

**COUNCIL SEMINAR  
6th October, 2015**

Present:- Councillor Lelliott (in the Chair); Councillors Ahmed, Beck, Buckley, Cutts, Elliot, Ellis, Godfrey, Hamilton, Jones, Parker, Pickering, Sims, Steele and Yasseen.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beaumont, Currie, Pitchley and Wallis.

**GULLIVER'S DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS AT PITHOUSE WEST.**

Councillor Lelliott, Advisory Cabinet Member for Housing and the Local Economy, welcomed Julie Dalton of Gulliver's to the seminar. Julie had been invited to attend the meeting to outline Gulliver's intentions with the Pithouse West property.

Julie explained about the existing Gulliver's business and the intentions for its expansion to the Pithouse West property.

- Gulliver's was a family business and operated as a family business;
- The business had three existing locations;
- The existing business would finance the new location at Pithouse West;
- £30m project over 10-12 years;
- Gulliver's provided family theme parks and rides and attractions for families with children aged 2-13 years;
- It was intended that the Pithouse West site include indoor activities : - water play, play barn, nerf zone, theatre spaces;
- It was intended that the Pithouse West site include outdoor activities : - ecology and education, wildlife, forest classrooms, Gulliver's Gears motor mechanics, Jurassic Safari park, farm park including crop fields and a cookery school, nature walks, mountain biking, facilities for children's groups like Brownies and Guides, non-denominational wedding rooms and prayer rooms;
- The connectivity and close proximity to the Rother Valley Country Park was important and would enhance the offer;
- There would be a Dream Village offering respite care and care for terminally ill children. There would be adapted facilities for families to enjoy;
- Accommodation including hotel rooms designed for families, camping facilities, a spa and lodges. Some of the accommodation would be themed.

Employment: -

- When it was up and running there were likely to be 400 jobs at the Park. This number was likely to increase;
- Service was really important to Gulliver's;

- The Pithouse West site would include a service academy where employees from the other Gulliver's locations would come for continuous professional development. Talks were underway to secure nationally recognised names;
- Gulliver's employed people of all ages and at all stages from work experience, apprentice level to management development;
- Construction would be sustainable, done by in-house and local suppliers;
- A planning application would be submitted at the end of 2015. Dependent on the outcome, construction would start as soon as possible.

Discussion and questions followed Julie's presentation: -

Councillor Parker asked about the relationship with the Rother Valley Country Park, the financing of the project and employment for the local area.

Julie explained that purchase of the property was contingent on planning permission being granted. The Pithouse West property had sufficient land available to achieve Gulliver's aims. Gulliver's employed local people.

Councillor Ellis explained the Council's support for the living wage. Career pathways were also very important as upskilling was important to the success of the whole area.

Julie agreed. She had worked in service industries her whole life and did not see the industry as a second rate career choice. A number of Gulliver's management team had started on the shop floor and worked their way up. Gulliver's were undertaking a review on the living wage and its implications for the company. A minority of the employees were paid on the minimum wage.

Councillor Beck thanked Julie for her presentation and said how she had given confidence about Gulliver's markedly different approach. It was important that the local community were kept aware about the project, as it impacted on so many areas of the Borough from education to road infrastructure and jobs/growth.

Councillor Steele agreed that it was positive news for the Borough. He asked where the project would start and where suppliers would come from?

Julie explained that the theme park would come first and further developments would follow afterwards. Gulliver's bought locally and built locally. Julie's team had already spoken to two local suppliers through consultation/community events.

Councillor Elliot asked for more information about the facilities for disabled children and families.

Julie explained that some of the mainstream rides could be adapted for individuals with access requirements. There would also be bespoke facilities too.

Councillor Yasseen thought that everything she had heard sounded like a great opportunity for local people. She asked for more information on how Gulliver's worked with agencies such as Councils, Schools and the Job Centre Plus to support access to the facilities?

Julie explained about the Job Clubs that Gulliver's participated in to provide entry-level jobs and return to employment jobs.

Councillor Ahmed asked how Gulliver's would engage with smaller and less visible groups?

Julie outlined that this did happen and agreed to provide information to Councillor Ahmed outside of the meeting.

Councillor Lelliott thanked Julie for her presentation and contribution to the discussion and answers.

Resolved: - (1) That the information shared be noted.

(2) That Gulliver's promotional leaflets showing their existing facilities be forwarded to all Councillors for their information.