

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 7TH OCTOBER 2010
title: REGENERATION UPDATE
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To receive an update from the Regeneration Team and its work.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Council Ambitions - In addition to Ribble Valley Borough Council striving to meet its three ambitions, it also recognises the importance of securing a diverse, sustainable economic base for the Borough. The work of the regeneration section seeks to promote this.
- Community Objectives – The issues highlighted in this report will contribute to objectives of a sustainable economy and thriving market towns.
- Corporate Priorities - Delivery of services to all
- Other Considerations - None

2 INFORMATION

2.1 Regional Economic Development

Regeneration and economic development activity from a local, regional and national perspective is going through a period of significant change following the general election in May 2010 and the subsequent formation of the Coalition Government. Whilst there is still a range of important detail to be clarified, the Regeneration Team at Ribble Valley are continuing to work within existing partnership structures and their programmes of activity and that this will be clarified in the White Paper on sub-national economic growth to be published in Autumn 2010 that will also set out what powers and responsibilities the new Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) will eventually have.

The Emergency Budget in June 2010 confirmed the Government's intention to replace Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), and to encourage the development of LEPs by April 2012. In this transition period towards these new arrangements, a key responsibility of the North West Development Agency is to support and assist the new Government deliver these objectives, and have in the interim been making efficiency savings and planning for change. It has been clear for sometime that funding available for economic development work will be more limited in the years ahead given the need to tackle the public deficit. To best minimise any adverse impacts where possible, working with partners to maximise resources will continue.

In light of this the statutory basis for Regional Strategies will no longer exist and the NWDA are developing a high level framework and plan for the North West, which will be finalised after the Comprehensive Spending Review in Autumn 2010. This will be a non-statutory framework/plan will depend on the active support and commitment of local authorities, business and other key partners to be effective and gain traction. Therefore, work will also continue with the Regional Strategy Advisory Group and 4NW committees to finalise the framework.

A Regional Transition Group has been established, comprising members of the NWDA, Government Office North West (GONW), the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) and representatives from the Northwest's sub-regions. The Transition Group's aim is to ensure an orderly and structured transition from the NWDA and GONW to any Northwest Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) that are established. The Group's scope and responsibilities are currently being finalised and it will be reporting to the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the NWDA and Regional Leaders Group.

2.2 Enterprise, Employment & Business Support

Despite budget reductions across the areas of enterprise, employment and business support across the region, a number of programmes will still continue their work in these areas, at least in a reduced or modified form, until the emerging LEPs begin to take shape and following the outcomes from the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) in Autumn 2010, therefore, the Regeneration Team is continuing its partnership working in these areas along with its involvement with the Pennine Lancashire Business Support and Enterprise Group: -

2.3 Business Link

Business Link remains the primary support agency for businesses across the region and the Regeneration Team are working with the organisation to ensure that access to support in Ribble Valley for local businesses and those considering starting a business continues. In Lancashire there has been over a 40% increase in enquiries for business starts compared with a year ago across a range of sectors. Ribble Valley and other local authorities in the County have helped to stimulate start up enquiries and activity through strengthened communication and working processes. Also, in Pennine Lancashire additional support provision is being rolled out through funding under the Intensive Business Start Up Programme.

Business Link has also conducted a detailed review of its operations to bring it in line with in-year Government budget reductions at the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA). This review has also taken into account anticipated budget reductions for 2011/12 following the CSR. As a result of this review restructuring of the organisation reducing 194 posts from it's current workforce of 338. Formal consultation with staff has begun already and redundancies are likely to take place before the end of March 2011. The organisation currently employs a number of mobile business advisers, including those providing advice on accessing finance, as well as those working through its free telephone service from the Preston headquarters. It is being proposed that these regional offices will close and replaced with a website providing advice and business support provided by other bodies.

Regenerate Pennine Lancashire (RPL) have signed a Data Sharing Agreement with Business Link (BL) allowing both organisations to share intelligence, local performance and pro-actively engage with priority business sectors in Pennine Lancashire. The agreement means BL and RPL will share all potential business

support inquiries to enable businesses to put forward the best possible case for assistance and ensure that any other finance initiatives are also considered. Visits to businesses will be carried jointly and case notes held on both the BL monitoring system and RPL's own Evolutive database. A support campaign targeting up to 700 Pennine Lancs and Ribble Valley businesses that have been identified as future job creators and having high growth potential will be launched in the next few months.

