

JOBS AND BUSINESS SUB-COMMITTEE GROUP

MEETING WITH WREST PARK ENTREPRISE (WPE) 27.03.17

Attendees: Ann Webb (AW)
Helen Skepper (HS)
David Taylor (DT) – Estates Manger (WPE)
Beverley Weller (BW) – Assistant Centre Manager (WPE)

Purpose of meeting: To learn about companies operating on the WPE site and to explain about the Silsoe Neighbourhood Plan and its context within Central Beds' Local Plan, and the role of the Jobs and Business section within the Neighbourhood Plan; to outline employment questionnaire to be launched within 2 months.

Discussion points:

1. AW explained the purpose of the meeting and our desire to reach as many companies as possible and have as high a rate of response as possible. English Heritage would be approached separately, today we were just seeking to discuss businesses on WPE site. (DT advised Sarah Bedlington is current EH Site Manager.)
2. DT explained that the majority of WPE site's tenants are micro businesses employing 0-5 people, with the biggest only employing 24.
3. WPE itself has 6 employees including ST and BW.
4. Low employee turnover rates. Recruitment agencies used for vacancies (WPEs and others'); aware of Silsoe Facebook presence but hadn't thought of using/asking to use it for recruitment purposes.
5. WPE been there just over 4 years. Site nearly full – together with English Heritage DT thinks total employee numbers within Wrest Park c450, similar to when Soil Association etc. there. There is some scope for growth, "but not aggressive growth".
6. No appetite to change business types profile – in semi-rural area and so naturally attract local, small, owner-led businesses. Low risk to WPE as loss of one/two tenants not financially critical - no appetite to have bigger enterprise on-site to alter this risk, plus not the right set-up (access and proximity to employment pool both inhibitors).
7. Finds Central Beds to be an "entrepreneurial county ... attracting clean, quiet businesses" – a good place to be located.
8. Unable to give us details of their on-site clients (DP issues) but offered their full support and help to encourage as high response rate as possible, but warned historically poor response!
9. Keen to participate and support the village where they can.
10. One problem of being in Silsoe – that of **poor mobile 'phone coverage** (broadband ok).

Action points

1. **HS** to check with Helen Flack whether a Recruitment section could be set up under the Silsoe Facebook page ?within Marketplace?
2. **AW** to forward questionnaire, in paper and electronic format, to DT of WPE for completion and onward transmission to WPE's tenants.