

**PLACE MAKING AND INNOVATION EXECUTIVE ADVISORY BOARD**

20 May 2019

- \* Councillor Angela Gunning (Chairman)
- \* Councillor Gordon Jackson (Vice-Chairman)

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|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| * Councillor Jon Askew           | Councillor Diana Jones      |
| * Councillor Christopher Barrass | * Councillor Masuk Miah     |
| * Councillor Ruth Brothwell      | * Councillor Maddy Redpath  |
| * Councillor Graham Eyre         | * Councillor Will Salmon    |
| Councillor Liz Hogger            | * Councillor Patrick Sheard |

\* Present

Councillors Caroline Reeves and John Rigg were also in attendance.

**PMI1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**  
Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Liz Hogger.

**PMI2 LOCAL CODE OF CONDUCT AND DECLARATION OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**  
Councillor Jon Askew declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to agenda item number 4 regarding the digital games sector in Guildford owing to his involvement in gaming exhibitions.

**PMI3 MINUTES**  
The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Advisory Board held on 8 April 2019 were confirmed as a correct record, and assigned by the Chairman.

**PMI4 OFFICER UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S SUPPORT FOR THE DIGITAL GAMES SECTOR IN GUILDFORD WITH FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**  
The Executive Advisory Board received a report and presentations in respect of the digital gaming sector in Guildford which was one of the most important hubs of digital games development in the country and worldwide hosting over 70 companies engaged in this sector. The report provided the background to the sector, relevant facts and figures, future plans and how the Council could provide support to the industry, and outcomes for the Council.

An introductory presentation given by the Local Economy Manager, whose team included innovation, tourism and the town centre brief, outlined Guildford's top performing economy, explained why digital games in Guildford were so important and promoted the annual Innovate Guildford Festival which sought to inspire young people into careers in science, technology and the arts. A vitality index which considered twenty different data sets placed Guildford amongst the top ten economies in the country, the University of Surrey had been nominated as the Sunday Times University of the Year 2016 and several key corporations had their headquarters located in the town. Challenges for the economy were ensuring any growth was proportionate and sustainable, providing sufficient affordable housing for key workers, congestion and its impact on productivity, future talent pool and availability of appropriate office space. Digital games in Guildford were important as the digital economy was identified in the UK's Industrial Strategy by the Government as a key part of the future prosperity agenda which would deliver future jobs in a relatively low carbon environment and

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the technology could help support other sectors and challenges around future living. Also, there was a specific Corporate Plan action to support the sector which aligned with University of Surrey's academic and research objectives.

A second presentation delivered by Sam Read, Games and Immersive Partnership Manager at the University of Surrey, referred to Guildford being described as 'The Hollywood of Videogames' by a Guardian journalist. The presentation explained the impact of videogames on UK lives in terms of average weekly hours of gaming and game revenues, the value of the UK games industry and consumer market, Guildford's videogame cluster, Guildford's first videogame studio in 1987, enabling entrepreneurship through initiatives such as Rocketdesk, Galvanising Guildford Games (G3) futures, the Guildford Games Festival, Guildford games website and branding, and the UK games market growth in 2018 in terms of game software, hardware and culture. G3 was the only games industry conference in the south-east and offered networking opportunities for around 150 attendees, brought external partners into the games industry and supported local games industrial initiatives. There was a full branding project for Guildford's games industry to utilise and the website highlighted Guildford's studios, history, activity and supporting ecosystem with a view to enabling Guildford to become an easy-to-share example of creative prestige in the UK and to inspiring confidence for inward investment.

