Finally, small firms have now moved from "survival" mode, to focus on how they can grow and upskill to gain competitive advantage. These companies have the added advantage of developing in the Thames Valley and, in particular, within Bracknell Forest.

Councillor Bob Wade

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Voluntary Sector Champion Councillor Finnie



The Voluntary Sector continues to play an outstanding contribution to the welfare of our community and we are all very grateful to our volunteers. Whether we are challenged by age, disability, have financial problems or any other of life's challenges our lives benefit from the help we receive from volunteers.

The most significant changes to our voluntary sector in the last year which I have heard of include the following –

A new General Manager has been appointed to INVOLVE (formerly known as Bracknell Forest Voluntary Action). This is Philip Cook and he comes with fresh ideas and much enthusiasm in order to assist the voluntary sector in our community and he has already met many of the senior directors and some councillors of the Borough Council. Once he has settled onto his new appointment, I am certain that he will be giving great support to our voluntary groups

I am hoping that the Borough Council will be able to join with INVOLVE to re-start the quarterly luncheon parties for representatives of our community groups. which I used to be able to hold, when they can exchange opinions and suggestions for their groups and learn from visiting speakers.

Financial pressures continue to give many of our voluntary groups increased worries and I am very pleased that many of our Borough Councillors have been able to give some financial assistance to several voluntary groups from their members' initiative fund.

Although this community does not suffer from the great financial pressures experienced in many parts of the country, some of our residents have had spells of extreme financial difficulties and have had to rely on the support which they receive from the Bracknell Food Bank. This is run by wonderful volunteers who rely on donations of food from residents (also volunteers) and distribute them to the more deserving,

A Food Bank has now also been opened in Crowthorne which caters for residents in Crowthorne and surrounding area. Unfortunately, they have experienced accommodation difficulties. They received temporary assistance from local residents and groups and are currently in discussions for a more permanent solution which I look forward to visiting when convenient to them.

Unfortunately, I have heard that the Friends of Broadmoor Hospital has been suspended but several people are hopeful that it can be revived in time for the opening of the rebuilt hospital.

There is a new group formed in our community whose aim is to support people in need. They are presently applying for charitable status when their details will be available. I have only received their initial proposals at present and I am planning to meet them in order to get their final proposals as all help for those in need is always appreciated.

I would like to hear from other Borough Councillors when they hear of any new challenges being faced by any voluntary group in their area.

Unrestricted

In the meantime, I repeat my very grateful appreciation for the excellent contribution made by all our volunteers.

Councillor James G. Finnie

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