

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

## REPORT TO POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

---

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 10<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2013

title: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP UPDATE

submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

principal author: CRAIG MATTHEWS

### 1 PURPOSE

1.1 To receive an update on the Councils' Economic Development Working Group.

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.
- 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 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Economic Development Working Group of the Council was established to further support and monitor delivery of the Councils' economic objectives, identify individual projects and address the issues in relation to the Ribble Valley economy. The Group are focussing on a list of economic issues across a number of areas, which provide the basis for key economic development activities with which to concentrate and further develop going forward.

### 3 INFORMATION

3.1 Since the last Policy & Finance Committee meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2013 the Economic Development Working Group has held two meetings (17<sup>th</sup> July 2013 and 20<sup>th</sup> August 2013). Minutes of the 17<sup>th</sup> July meeting are attached at Appendix A, whilst the minutes of the 20<sup>th</sup> August meeting will be published once agreed by the group.

3.2 Previously, in considering the groups role to assist the delivery of regeneration and economic development in the borough, and also recognising that there was a broad number of ongoing issues and areas in connection with the Boroughs' economic development, the working group were keen to see a targeted list of priority actions to provide the basis of key projects and activities upon which to concentrate. These four work areas will be developed, forming the basis of project activity going forward. A list of those project areas are summarised below: -

1. Employment Land and Premises: Developing measures, which ensure that current employment land and premises provision in the area meet with business, economic and employment growth needs. Identify measures to bring these forward including options to deliver land and premises and maximising opportunities from empty properties in the Borough.

2. Clitheroe Market: To bring forward options for an appropriate scheme for the future of the market development area in line with the aims within the Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan.
  3. Tourism & Visitor Economy: To further develop measures, activities and events to support tourism and the visitor economy in Ribble Valley.
  4. Transport & Infrastructure: Promoting improvements to services between Clitheroe and Manchester and Clitheroe and Preston, and working with the County Council and others providers to improve the local infrastructure. Extension of rail services from Clitheroe to Hellifield.
- 3.3 Further to the identified project areas above the group have discussed a number of other issues and important factors as follows: -
- 3.4 In addition to the requirement to ensure that there is sufficient employment land and premises provision in the area meet with current and potential future business, economic and employment growth needs, it is considered important to monitor and maximise opportunities where possible from existing vacant business land and properties in the Borough and to monitor their appropriateness for modern business requirements.
- 3.5 In relation to the Clitheroe Masterplan and Market site, it was recognised that the Council may not necessarily be the lead body in any potential or future development of the site, but it was considered important that the Council will continue to have a significant role, as well as continuing to retain the market function and enhancing and improving links with the rest of the town centre. Also, in relation to other town centre initiatives, refreshing a 'Town Team' partnership style of approach were considered important and to continue improving the coordination and future work between local businesses, the Borough and Town Councils.
- 3.6 The need to maintain activities that will help support and maintain the vibrancy of all town and key service centres across the Borough (i.e. Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley) was emphasised, and to look into refreshing activities through coordinated work with local businesses and town / parish councils.
- 3.7 Improved services and the regularity of rail and bus provision were considered important factors, weekend services, for example, to enable tourism visitors to come to the area. The group have expressed concerns regarding the decline in rural transport and services and further engaging with Lancashire County Council as the Transport Authority with a view to finding solutions on these issues.
- 3.8 The land-based economy generally has also been the subject of discussions within the group and the need to maintain awareness of the key issues connected with the sector. Farming and land based businesses represents the major land use in Ribble Valley and the Borough is still an important agricultural production area that is vital to the wider economy, although farming has seen significant changes in recent decades with diversification and increasingly tourism adding extra income to the local rural and land based economy.

CRAIG MATTHEWS  
REGENERATION OFFICER

MARSHAL SCOTT  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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

## NOTES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP HELD ON WEDNESDAY 17<sup>th</sup> JULY 2013

PRESENT: Cllr S. Hore (Chairman)  
Cllr R.Elms  
Cllr K.Horkin  
Cllr G. Mirfin  
Cllr J. Rogerson  
Cllr R. Swarbrick  
Cllr A.Yearing

IN ATTENDANCE: Colin Hirst  
Craig Matthews  
Bill Alker

### 1) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence from the meeting was received for Marshal Scott.

### 2) MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> November were agreed.

### 3) TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Chairman reminded members that the working group at their last meeting had identified the Terms of Reference. However, it was pointed out that the chair of Policy and Finance Committee was no longer a member of the working group and therefore, it was agreed to make that amendment to the Terms of Reference accordingly.

### 4) KEY PRIORITIES

The Working Group revisited the four previously agreed priorities as follows: -

#### a) Employment land and premises

An updated Ribble Valley Employment Land Study was finalised in June 2013, which also forms part of the work to inform the Ribble Valley Core Strategy. The Study covers all industrial, warehousing and distribution uses, as well as offices. The Study primarily assesses the supply, need and demand for employment land and premises in Ribble Valley within the planning Use Class B – B1 (business offices/light industrial), B2 (general industrial) and B8 (storage and distribution) but also considers land needs of non B-class employment uses.

The conclusions within the study identifies that further land allocations for B1 (a, b and c uses), B2 and B uses in the order of 8 ha would be required to meet the shortfall generated by the application of long term take-up performance for the current plan period to 2028 and the Council are working to address this. Also, the numbers of existing allocated employment sites such as Barrow Brook, as well as the need to monitor existing vacant business premises were discussed. It was pointed out that the Council has already made a commitment to enable further employment land to be brought forward and work is ongoing with a number of landowners in the Borough in order for this to be achieved.

#### b) Clitheroe Market

The Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan document produced in 2010 identified a number of areas throughout the town centre where improvements could be made to help increase the longer-term vitality and viability of the centre. As part of this, Clitheroe Market and the surrounding site was identified as an area that could act as a 'catalyst' where various development options could take place that could better integrate with, and help improve the town centre as a whole.

Also, issues regarding town centres generally were discussed such as vacant shop premises and the need to maintain and improve the environment in all town and service centres, such as pavements and signage. On these issues, the subject of refreshing the 'Town Team' style of approach, where closer working could take place between local businesses and both borough and town / parish councils (Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley), through meetings and activities to address any areas where improvements could be made.

#### c) Tourism and Visitor Economy

It was recognised that tourism had links with all of the other three priorities and there a various ongoing in initiatives and partnership work to support this priority.

#### d) Transport and Infrastructure

Issues such as rail services, and in particular weekend services, which enabled tourism visitors to come to the area but also make the return journey home were raised. It was pointed out that highways and transport master plans are being developed by Lancashire County Council for specific areas across Lancashire, and whilst it was recognised that many activities on this issue are primarily functions, the need to feed through any specific issues that are identified. Masterplans for East and Central Lancashire are areas where any issues Ribble Valley Borough are relevant.

### 4) CURRENT EVIDENCE

As part of the Core Strategy work it was pointed out that a number of studies had been undertaken, providing updated evidence for Ribble Valley across the areas of future employment land requirements, assessments of retail and leisure in the Borough as well as a health check of the 3 main service centres of Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley.

### 4) TOWN AND VILLAGE CENTRES

Much of the discussions on town and village centres had taken place earlier in the meeting. It was re-emphasised of the need to maintain activities that will help support and maintain the vibrancy of town centres, and to look into refreshing activities through coordinated work with local businesses and town / parish councils.

---