

# Leader's Report to Full Council

## 16 October 2018

On days like today we have to consider why we are in local government and ask ourselves what do we hope to achieve and the answer is to make the difference in the lives of the people of the Ribble Valley. We have done a number of things in the last months with which we can be proud:-

The first Community Committee is looking at a 3G pitch at Roefield which is being discussed with the Lancaster Foundation Sports Trust and involves Clitheroe Wolves. We hope to see it up and running in 2019 and the Council is committed to making it happen in some form.

### Business Rates Pool

RVBC was part of the project put together in 3 weeks involving 14 Lancashire Local Authorities which put together a bid to the government to bid for a business rates pilot scheme that is calculated to increase public spending in the County by £10.8 million.

With 14 authorities working together it proved to be a triumph of cooperation. The Leaders of the Lancashire Councils met together with their Chief Executives. The Finance Directors of the authorities met together and worked out a formula which was then approved by the authorities.

The officer team was led by our very own Ribble Valley Finance Director, Jane Pearson. Councils throughout the county met to approve the bid. The Ribble Valley Emergency Committee met to approve our involvement 10 hours before the bid was submitted.

Taking part are all Lancashire authorities except Lancaster: Lancashire County Council, Blackburn, Blackpool, Chorley, Preston, South Ribble, West Lancs, Ribble Valley, Burnley, Hyndburn, Fylde, Wyre, Hyndburn, Pendle and the Fire Authority.

The application is structured into 3 sections.

5% of the fund is put aside to cover all risks from business rate appeals and other issues.

£2.5 million is put into an economic growth and sustainability fund to be distributed by the Council Leaders. In Ribble Valley officers are looking at projects we can submit to the fund which we will press to be included.

The remaining money is to be distributed to all authorities. In the 2 tier authorities Lancashire County Council will receive 17.5% and the Boroughs and Districts 56%. Ribble Valley's share is estimated to be £353,000. which when added to projects from the fund, will result in us being able to do a great deal in the Borough.

This bid is not guaranteed to be approved but I took the opportunity at the Conservative Party Conference to lobby minister Rishi Sunak MP on the merits of Lancashire's case.

The pilot is part of the government's plan to end revenue support grant by 2020-21 and give to local authorities 75% of the business rates. Instead it places local authorities in a better position to determine their local income.

### Appointment of new Director, Nicola Hopkins

We welcome today our new Director of Planning and Economic Development, Nicola Hopkins who commenced her employment with Ribble Valley on 6 August. She has already started reorganising its planning and economic development departments, ready to work with the newly created economic development committee. We as a Council will now drive the local economy to create jobs, attract new businesses, improve town centres, encourage tourism and increase our revenue to preserve local services for residents. The extra funding that the pilot business rate scheme can deliver will be very helpful.

Nicola has been thrown in at the deep end with an appeal hearing in the planning application for Hammond Ground in Read, government new rules changing, the calculation of the 5 year supply of development land and the creation of the Borough Economic Development Plan which she is moving forward.

### Clitheroe Market Development

The Policy and Finance Committee decided to take a step back and to consider the most appropriate way to redevelop the Clitheroe market site.

The Council had decided previously to press ahead with negotiations with Barnfield on design contact costings and legal aspects with developers Barnfield.

Due to the Council listening to the views of the public in a widespread consultation, and public meetings including interested groups, the Council decided to alter the remit, remove the hotel and reject an indoor market hall in favour of an open air covered market. This reduced the size of the project. For the developers Barnfield Construction it meant the project is less viable, the question is could they build a centre with the design elements required. There were also design issues, red lines which the Council wish to have dealt with which are essential to the smooth running of the market, particularly relating to access to the market for traders their products, vans and public.

There are legal issues which Councillors will want to look at mainly to decide if we retain control of the site and not grant a long lease to developers. My personal view is that we do not sell the family silver, although I recognise working in partnership is important when dealing with projects of this size.

Since this project was considered there have been major changes in retail brought about by the rise of Internet shopping. Reports on town centres, particularly the Grimsey 2 report, point to them being more places of leisure as well as shopping. These are factors Councillors will want to give consideration to before making a final decision.

The Council is still committed to the Clitheroe town centre regeneration which includes improving the market, parking, new facilities and improving access. The important addition of Holmes Mill has made it essential to balance the centre of Clitheroe and protect the viability of the existing town centre around Castle Street. In order to achieve this aim we must have in mind the need to improve the market quarter.

We resolved to hand over the project to our new director Nicola Hopkins and her team to bring forward a number of options for the Council's consideration on how this development can be considered.