

Appendix E - Scrutiny Review of Partnership Working

Notes of Fourth Meeting – Tuesday 8th January 2013

Present: Cllr Andrew Cartwright
Cllr Peter Chowney
Cllr Mike Howard
Cllr Trevor Webb
Cllr John Wilson
Neil Dart, Director of Corporate Resources
Mark Horan, Policy & Partnerships Officer
Michael Courts, Democratic Services Support Officer

Apologies: Cllr Peter Pragnell
Cllr Mike Turner

1. Question and Answer Session with Councillor Peter Chowney and Neil Dart, Director of Corporate Resources

This item was moved up the Agenda, with the agreement of the Chair.

Discussion took place regarding the background of Seachange. Seachange has a board of fifteen directors, with Councillor Chowney serving as the Council's nominated director, with decisions generally made by consensus. The Director of Corporate Resources also attends meetings as an observer. Councillor Chowney noted that Seachange has a similar remit to Seaspace and aims to facilitate regeneration in Hastings and Bexhill.

At an earlier meeting, John Shaw had suggested an annual briefing for all Members, in response to concerns regarding a lack of publicly available monitoring information for the work of Seachange. The review team acknowledged that some information related to Seachange was commercially sensitive but underscored that a historic report would be in keeping with the Council's corporate priority to strengthen the local economy.

Consideration was given to the job offer in the town; Members noted that niche and high level job opportunities were available at the Innovation Centre, alongside the offer of larger companies in the town. The review team underscored the link between education and employability, in order to ensure these vacancies are filled by local people. The review team was advised of an employability training programme some new employers had developed with the college, since relocating to the town. The programme had enabled them to recruit staff with limited or no previous work experience and who may have a history of unemployment. Members requested further updates on the efforts of employers to recruit staff locally.

The review team discussed the work of economic partners, in the context of the financial challenges facing the Council. Members noted the efforts of Seachange and other partners had been necessary to attract further investment in the town. Moreover, the use of the Council's expertise in grant application and self funded projects could continue to support these efforts going forward.

The review team thanked Councillor Chowney and the Director of Corporate Resources for attending.