



## Media Release



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## THE MOST BUSINESS FRIENDLY COUNCIL IN THE SOUTH EAST

When it comes to help and support for small businesses, Chichester District Council has proved itself to be the best in the South East. The Federation for Small Businesses (FSB) has declared Chichester the overall winner of its most **Small Business Friendly Council** award.

During 2009, the FSB invited local authorities to take part in the Small Business Friendly Awards scheme. Its purpose was to highlight examples of best practice being employed by councils in support of small businesses and local economic development.

Entries came from afar afield as Canterbury City Council in East Kent, to Cherwell District Council in West Oxfordshire; but Chichester District Council's submission stood out. In December, Chichester won the Small Business Friendly regional award for West Sussex and Surrey; this year it has gone on to win the overall award for the South East.

Presenting the council with their award, Roger House, FSB, South East Policy Unit Chairman, congratulated Chichester on their success: "The awards are designed to recognise and reward projects that demonstrate innovation and excellence in supporting small businesses. Chichester District Council clearly demonstrated both these qualities in the range of projects they put forward. They are a shining example of what support can be given to small businesses through innovative ideas, effective leadership, excellent partnership working and a genuine understanding of the needs of the small business community."

The projects the council submitted included:

- **the South Coast Design Forum**, the creation of a design community now recognised as a leading authority in the design arena;
- **the Village Shop Grant Scheme**, set up to ensure the survival of the district's village shops;
- **the Midhurst Vision Project**, directed at regenerating Midhurst town centre and revitalising local retail shops; and
- **the Enabling Grant Scheme**, to encourage businesses to set up a website and sell their products and services via the internet.

Roger felt other authorities could benefit from adopting Chichester District Council's approach to economic development and business support: "Irrespective of a council's size or budget, if they employ an innovative approach to business support, such as the South Coast Design Forum, then the results can be very impressive indeed."

Councillor Myles Cullen, Leader of Chichester District Council, added: "It's wonderful that the council's work has been recognised by the business community. It demonstrates once again our ongoing commitment to the 5,500 small businesses in our district. These are tough economic times and the Council's contributions to support small businesses is increasingly important. We'd like to thank partner agencies and local business people for the part they have played in making these projects such a success, and hope that they share in our recognition."

Co-incidentally, Compton Village Shop, a recipient of one of the District Council's grants, was named as the Best Village Shop in the South East by the Countryside Alliance. Success is catching!

**ENDS**

**For further information, please contact Susan Meaden,**

**Public Relations Officer, on 01243 534754.**

**Note to editors:**

**Picture caption:** Roger House (Chairman of the South East Policy Unit FSB), Cllr Myles Cullen (Leader of Chichester District Council & Portfolio Holder for the Economy), and Paul Formstone (Chairman of the Surrey and West Sussex Region FSB).

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**Enabling Grant Scheme**

This scheme provided over a 100 small businesses, across a wide range of sectors, with the incentive to invest in e-commerce and promote their products and services on the internet. The resultant sales growth, reported by many of these businesses, is testimony to the value and success of the scheme.

**South Coast Design Forum**

From its humble beginnings aimed at helping designers in Chichester to network and win

more local business, the SCDF has grown in just three short years and is now recognised as one of the leading authorities in the design arena. The SCDF's membership now stretches from Brighton to Southampton and has raised the profile of the design community in this area.

### **Village Shop Grant Scheme**

The FSB panel praised the range of support measures brought in by the council to improve the competitiveness and viability of village shops and combat the impact of post office closures. As a result of this scheme none of the district's village shops has had to close and Compton has been named as the Best Village Shop in the South East by the Countryside Alliance.

### **Midhurst Vision Project**

Launched in 2008, the Midhurst Vision is a three year programme to regenerate Midhurst's High Street and halt the decline in visitors to the town. As a result of the development of the Midhurst Vision, the council was able to secure a grant of £160k to renovate shop fronts and provide business and retail training for shop staff. The council also appointed a Rural Town's Co-ordinator for Midhurst to drive the programme forward and work with the 22 organisations represented on the Midhurst Vision Steering Group for the future prosperity of the town.