

Fleet Town news

Issue 1 Dec 2006

A Vision for Fleet

by Paul Doughty, Fleet Town Centre Manager

My vision is for a lively and growing town centre that is popular with people wanting to visit for the town's comprehensive and unique shopping opportunities.

A place where a wide range of businesses can thrive as the town looks forward to the many opportunities presented by the potential growth in the South East region and the forthcoming Olympics in 2012.

I want to see a town with a sustainable future that faces challenges boldly and effectively; an inclusive, welcoming, exciting and safe place to visit and work by day and night.

I believe that this vision will be realised through the active participation and involvement of all people with a positive interest in seeing the town develop.

In the short term this means forming an effective liaison of local groups to provide efficient feedback and better utilisation of limited resources through a formal management structure.

In the longer term it means looking at improvements in the town's infrastructure in conjunction with local, county and national representatives to provide better

facilities that will encourage people and businesses to come to Fleet.

It means developing the town's unique character and charm and strategically marketing them to encourage growth. It means working together.

I see the Town Centre Manager's role as being an independent champion for the town; a facilitator working with local councillors, council officers and business and community groups to produce positive actions that will mutually benefit Fleet.

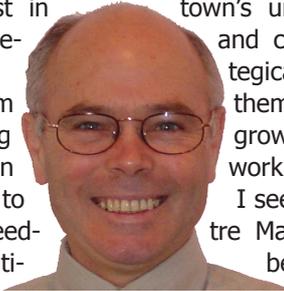
It will not be easy nor will it

be achieved quickly, but it is possible and the first steps have already been made. I look forward to a challenging time.

Christmas lights review planned

Disappointment with the Christmas lights contractors, Blachere Ltd, has led to the FTTCM requesting a review early in the New Year. A number of issues need to be resolved to restore confidence in the contractors if their three-year contract is to continue.

Suzy Lovett, Blachere's Project Manager has promised to rectify all the faults.



Shopkeepers urged to utilise Internet

The Internet is a major challenge facing town centres. On-line shopping is threatening to overtake traditional retail outlets as shoppers find it increasingly easy to surf the net and find what they want. There's little hassle and faulty goods can easily be returned.

For small retailers with limited turnover and capital funds competing can be difficult and it is often easier to just carry on as before.

Unfortunately, that simply won't work and small shopkeepers can benefit from the effective use of e-mail and simple web sites. Yet how many traders in Fleet readily supply their e-mail details, or send their customers a regular mailing letter with special offers? Very few, if any.

Ignoring the Internet isn't a solution; using it is.



WISHING
YOU A VERY
MERRY
CHRISTMAS
AND
PROSPEROUS
NEW YEAR

Town management group reaches premature end

Fleet Town Management Group (FTCG) decided to disband at its meeting on 11 December despite a plea from the incoming Town Centre Manager, Paul Doughty, to delay its decision.

The decision effectively ends the partnership between Hart District Council and the town's retailers that has worked over the past several years. Concerns were expressed during the meeting that the FTCG had simply become a talking shop rather than an effective organisation working together to improve the town.

The need to provide an improved management structure has been recognised by Hart District Council. One of Mr Doughty's first key tasks is to produce a management template based on the experiences and best practice of other towns throughout the country.

The experience of FTCG members would have provided Mr Doughty with invaluable information in formulating a strategy to make Fleet a better town.

Fleet's new Town Centre Manager

Paul Doughty is a single parent following the death of his wife, Claire, in June and lives in Church Crookham with his three daughters.

He is a former editor of national and international business maga-

zines and has worked in marketing and public relations.

He served with the TA Media Operations Group. A member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing, he continues to manage his own company.

Planning workshop focuses on Fleet's future

A workshop for all interested parties is to be held in late January to discuss the challenges facing town centres and the need for a revised and cohesive management structure for Fleet Town Centre.

The evening event will feature brief presentations from Hart District Council, the Association of Town Centre Managers (ATCM), and the Fleet Town Centre Manager (FTCM).

These will be followed by a round table discussion.

Toyubur Rahman, South East Regional Development Director of ATCM will talk about making town centres more competitive to meet the needs of consumers and businesses in the future as well as the potential for growth throughout the South East.

Paul Doughty, FTFCM, will highlight the need for an improved management structure in the town following the demise of the Fleet Town Centre Group (FTCG).