The following points arose from related questions and discussion:

- It was acknowledged that gaming was very popular and played across the world and via local area networks.
- Reference was made to one company which had utilised Rocketdesk, a new home for start-up game developers and other creative technology professionals in the area, and found it invaluable for companies starting up. The facility offered a support network with opportunities for exchanging complimentary skills and fostering innovations. There were many virtual teams in Guildford.
- Support and free business advice was available to assist start-up companies from business networks, growth hubs and organisations such as the SETsquared Partnership, a global business incubator and accelerator.
- The Council would be supporting an intellectual property event to assist businesses.
- Competitively priced office space, good connectivity and local networking assisted businesses.
- Nationally the UK was behind other countries in terms of broadband and Local Plan policies sought to address this by encouraging the inclusion of full fibre broadband in all developments, including housing. The use of broadband in public buildings would strengthen the connectivity network and related mapping was currently being undertaken. It was hoped that Government funding would be made available to improve connectivity.
- There were other games industry clusters across the country including Dundee and Leamington Spa although these were established more recently than the Guildford cluster. There was a good track record of local authority involvement and competition.
- Games streaming technology was advancing.
- Reference was made to Two Point Studios, a videogame development company based in Farnham, which had a strong reputation.
- Gaming had featured in initial discussions around exhibits in Guildford Museum and the games industry would drive tourism in the future owing to its popularity.
- Raising the profile of the Guildford gaming sector would attract investment and provide employment opportunities in local companies.
- It was felt that there was more which the Council could offer to improve skills such as operating computer coding classes.

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- The good work being undertaken at Guildford Library was highlighted as an attraction point for the skills needed by industry.
- The Leader of the Council felt that the Innovation Strategy Board had achieved much work and drawn many partners together and should continue its work and maintain contacts.

#### **PMI5 OFFICER UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S SUPPORT FOR THE TOURISM SECTOR IN GUILDFORD WITH FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES**

The Tourism Marketing and Development Manager gave a presentation to supplement her report in respect of the tourism sector which addressed the background to the sector and current performance; provided a SWOT analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with tourism; explained the meetings, incentives, conferences and events (MICE) process; detailed group day visits and short breaks, visiting friends and relatives, free independent travellers and UK inbound tourists; described the Tourist Information Centre; and explained marketing collateral, key drivers, key industry partners and the future.

The current position consisted of strong partnership working with tourism businesses (hotels, attractions, conference venues and promoters) and working with key partners in the industry including Tourism South East, Visit Britain, Visit England, UK Inbound and British Destinations. Guildford had a high profile in tourism in the UK and further afield.

The Cambridge Report 2017 detailed the 350,000 overnight tourism trips to Guildford in 2017 and advised that 4.8 million day trips were made to Guildford in 2016 and that £232.5 million had been spent by overnight and day visitors to the town. The total value of tourism activity in Guildford in 2016 was estimated to be £307.5 million and the industry consisted of 4,158 full time equivalent jobs and 5,679 actual jobs.

In terms of meetings and conferences, Guildford continued to be a hub for business tourism, with its close proximity to London and the main airports. It was a popular and convenient meeting place for local and global companies and some of the above footfall and bed nights were as a result of business tourism. 11,700 business events had been held at Guildford and Surrey venues and overall direct spend from delegates (and partners) was an estimated £129.4 million. Residential / 24-hour delegate rates in Guildford and Surrey, at £173, were significantly above the national average (£134). Day rates, at £42, were also above the national average (£37).

The SWOT analysis revealed that strengths were proximity to London, an existing and proactive network, strong local partnerships and a wide range of 'product'. Weaknesses were staffing: students and EU workers, proximity to London, shortage of hotel beds and lack of funding (Discover England Fund). Opportunities were Sterling versus other currencies in the short term, UK Inbound – other areas Brazil, India, Australia/New Zealand. Threats consisted of Brexit, a lack of joined up approach from other Borough's and larger destination marketing organisations with greater spending power inside and outside the UK.

Under MICE, members of the Conference and Venues Group paid £430 per annum and received a listing in the Venues brochure, a full entry on the website, press leads, and opportunities to join in pro-active marketing initiatives such as exhibitions and familiarisation visits at additional cost. Networking meetings were held twice a year and there was a Tourism Conference in order to share best practice and discuss promotional opportunities.

Group visits usually consisted of day visits and short breaks by coach. Group rate and coach parking information was included in the annual Visit Guildford Destination Guide and there was a dedicated [Groups section](#) on the Visit Guildford website which included

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information around parking, food and drink stops, group friendly hotels and offers. An Excursions Exhibition was held every January with other tourism partners and familiarisation visits were provided.

