

## Taking Fleet Forward provides clear direction

New management team forms to get town working together for a better future

**F**leet Forward has been chosen as the name of the town's new management team which comprises a partnership between Hart District Council and the town's key stakeholders.

Its prime function is to act as representatives of the town's stakeholders in agreeing and implementing an effective plan for increasing Fleet's viability and vitality. It will also provide focus and direction for the Town Centre Manager.

Paul Doughty, Fleet Town Centre Manager, says, "I'm really pleased that we have formed a strong management team."

Originally called the Fleet Town Centre Partnership, the group decided that a more dynamic name was needed to reflect the aspirations of all stakeholders in creating a vibrant town and community.

The original name was also seen as cumbersome and could have led to confusion with the Fleet Business Partnership, a separately constituted community interest group.

Fleet benefits from a number of highly active but disparate groups that work hard to benefit the town. These groups are all very important to Fleet and play key roles in ensuring lively well-attended events that add to the

town's ambience.

Fleet Forward, however, aims to represent the interests of all of the town's stakeholders in championing the town.

Notes Doughty, "It is a challenging task as stakeholders often have disparate views, for example, the business approach of large national retailers is vastly different from that of local retailers while the needs and importance of non-retail businesses



can be easily overlooked".

Fleet Forward comprises 14 people, including the Town Centre Manager, representing eight different groups among the town's stakeholders. These are:

- Pubwatch - two members from pubs/restaurants focused on the night-time economy;
- Hart Shopping Centre - two members focused on the needs of national retailers;
- Fleet Business Partnership - one member representing a cross-section of interests in

Fleet;

- Community & Voluntary Groups - two members focused on the wider community;
- Federation of Small Businesses - one member focused on smaller non-retail businesses;
- North Hampshire Chamber of Commerce & Industry - one member focused on larger non-retail businesses;

- Local Authorities - two members with county expertise, and;
- Hart District Council - two members

Fleet Forward received Cabinet approval from Hart District Council earlier this year and funds have been allocated for the town's manager. Two seminar sessions were also held - one with stakeholder's representatives and a separate one with Councillors - to look at the issues facing the town.

Doughty says, "I believe Fleet Forward will succeed as it focuses on getting everyone in Fleet working together for the common good of the town."

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## Bra dump sites sought

Retailers in Fleet are being asked to help the Phyllis Tuckwell hospice and benefit their own business by recycling bras.

The local charity wants to place a number of small hexagonal cardboard bra banks with local retailers. They are about 0.75m in diameter and about a metre high and have the Phyllis Tuckwell logo on the side.

Each bin can hold about 100 bras and they will be emptied regularly by contractors working for the Hospice. The bins are lightweight and can be easily moved to different locations to aid customers.

Lingerie shops could make effective use of the bins by offering a discount for new bras when an old one is recycled.

The charity is also looking to place larger metal textile and bra recycling banks in Fleet. The Town Centre Manager is discussing this initiative with Hart District Council.

Once the sites have been agreed Phyllis Tuckwell will begin a sustained publicity campaign to raise public awareness of the scheme.

### For more information contact:

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## Fleet Food Fair set for May bank holiday

The first Fleet Food Fair is set to go ahead as planned on the late May bank holiday, 26th May. The event, which is being held in association with Hampshire Farmers Markets, will take place in Branksome Wood Road at the junction with Fleet Road between 10 am and 2 pm.

A mobile kitchen will be the highlight of the event as chefs from some of Fleet's top restaurants

prepare a dish and give a few tips to the audience. The kitchen has a full oven with twin hobs and an overhead mirror so that people can clearly see what is happening.

A similar event in Southsea last year attracted 2,500 visitors; this year Southsea is holding a two-day event with longer hours.

Fleet's Town Centre Manager,

Paul Doughty, says, "This is a wonderful opportunity for businesses involved with food or catering to highlight what Fleet has to offer."

He adds, "I had some concerns about the event going ahead when the costs of the kitchen rose quite sharply but have now been able to source another unit." The other challenge was sponsorship since none of the companies approached in Fleet felt able to support

the event.

Hampshire County Council has now stepped in to help.

Another Food festival is planned for Saturday, 13th December.

### For more information contact:

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## Limited response on street cleaning

Hart District Council is proposing to undertake additional cleaning of pavements outside of Fleet's pubs and restaurants at weekends provided the traders are prepared to meet the cost. The proposals stem from concerns by the traders about the negative impact of rubbish.

HDC's street cleaning team says that it does not have the budget to undertake weekend cleaning but can provide the crew and the equipment provided their costs are met.

The estimated cost is £100 for a team of two sweeping the pavements for a total of 2.5 hours over the weekend. The proposal is primarily directed at the Reading

Road end of Fleet Road where the majority of the pubs and restaurants are located.

Participants also need to be co-located since the scheme could be difficult to administer if one or two premises opt out yet still benefit

from weekend cleaning.

Although the proposals have already been circulated there has been little response. Macdonalds says that it already pays for its own steam cleaning

and Whistlers notes that it would gain little benefit from joining a scheme because of its location.

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Naples street scene

# Business interest looks mixed

Commercial agents say the credit crunch is having an impact although there are other factors affecting business

The credit crunch, combined with the prevalence of older buildings, has dampened business enthusiasm, according to local commercial agents.

Fleet remains relatively popular although Ancell's Farm now has a high proportion of empty office space despite excellent parking.

Remarks one agent, "Non-retail was pretty buoyant but it has been quieter for about the past five months as the credit crunch has restricted activities".