2.4 Pennine Lancashire Intensive Start-Up Support (ISUS)

Pennine Lancashire Enterprise Trust (now known as CENTA – the Consortium of Enterprise Agencies) and The Prince's Trust are delivering the No Limits Get Set and the North West Development Agency ISUS Business Start up programmes. The organisations provide free and confidential business advice to new start-ups and existing businesses as a delivery partner for Business Link's support services.

The service is being run locally as Ribble Valley Enterprise and new offices have now been opened in Clitheroe at 5 Waddington Road. This means that a fixed, local access point in the borough is now covered in terms of start up provision where both financial and mentoring support is available to those individuals who may be looking to set up their own business.

Under the ISUS programme this year since April 2010 in Ribble Valley there have been 14 new business starts. In early September 2010 the NWDA advised that the in-year reduction of 25% has been set against the Pennine Lancashire ISUS programme. 20% of this reduction should be from the post-start element of the contract and discussions are currently taking place regarding re-profiling the ISUS 2010/11 budget to incorporate this and the remaining 5% saving.

2.5 High Growth Programme

The High Growth business support programme is currently funded by the NWDA designed to help businesses in the region with starting and developing High Growth Businesses and provides business coaching under the brand of 'Winning Pitch'. Nine businesses across Ribble Valley are receiving support as part of the regional High Growth Programme - the part EU/NWDA funded programme targets firms from new and very early stage businesses who show the capability of growing to a turnover of £500k in the first three years of trading (Lot 1) and to established businesses who already turnover £500k or more and have the ability for future growth at 20% per annum (Lot 2).

2.6 Unemployment & Redundancy

The Regeneration Team also monitor levels of unemployment and redundancy in Ribble Valley and the wider area. The number of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance in Ribble Valley remains consistently one of the lowest in the region, however, mechanisms are in place to act where necessary and the Regeneration team are in regular contact with the regional redundancy team to assist and coordinate any support should this be required.

More recent examples of this are HJ Berry of Chipping, which suffered the loss of 84 jobs in Spring 2010. Since then over 70% of the workforce have found new jobs since its closure. Last month it was confirmed that 149 jobs would go at the BAE Samlesbury site with a further 298 at its factory in Warton. The Regeneration Team

are also helping to coordinate across Pennine Lancashire with Job Centre Plus for any pending redundancy support that may be required.

2.7 Regenerate Pennine Lancashire & Projects

In addition to the changes made to the 2010/11 budgets, the NWDA have also confirmed that operational and capacity funding for many partner organisations across the region, including Regenerate Pennine Lancashire, will end in March 2011.

Many of the projects that have been affected are those that were on the NWDA's list of 'regionally significant projects' covering urban districts throughout the North West, including those within Pennine Lancashire as part of proposals originally put forward under the Pennine Lancashire Joint Investment Plan (JIP). None of which were within Ribble Valley. There were however a number of Ribble Valley proposals put forward as part of the JIP that are currently being re-examined as to their future development and deliverability through other alternative and private sector resources: -

Barrow Brook & Business Village - The main Barrow Brook site covers 10.53 hectares and contains 5 separate plots and has the potential to support Ribble Valley's economic growth, contributing to growth within the sub-region, by accommodating office accommodation, which could potentially create over 1,000 jobs in the area. Officers from Ribble Valley Borough Council and Lancashire County Developments Ltd (LCDL) are working together to drive the project forward and meetings have taken place with site owners to determine their future aspirations.

Vocational Learning Centre - Land has been identified at the Barrow Brook site for the potential to develop a vocational learning centre to service the training needs of local people and will be key to the delivery of the specialist 14-19 diplomas in Ribble Valley. To date an Outline Business Case has been produced to define the concept and a draft five year Business Plan to whether the scheme is financially viable and sustainable. Preliminary drawings showing the design and layout of the Centre have been produced.

Primrose Mill - Much of the business accommodation at Primrose Mill was previously unsuitable and support was being sought under the JIP to bring improvements forward, however, this is now being driven by private sector investment and work currently underway at Primrose Mill has now reached another stage with the opening of a new gymnasium and fitness centre called Crossfit Clitheroe. This new development has included a full renovation of two former light industrial units and the removal of the steel chimney on the site.

