

NOTES OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP HELD ON MONDAY, 20 FEBRUARY 2017 AT 4PM

PRESENT:

Councillors: T Hill – Chairman
S Atkinson
K Hind
J Rogerson
R Thompson

Officers: C Hirst
C Matthews

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor L Graves.

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME IN ENGLAND

Craig circulated a fact sheet regarding the programme which provides money for projects to improve agriculture, the environment and rural life. It is an EU initiative that is committed to run until 2020 regardless of Brexit.

There are 4 elements

- £3.1bn – environmental – managed through DEFRA
- £141m – countryside productivity – managed through DEFRA
- £177m – growth programme – managed through LEPs
- £138m – LEADER programme – managed by a Local Action Group

Approximately £4m of the LEADER programme will come to Lancashire and is available to local businesses, communities, farmers, foresters and land managers and will be used primarily for job creation and growth.

There have been 68 expressions of interest so far in Lancashire and North Bowland – the area into which Ribble Valley falls. There is an eligibility criteria to meet; is only for capital funding and micro/small businesses with less than 10 employees. The market towns of Clitheroe and Barnoldswick also qualify. It takes approximately 6 months to get through the application process.

UPDATE ON MAIN CENTRE ACTIVITIES

Clitheroe – there are currently very few empty properties on the high street with interest already being shown in the ‘soon to become vacant’ Yorkshire Bank. Colin gave an update on the White Horse, York Street; the Labour Exchange building on Lowergate and the old hospital site on Chatburn Road.

Longridge – currently no issues for the high street and retail. Liaison with the business group still proves difficult. It was highlighted by the Longridge councillors that the night time economy is struggling and that provision of employment is falling behind the housing.

Whalley – concern that the approved TRO scheme for the high street has still not progressed. Colin updated the group regarding the Whalley Arms and car park.

EMPLOYMENT LAND

Thwaites – planning permission has now been granted for this scheme at Mellor Brook and pre-commencement conditions are being discussed. It is anticipated it will be open for business within 12 months.

BAe – the research centre had been opened and is of very high quality and being used by both UCLAN and Lancaster University for both training and educational purposes. All infrastructure of link roads is now complete. There may be more demand than space.

Barrow – an appeal was recently been won to keep this earmarked site as employment land rather than housing and as such now needs marketing. The group felt that as this particular piece of land has a ransom strip that we should also be looking for suitable land elsewhere on the A59 corridor to use as our employment site. It was recognised that there are planning constraints to consider but members were concerned that economic growth was facilitated. Colin agreed to prepare a discussion paper on the topic.

COMBINED AUTHORITY ECONOMIC WORKING GROUP

This officer group had been re-formed and was looking to provide an overview on projects across Lancashire as well as developing pipeline projects. This was a useful group to be part of even if the Combined Authority does not go ahead.

CONSULTATION ON THE INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

Colin/Craig would send a link to the group so that individual councillors could look at the document and feedback comments. A report would be presented to Policy & Finance committee on 28 March 2017 with a draft response. Responses to the document were due by 17 April 2017.

LEP UPDATE

A £70m investment.

Melissa would be inviting local businesses in Ribble Valley to sessions about the Boost Project.

The working group approved supporting the RV Business Network Awards again this year.

Colin showed a short video entitled 'We are Lancashire – The Place for Growth'. The group asked that this be made available on the RV website as a link.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting to be arrange for **Thursday 30 March at 4.30pm** in Committee Room 1.

The meeting closed at 6.00pm.