Where visiting friends and relatives was concerned, there was a large market with visitors often staying with relatives rather than in paid accommodation and they accounted for much of the reported footfall in local attractions and day visits. This category of tourism also included some UK Inbound visitors. The Visit Guildford website was the main vehicle for informing tourists and there was event led promotion through local media listings.

Free independent travellers were the most difficult to target and the website, social media, Alexa, radio and editorial were utilised to promote Guildford as a destination.

In terms of UK inbound visitors, Western Europe and the Nordics/Scandinavia were targeted through Tourism South East's (TSE's) International Marketing campaigns which included taking translated information on sales missions, sending the Council leads from travel press and travel trade, and sales missions. China was targeted through the Go China campaign, a presence on websites hosted in China, representations in a travel trade brochure, travel trade sales exhibitions, following up leads, Chinese social media, an App, students visits and a leaflet covering tourism, education and business. Custom GB circulated e-newsletters to over 10,000 USA travel agents regularly.

The Guildford Tourist Information Centre (TIC), which had regularly won awards in the Beautiful South Awards, was open 6 days a week in winter and 7 days a week in summer and offered advice and assistance to both residents with visiting friends and family and visitors to the town. The primary objective was to encourage people to visit the town, stay longer and spend more. Souvenirs, maps, books and tickets to local events and attractions were sold and provided additional income to the Council. The ticketing service also offered marketing, help and advice to promoters to help them maximise the effectiveness and profitability of their events. The TIC Team also engaged with local businesses, worked closely with the University of Surrey and attended Freshers Fairs and Open Days to promote the town to prospective and new students.

Other means to promote Guildford were various tourist guides, leaflets and booklets, social media, town guides walks, press and public relations, videos, exhibitions and excursions. The Visit Guildford website had been viewed on over 230,000 occasions in the last 12 months.

Key drivers were partnership working, social media, repetition and reliability, proactivity, awareness of trends and the TIC.

Key industry partners were Tourism South East, Visit Britain/Visit England, British Destinations, Tourism Alliance, UK Inbound and tourism businesses, Custom GB and Visit Surrey.

Looking to the future, Brexit would upset the tourism landscape and there was a need to keep up to date with future trends and to explore new markets i.e. Brazil and India.

The following points arose from related discussion and questions:

- The Spike Heritage Centre was included in the Visit Guildford guide and benefited from a car park which could accommodate a coach.
- Groups tended to consist of elderly people with some mobility issues and therefore coach parking was required. The topography of Guildford could discourage visits by

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people with mobility issues and therefore transport and drop off points needed to be planned to assist them.

- The 2014 Visitor Strategy was reported to have achieved its targets and was due for a refresh.
- Attractions in Guildford included gaming, Lewis Carroll, sport, events and shopping which were all promoted.
- Improved access to the River Wey frontage was welcomed as a tourist attraction and it was felt that both the river and Basingstoke Canal should be promoted. A replacement day boat, including a restaurant, was sought to increase river access.
- Facilitating a gaming competition tapping into local area networks and introducing an e-sports programme were suggested as tourist attractions.
- The provision of a new tourism centre with digital technology in Guildford was possible in the future.

**PMI6 EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN**

The EAB acknowledged that it needed to become more familiar with the content of the Forward Plan before it was in a position to comment on it. To assist with this process, it was agreed that the Corporate Plan 2018-23 be circulated to members.

**PMI7 EAB WORK PROGRAMME**

The EAB work programming process was explained to Councillors who were invited to suggest any items or join future working groups.

**PMI8 PROGRESS WITH ITEMS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE EAB**

The Leader of the Council advised that expressions of interest for nominations to the Executive Working Groups would be sought. It was reported that the Bike Share Scheme would be delayed until the summer whilst the interaction with a similar scheme operated by the University of Surrey was agreed. The possibility of adding electrical charging points to lampposts was raised, however, there were associated practical difficulties and resource issues.

**PMI9 LATE SHEETS**

The Late Sheet confirmed the membership of the Executive Advisory Board.

The meeting finished at 9.05 pm

Signed .....

Date .....

Chairman