2.8 Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE)

Ribble Valley businesses continue to benefit from the Rural Development Programme (RDPE) which is a separate fund to the NWDA budget and although managed by the agency is sub-contracted by DEFRA and funded by the EU Commission. RDPE will run until 2013 and DEFRA will make alternative / transitional arrangements to carry this fund forward.

Ribble Valley Borough Council took the lead role in the production of the Local Development Strategy on behalf of Pennine Lancashire partners and following the successful application for funding the LAG was formed to oversee delivery of a £3.2 million programme, which includes £2.7 million in direct grant aid with the balance to

cover other elements of the programme to include such things as staffing, research and project development costs. The NWDA currently oversee the work of our Rural Development Programme (RDPE) so we are looking into this issue to ensure how best the programme will be carried forward to 2013. The programme is focussed on the following three themes, or axis, these are:

- Axis 1 – improving the competitiveness of the farming and forestry sectors
- Axis 2 – improving the environment and the countryside
- Axis 3 – rural quality of life and diversification of the rural economy

Delivery of the programme, which is a bottom-up, community, led delivery method undertaken by Local Action Groups (LAGs) who will ensure that supported activities are within the context of the Sub-Regional Implementation Plans. In Lancashire 3 LAGs have been set up to manage the RDPE programme of activity under Axis 1 & 3, whilst Axis 2 is being delivered by Natural England and the Forestry Commission.

Pennine Lancashire LAG has a dedicated Development Officer who works frequently from the Ribble Valley council offices and acts as a point of contact and support. In addition to this two RDPE Programme and Monitoring Officers are based at the former Lancashire Economic Partnership (now part of Lancashire County Council) offices in Accrington.

To date the Pennine Lancashire RDPE Programme has achieved the following to date: -

- 131 contacts with business and individuals with projects and proposals across the 6 Pennine Lancashire Local Authority districts (83 in Ribble Valley).
- 47 business projects have been progressed, which involves preparing individual business plans through the Business Link diagnostic process before proceeding to full application stage (32 in Ribble Valley).
- 20 full grant applications have been submitted (13 in Ribble Valley).
- 17 projects have now reached full grant stage (10 in Ribble Valley) for delivery.

In financial terms the 47 projects (32 in Ribble Valley) pending or currently in progress across the Pennine Lancashire LAG area represent to a total overall project value of new business investment in excess of £3.5 million.

2.9 Economic Action Plans

The Ribble Valley Economic Strategy sets out the economic aims and objectives for the areas economy over the period 2009 – 2014 on the 5 economic themes of; Business Support and Development, Infrastructure and Communications, Image, marketing and promotion, Regeneration & Economic Development and Employment and Skills.

A key action within the Strategy identified the need to work in partnership and consult with the private sector to develop ideas and priorities for action in key service centres. From this, action plans were prepared for both Longridge and Whalley.

Longridge Action Plan - The final Economic Action Plan for Longridge was endorsed the RVBC Planning & Development Committee on 17 June 2010 following work between the regeneration team and a working group made up of representatives from Ribble Valley Borough Council (RVBC), Longridge Town Council (LTC), Longridge Business Group (LBG), Longridge Social Enterprise Company (LSEC), Longridge Partnership (LP), Lancashire County Council (LCC) and Business Link North West (BLNW) will contribute to a number of the actions within the plan. This group went on to form the initial Town Team which then followed with around 100 people attended the Longridge Economy & Town Team Launch event on 15th September with local businesses responding positively with a commitment to working together and assist the progress of the action plan and create activities that will support its work.

Whalley Action Plan - The Economic Action Plan for Whalley was endorsed by Planning & Development Committee at its meeting on 12 August 2010. It sets out a number of actions following coordinated work between the RVBC Regeneration Team, Whalley Parish Council and Whalley Chamber of Trade which included consultation with local residents and businesses to determine the village's future needs. At the present stage the actions within these themes would be met from existing regeneration resources where applicable, however detailed proposals and specific projects that would be developed from the programme would be considered individually and where appropriate funding bids drawn up and co-ordinated to enable their delivery in due course via a range of partners with detailed projects and progress as they arise and keep this Committee informed on the actions.

