

Information/Discussion Paper

Economy and Business Improvement - 30th November 2009

Parklife: A review of Phases 1 & 2 and moving into Phase 3

This note contains the information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Committee, but where no decisions from Members are needed

1. Why has this come to scrutiny?

- 1.1 This discussion paper has come to scrutiny to inform members as to how the c.£80k investment from Cheltenham Borough Council to Parklife (care of Gloucestershire Development Agency) has been expended over the past four years. The economic development team and Parklife believe that it is important for members to identify with what the project was initially set up to achieve and whether it realised these goals, before distinguishing the new change in direction for Phase 3 of the project (2009-2011) and what the target outputs are for the future.

2. Summary of the Issue

- 2.1 Parklife is a unique service for the county of Gloucestershire, which is designed to support local businesses trade more effectively. In Cheltenham, the estates covered are Lansdown and Kingsditch.

The service is exclusively designed to link together companies in the same geographical area, on business parks, industrial estates or in the same vicinity, to take advantage of networking, skills development, staff recruitment and business advice on their doorstep.

Parklife's key aims are to:

- Train staff cost effectively
- Assist with the recruitment of new staff
- Meet and work with other local businesses
- Increase business sales on specific industrial estates through business networking
- Provide tailored advice from experienced business advisors

- Identify potential grants and funding for the businesses

At the meeting this evening, Keith Rog from Parklife, will update members on how the monies have been spent since 2006, and in addition, how the £20k investment from Cheltenham Borough Council for 2009-2011 will be allocated. The presentation will highlight the success achieved over the past four years, as well as the strategic direction for the future.

There have been three phases to date for the project:

- **Phase 1:** Launch (2006-2007, designed to support businesses on the Lansdown Industrial Estate, as well as other estates across the county, to network with each other and to do business with each other whilst highlighting opportunities to save costs, etc, via joint procurement);
- **Phase 2:** (2007-2009, to consolidate the project and establish an additional site at Kingsditch Business Park via the Vibixa premises; to introduce training elements such as the Environmental programme; to explore further opportunities such as site insurance, meet the buyer events);
- **Phase 3:** (2009-2011: The project is reassessed in response to the economic climate and aims to encourage new business start-ups in the borough, as well as to support existing businesses with the Graduate Challenge and Response to Redundancy programmes; to establish two new sites to reach a wider network – Cheltenham Trade Park and Space Business Centre, Neptune Business Park; and to ultimately provide an active link between the private sector and the Borough Council.

3. Summary of evidence/information

- 3.1 The targets for Parklife to achieve during the 2009-2011 period are contained within the background paper.
- 3.2 Parklife supports the Economic Development Strategy 2008-2011, within the key indicators of SO1, SO3, LAA EDE 2 and LAA EDE 3.
- 3.3 Phase 3 is a two year programme, with the funding trench expiring on 31 March 2011.

4. Next Steps - possible next steps for the committee to consider e.g. potential witnesses, further report, site visit etc.

- 4.1 Members may wish to re-examine whether the targets set were achieved after the funding has expired in 2011.

Background Papers

1. Targets and Outputs for Parklife: 2009-2011
2. Phase 1 summary report
3. Phase 2 summary report

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Accountability

Cllr Steve Jordan

Scrutiny Function

Economy and Business Improvement