Key points that will be discussed are how the management team tackles:

Funding – currently the FTFCM is funded directly by the Council with few funds available for the strategic marketing of Fleet.

This can lead to the perception that the FTFCM works directly for the Council rather than being an independent champion for the best interests of the town.

Representation – the needs of everyone with an interest in the development of the town must be heard and properly debated to formulate an

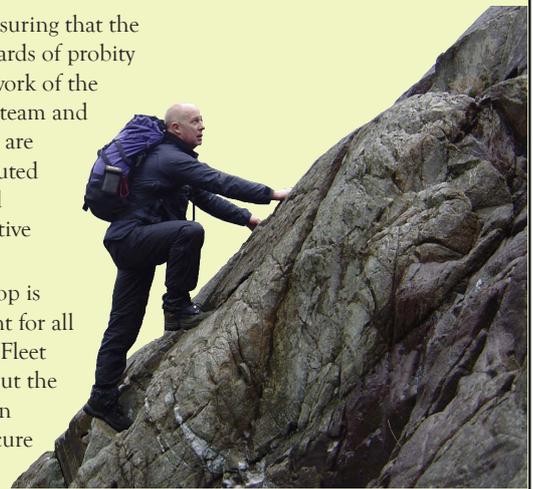
effective strategy if Fleet is to be successful.

Infrastructure – creating a single cohesive plan for improving Fleet's infrastructure and ensuring it is properly presented to county and national authorities to create success.

Probity – ensuring that the highest standards of probity apply to the work of the management team and any proposals are properly executed and improved through effective feedback.

This workshop is very important for all businesses in Fleet and aims to put the foundations in place for a secure future.

Dates and venue will be confirmed early in the New Year but you should register your interest in attending this event as soon as possible to ftc.manager@hart.gov.uk or by phone to 01252 613475.



Festivities night goes extremely well

Fleet Festivities on 22 November was a resounding success as people crowded into town for the traditional lighting of the Christmas tree and street lights combined with a street party atmosphere.

The event was organised by the Fleet Business Partnership following the resignation of the

town's previous manager, Sue Collen.

Concerns had been raised that the event would not be able to go ahead as Ms Collen had been its principal driving force over the past three years.

Instead local retailers and willing volunteers, aided by funding from Hart District Council, put on an excellent show with street markets, choirs, animal displays and fireworks.

Hart Centre supports Business Partnership

The manager of Hart Shopping Centre, Caroleanne Baker, has pledged to work with the Fleet Business Partnership (FBP) throughout 2007.

In an email to the Fleet Town Centre Manager, Ms Baker disclosed that she has already decided to support the FBP following a series of informal

meetings.

Notes Ms Baker: "I spoke with Kevin Whibley (Chairman Fleet Business Partnership) earlier this year and informed him that we will support the Fleet Business Partnership where possible and subsequently liaise with Kevin on any matters concerning this partnership".

The FBP has proposed different opportunities of interest to Hart Shopping Centre.

Remove or improve poor quality web sites

The web is an ideal tool for companies to reach a global audience.

Some, such as Amazon, have had a great deal of success but the web is a double-edged sword. To be an effective marketing tool web sites must work properly and the information must be accurate.

Unfortunately, badly constructed and maintained sites can damage businesses by association rather than promote companies positively.

Fleet is no exception and there are a number of sites that need to be either markedly improved or removed from web. One example is

<http://www.fleethampshire.com/>. This site aims to be a comprehensive guide to the shops in Fleet but it takes little time to find out-of-date or missing information.

A large number of companies have only the STD code and no telephone number; Carson's address is given as the Hart Centre but is shown as being on the High Street.

JC Fabrics is depicted with a 'To Let' sign and a note that it will soon be moving to Church Street although the move happened some months ago.

Other links lead to hyper-space rather than the prom-

ised details while Boots the Chemist apparently does not have a web site despite having a successful on-line shop.

Flowers & Things continues to bloom despite moving out of Fleet some time ago. Click on Bon Marche and you'll find yourself in Dolland & Aitchison which is not good for either retailer.

Some, such as Bulldog PC, are repeated. Others do not have telephone numbers although the details can clearly be seen in the pictures. Overall the site fails to give a positive impression of Fleet and should be rapidly removed or radically improved.



Fleet Town News will be distributed by email only.

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