There are now no very large non-retail companies left in the area since BT pulled out a short while ago notes one agent. However, the agents argue that they are succeeding in slowly filling the available space as there is still demand for business units in town, especially for units close to the railway station.

Because of this Waterfront Park should be a prime location but the recent application to put housing on the site caused concern among some businesses interested in relocating to Fleet. Although the planning application was turned down, agents believe that housing will eventually be put on the site leading to many of the businesses there relocating.

A challenge facing many of Fleet's non-retail units is their comparative age with Ancell's Farm having its heyday in the

1980s and '90s. New office units in Farborough are being rented at £25/sq ft while similar properties in Fleet can only command about £18/sq ft.

Retail has similar issues and agents say that the market has struggled over the last nine months. Yet there are still bright spots with interest being shown in the former Gift Box and the JC Fabric's former Fleet Street shop is about to be occupied.

Equally there is interest in - but no firm offers for - the latest retail unit, formerly Jumbo Electrics, to join the market. Rent for the 2,000 sq ft unit stands at £55k.

Against that one of the town's established retailers is now looking to move from Fleet Street although the intention is to maintain an Internet store as a growth area for their business.

The agents believe that footfall in the core area of Fleet remains reasonable and that landlords need to be realistic about property and rent values. Some owners believe their property to be worth some 30 to 50% more the actual market value and are holding out against any redevelopment or sale on that basis.

Remarks one agent, "The credit crunch is a major factor but parking and access remain core issues for any business thinking of moving to Fleet".

## Making e-commerce work for retail

A conference that aims to encourage local retailers to develop their e-commerce presence is being held on Wednesday, 21st May at the Winchester Guildhall.



The principal argument is that an e-store can complement a traditional high street presence but not necessarily replace it. Combining technologies such as a laptop, mobile and PDA in the so-called 3 Screen world (3SW) can give retailers an invaluable tool in reaching new customers and increasing sales.

The keynote speaker for the conference is Houston Spencer, form Alcatel-Lucent's and there will be presentations on The Future of the High Street which looks at the opportunities for small retailers and producers.

The conference costs £40, including a networking lunch, and starts with registration at 9 am.

The conference organisers, ehampshire, are also running a series of free workshops in association with Adido Solutions of Southampton. The next two events are on Wednesday 28th May at the Admiral Lord Nelson School in Portsmouth and on Wednesday, 18th June in Basingstoke at the District Council offices. Although these workshops are free people are asked to register before attending.

**For more information contact:**  
www.ehampshire.org

Fleet Town News is a free newsletter produced by the Fleet Town Centre Manager to help keep local businesses informed about developments in the town. It primarily focuses on the work of Fleet Forward and the town centre manager.

The newsletter will now be produced quarterly and distributed in two formats. An A4 colour version will be sent by email to any interested readers as a pdf attachment; this is the same as last year. An A5 mono version will also be

## Constant vigilance keeps Hart safe

Close liaison between Police and community support teams made Hart District the safest local authority in the UK in April but constant vigilance is needed to make sure it stays that way.

Chief Inspector Norman Mellors, Hart's police district commander says that overall crime decreased by 8% last month although drug offence showed a worrying increase.

Mellors remarks, "Residents often have a disproportionately high fear of crime and are not aware that Hart District has the lowest crime rate in Hampshire".

Initiatives, such as the use of mobile CCTV, have helped reduce anti social behaviour but Mellors warns that all anti-social behaviour should be reported since extra patrols can only be deployed when problems are notified.

Alcohol plays a significant part in most public assaults. Many residents believe that there are too many licensed areas yet Hart's premises in some licensing com-mittee get very few objections about or licensing ex-tensions. Mellors argues that the absence of public objections will re-sult in more licensed premises and longer licensing hours being granted.



Criminal damage and anti-social behaviour are particular priorities but the absence of youth clubs, youth leaders and activities for young people is a negative aspect although anti-social behaviour is not solely a youth issue.

Mellors concludes, "Active co-operation and support between the Police and all stakeholders is essential if we are to maintain Hart as a very safe place".

**For more information contact**  
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Hart Safer Neighbourhood Team  
Fleet Police Station

## What do you think is the shape of Fleet?

Fleet Forward is planning a competition to decide on a logo for Fleet. Paul Doughty, Fleet Town Centre Manager says, "Logos are quite important since they instantly convey a snapshot of the town and help people associate with the town."

At the moment Fleet is marked by pink signposts on the out-skirts but it has no logo.

Planning for the competition is at an early stage but Fleet Forward feels it is important for everyone in the town to be able to put forward their ideas. Doughty comments, "The logos of many UK towns tend to be fairly mundane while Continental towns often have more colourful and exuberant logos and it really comes down to how people feel their town should be perceived."

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published and distributed by hand initially to retailers and businesses in Fleet Road between Reading Road and King's Road.

The distribution area may be extended depending on demand and costs.

## A-board guidelines

Most of Fleet's pavements are part of the highway which means that Hampshire Highways is responsible for making sure they are safe.

To help retailers Hampshire Highways has agreed a simple set of guidelines.

### First steps

Check whether or not the pavement outside your shop is private property.

Check that any proposed board does not exceed the maximum size permitted.

### The guidelines

The A-boards must:

- Be stable
- Placed next to the retailer's premises
- Placed at least 1.8m from the kerb
- Always be in the same position
- Not contain any swinging, rotating or other moving parts
- Be taken in at night
- In addition only one A-board per business is permitted. They are the responsibility of the business and HCC accepts no responsibility for them.

Despatch will be in the first week of February, May, August and November.

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