

NOTES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP HELD ON TUESDAY 20TH AUGUST 2013

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Colin Hirst
Craig Matthews
Bill Alker

1) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Cllr R Swarbrick.

2) MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 17th July 2013 were agreed. The role of a new Partnership Officer post has now been filled (who is due to start work in September on a part time basis) and they would work closely with villages, communities and the third sector.

3) UPDATE ON EMPLOYMENT LAND

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, the group considered that it is 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. It was reported also that some interest was being shown on land at Barrow Brook for future employment uses.

4) UPDATE ON CLITHEROE MASTERPLAN

Within the Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan, 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. A paper specifically on Clitheroe market development proposals taken from the masterplan was circulated. Councillor Horkin declared an interest in this matter but remained in the meeting. It was recognised that the Council may not necessarily be the lead body in any potential initiatives or future development of the site, but it was considered important that the Council will continue to have a significant and controlling role, as well as continuing to retain the market function. There was a need to look at the possibility of pedestrianising Clitheroe town centre and enhancing and improving links with the rest of the town centre.

Also important to strengthen engagement and work with Clitheroe Town Council, and in relation to other town centre initiatives generally, 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. 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.

4) RURAL ECONOMY PAPER

Information was circulated detailing numbers involved in agriculture, forestry and fishing as compared to the rest of the employment sector. Issues around the land-based economy generally the need to maintain awareness of the key issues connected with the sector were discussed. 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.

Some farmers had diversified (i.e. tourism activities). It was recognised that there was a difficulty for many upland farmers who had tried diversification but were currently making a loss on their businesses. There was a need to understand the causes for young people leaving villages and understand that the withdrawal of rural services (police, health, transport) was a key factor in this. It was also noted that rural areas are often play an important as the 'playground' for urban areas.

4) CONFIRMATION OF PRIORITIES

Following discussions in the previous meeting, the group confirmed the four work areas as previously agreed (Employment Land and Premises, Clitheroe Masterpln/Market, Tourism & Visitor Economy, Transport & Infrastructure) for a future focus of the group and where possible to seek funding and support through the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership.

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