2.4 Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan

The RVBC Planning & Development Committee agreed the Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan on 17 June 2010 following work with Lancashire County Developments Ltd, the economic development arm of Lancashire County Council, to commission a piece of work to produce a Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan. Manchester based Turley Associates were appointed to carry the project forward and provide a clear development framework to enable partners to support the promotion and revitalisation of the Town Centre, helping it to fulfil its potential as an attractive, vibrant and successful location.

A key part of Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan document focuses upon the vision and concepts for Clitheroe's future, together with the primary actions needed to start delivering the vision, which is set out as 10 Goals, supported by town frameworks and 4 'catalyst' projects. The first proposal was to create a 'Town Team', which will set in place an accountable forum to take forward the ideas and proposals set out in the Masterplan. Following this a Town Team has been formed from original representatives of the consultation/steering group to work in partnership and assist in the delivery, monitoring, reviewing and development of the plan.

A further three catalyst projects relating to each of the Priority Areas: Castle Street and Clitheroe Market, Moor Lane and Lowergate, and Market Place and Wellgate. These three project areas translate the strategies and proposals set out in the Town Frameworks into more neighbourhood specific development principles and projects and are being addressed into actions being progressed by the Town Team and will be complemented by further, more detailed consideration on how the Town Frameworks are to be delivered in the remaining neighbourhoods where a more limited scale of intervention is proposed.

2.10 Town Centres & Business Groups

The Regeneration Team is continuing to monitor empty business properties across Ribble Valley and in particular those within key service centres. Any vacant business premises are marketed using the Evolutive property database.

The Regeneration Team also attends regular meetings and provides support to the three business groups in Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley. All of which have developed into much more robust groups over recent months, growing in numbers and increasing activities to support trade in each of the towns.

Clitheroe - Clitheroe Chamber of Trade membership is now growing monthly. Chamber members are regularly updated and involved during the development of the Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan and a number of members are on the Town Team. The Chamber has become affiliate members of East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce – this will enable their members to receive access to the many services offered by the sub regional body, for example Chamber HR provides access to updated downloadable documents, templates, forms and policies – and a 24/7 helpline and legal expenses insurance cover, business information, networking opportunities and market research services. The continuing growth of the Chamber has also led to stronger involvement in activities to promote visitors. Feedback from local traders on the May Festival in Clitheroe is very positive saying that the town centre has been buzzing on a Saturday and the additional on street entertainment over Sheepfest/Streetfest much enjoyed by visitors and business owners. It is estimated that around 15,000 people visited the Clitheroe Fine Food and Crafts Street Market on 14th August with stall holders and traders reporting excellent sales with some selling out of produce completely. Plans are now being prepared for 2011 and beyond with the view to making it a self-sustaining future operation.

Longridge - The Longridge Business Group formed in 2008 and after much hard work and dedication from traders in the town. A dedicated website used to promote the businesses and Longridge Town Centre has now been created which was made possible through an RVBC grant. The group are involved in the work of the Longridge Economic Action Plan, which will assist in the development of year round events that will encourage increased trading activity in the Town. A Longridge Big Weekend is being planned for October 8-10 to showcase produce from the Longridge area starting on the Friday with a cheese and wine evening at St Wilfrid's Club and through to the Sunday with a food and craft festival with an art and photographic exhibition with other activities being planned.

Whalley - Whalley Chamber of Trade continues to be a strong group of businesses committed to the success of Whalley and the trading environment and the Regeneration Team attends the meetings of the Whalley Chamber of Trade to offer support wherever possible. Signage has been erected on the railway station and on the industrial sites to encourage visitors into the town centre, which has been supported through an RVBC grant and the group are working closely with the Regeneration Team to deliver the Whalley Economic Action Plan.

All the trade groups are now busy planning their Christmas campaigns and the Regeneration Team will be providing support to help encourage a successful Christmas trading period.

2.11 The Future Economic Climate

The Regeneration Team are continuing to monitor issues during the current economic climate across Ribble Valley, the wider region and the UK and its current and future implications for the Ribble Valley. Economic Updates are regularly circulated to the Leader and Deputy Leader and the Senior Management Team. This is extremely important in ensuring that we remain aware of the issues that are currently affecting the economy of the Ribble Valley and the surrounding areas. This enables us to respond as quickly as possible to any issues that may arise.

DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS: -

Ribble Valley Economic Strategy 2009 - 2014

For further information please ask for Craig Matthews, extension 4531.