



Committee and Date

Council

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Item

13

Public

PORTFOLIO HOLDER REPORT FOR THE UNIVERSITY CENTRE AND SHREWSBURY BID

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1. Summary

- 1.1** This report is an update on University Centre Shrewsbury (UCS) and details the work currently underway in preparation for the arrival of the first undergraduate students in September 2015. This includes accommodation, teaching and learning provision and planning policy in relation to the management of student housing.

REPORT

University Centre Shrewsbury

2 Student Numbers & Curriculum Update

- 2.1** The anticipation for student numbers for September 2015 is approximately 130 split between undergraduate (approx.85) and postgraduate (approx.45) programmes.
- 2.2** The curriculum consists of 10-12 undergraduate programmes and 5-6 postgraduate programmes based around the four research clusters consisting of:
- Sustainable Business & Community Development
 - Medicine & Health
 - Societal Innovation
 - Design, Heritage & Built Environment

Recent appointments include Professor Anna Sutton as Provost for University Centre Shrewsbury, who will lead the future development of the project. Professor Claire Schofield has also been appointed as the lead for the Sustainable Business & Community Development research cluster. This includes engaging with the Shropshire business community to develop skills and resilience in the local economy.

3. Mardol House Refurbishment

- 3.1 The conversion of Mardol House is currently ongoing with a programme completion date of Monday 14 September in readiness for the arrival of the first undergraduates during the week of 28 September 2015. The development comprises 85 student bedrooms with a mixture of cluster living and individual studio apartments which will provide accommodation for all first year intake undergraduates. A residential tutor will live on site with the students providing pastoral care and support.
- 3.2 Due to a determination by both the authority and the contractor to mitigate as much as possible the effects of the construction programme weekend road closures, required for essential service connections, have been scheduled for 5 & 12 July to avoid any major events.

4. Guildhall Refurbishment

- 4.1 The internal refurbishment of the Guildhall as the primary teaching location is due to commence by the University of Chester in early July for a 6 week programme. This will include the creation of teaching and seminar space, library, student support and academic offices. Rowley's House will remain in use for a variety of administration functions and public events and forums ensuring the University Centre is highly visible to and engaged with Shrewsbury and Shropshire.

5. OJEU (IMC-157) Development & Operation of Student Accommodation

- 5.1 The OJEU process for the provision of up to 800 additional managed student bedrooms is progressing and has currently reached preferred bidder stage. Units will be developed on a call off basis based on demand. Final designs are currently being developed and it is envisaged that public consultation relating to location will commence shortly. This level of provision is intended to secure the future growth of UCS for at least the next 5 years.

6. Accommodation Strategy

- 6.1 In conjunction with the OJEU (Official Journal of the European Union) process the Council is also conducting a detailed investigation into the potential effects of any student migration into residential areas outside the provision of managed accommodation. The Council is working with 'ARUP' consulting and will receive recommendations before the arrival of the first undergraduate students to ensure the most effective measures to manage student growth are implemented.
- 6.2 Work is also progressing on a Landlord accreditation scheme in order to regulate the suitability of the provision of Student Living.

7. Partnership Agreement

- 7.1 Work is progressing on a Partnership Agreement to succeed the Memorandum of Understanding that exists between the Council and the University of Chester.

8. Communications Plan

- 8.1 Communications are managed jointly between both parties and regular press releases are issued alongside postings on Social Media.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1 The collaboration between Shropshire Council and the University of Chester continues to deliver on the successes achieved to date. The utilisation and recycling of existing and redundant Council infrastructure combined with the academic expertise of the University of Chester provides a unique opportunity to not only benefit the educational offer available in the county but also provide a substantial contribution to the local economy.

Shrewsbury Business Improvement District (BID)

10.0 Shrewsbury Business Improvement District (BID)

- 10.1 The Shrewsbury Business Improvement Business District (BID) company represents the private sector businesses and organisations within the BID area of central Shrewsbury and works in partnership with Shropshire Council, Shrewsbury Town Council, Shrewsbury Tourism Association, Shrewsbury Business Chamber and West Mercia Police. It is a democratically elected private sector led organisation which aims to invest in and deliver projects and priorities, which are set out in a five year business plan, to improve the trading environment and raise the profile of the town. The company is financed principally from levies collected from organisations that operate within the BID area and which occupy buildings with a rateable value above £10,000. BID levy payers are members of the company and exceed 500 in number and it also invites voluntary members for those under the rateable value mentioned.
- 10.2 The Company completed its first year of operation in 2014/15 and has achieved some notable successes in terms of projects delivered to promote and support increased footfall, investment and economic growth in the town.
- 10.3 These include:
- 10.4 **Marketing, profile and promotion**

The company has created a twelve month marketing plan and is delivering high quality PR and marketing outcomes in partnership with a locally based company, as well as communicating successes to businesses. Activity has generated £0.5m PR value and reached 3million people.

Shrewsbury's tourism website has been re developed to ensure it is the principal website for the town. Social media accounts and campaigns have been used successfully, attracting many users, to raise the town's profile and to attract visitors. The company is working closely with key partners to project key projects and initiatives for the town including the Shrewsbury vision, the University Centre of Shrewsbury and the direct Shrewsbury to London rail link.

10.5 Access and Car Parking

The company continues to work in collaboration with Shropshire Council to deliver car parking incentives to attract and retain greater footfall in the town.

These initiatives are jointly planned and promoted; Sunday car parking initiatives have seen an average of 21% increase in footfall on these days. Footfall counts are recorded and measured and have demonstrated a correlation between parking incentives and increased footfall.

The Company is subsequently working with Shropshire Council to develop a strategy for Sunday and Bank Holiday car parking policy which has led to the recent park all day for £1 trials.

Working with Shropshire Council and Shrewsbury Town Council, the company has appointed public realm wayfinding consultants to transform the town's on street signage system into a more efficient and effective mapping approach. Initially creating a new master map for hard copy and digital use, the team will then work on a public realm system to install signage totems around town, linking spaces, places and locations including the town's key tourism, shopping, business and education sites. This project is planned for delivery in 2016 as part of the Shrewsbury Integrates Transport Package.

10.6 Backing Business

Footfall cameras have been procured and installed and information is shared monthly with local business.

Regular e-bulletins and town centre information is being provided to keep members informed of benefits and town centre news is channelled directly to business owners to help them keep informed of news that affects the town. Visitor information is provided via a range of user friendly channels, including social media and promotional videos for the town, reaching tens of thousands of people across the globe.

10.7 Direction and Drive

The company continues to work closely with Shropshire Council, Shrewsbury Town Council, public and third sector bodies to develop and promote business friendly town centre policies. These support the Team Shrewsbury initiatives and assist with the joint promotion of the highly successful town based festivals.

The BID board has ensured that it continues to be a supportive and valued partner in the bringing the new university into the town centre. Five new directors were elected by the business community after a recent annual meeting.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

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Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Councillor Claire Wild

Local Member

Councillor Andrew Bannerman

Conflicts of interest declared by members

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Appendices

N/A