

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 16 DECEMBER 2010

title: ECONOMIC STRATEGY – TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLANS UPDATE

submitted by: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To receive information on the work and progress of the economic action plans.

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, the importance of securing a diverse sustainable economic base in the borough is also recognised.
- Community Objectives – The issues identified in this report will contribute to objectives of a sustainable economy and thriving market towns.
- Corporate Priorities – Delivery of service to all.
- Other Considerations – The proposals support the Council's headline activities for the year of supporting regeneration in Longridge.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 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.

2.2 A key action within the Strategy identified the need to work with businesses and local groups to formulate area focused action plans to help in particular the key service centres to create a range of activities that would assist improvements in the local economy, and steer both private and public resources and to act as a catalyst for further activities at the local level. The development of the Masterplan for Clitheroe Town Centre along with economic action plans for both Longridge and Whalley now provide a framework with which to carry forward these objectives.

3 INFORMATION

3.1 **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.

- 3.2 A key part of the 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 sets in place an accountable forum to take forward the ideas and proposals set out in the Masterplan. Following this a Town Team has been created with membership drawn from members and officers of the Borough Council, Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership, Lancashire County Council, Clitheroe Chamber of Trade and other representatives from the local community relevant to developments within the town centre to work in partnership and assist in the delivery, monitoring, reviewing and development of the plan.
- 3.3 The masterplan process so far has been supported by a committed **Steering Group**, which has developed momentum and needs to be maintained if successful progress is to be achieved on a day-to-day basis. Regular meetings of the steering group will continue to support delivery and report back to the Town Team. Membership of the Steering Group will need to be supplemented from time to time with additional delivery skills – such as property, design and project management, as well as continuing engagement with stakeholders outside of the steering group, including key landowners, developers and local businesses.
- 3.4 Project timeframes have been drawn up identifying a number of key priority projects and early actions that will drive the regeneration of the town centre as key next steps to progress the delivery of the priority and early win projects. Whilst widespread endorsement of the Masterplan with the Council and key stakeholders has been endorsed, the 'Town Team' will identify actions and give direction to enable the priority and early win projects to be further driven forward.
- 3.5 A **Development Brief for the Markets Area** is a priority project in progress based on the development and design principles agreed through the masterplanning process. Other priority projects are to prepare a **Public Realm and Urban Design Guide** for the town centre, an **Access and Movement Strategy** for the town centre along with more specific design proposals for the improvements to Castle Street and improvements to courtyards and alleyways. Potential funding sources for public realm projects are also being explored which the Town Team will assess at a meeting next month to progress these along with the following recommendations in the Masterplan: -
- **Prepare and implement an 'Early Wins' Strategy** – In revitalising main streets it is considered important to identify small, but significant, projects and recommendations that are achievable in the short term with a view to long term changes when budgets and resources allow. The early wins strategy will be examined at the Town Team meeting, detailing current activities (such as events being planned for 2011 and beyond i.e. a Clitheroe Food Festival following on from the success of the street market in August 2010) and further proposals to support for larger revitalisation projects. These 'Early Wins' act as an important way to demonstrate commitment to Clitheroe Town Centre and the aspirations within the Masterplan.

policy framework for the design of new buildings, spaces and the refurbishment of existing ones, this Design Appraisal will set out an analysis of the vitality and viability of the town centre's shopping functions, as well as recommendations for the enhancement of the town centre. It will provide an evidence base and it will identify the scope and potential for improvements to the town centre.

- **Longridge Old Station Buildings** – now fully refurbished with the support of an RVBC grant, the need now is to ensure the longer-term success and sustainability of the building. The facility is being branded and marketed to businesses as Workstation (at the old station buildings). Features are high quality meeting space, serviced office accommodation and a 'virtual office' facility with message and post handling. The building is now able to offer high-speed internet access and plans for 2011 include business start-up advice sessions and other business support workshops to be held in the building. A new website is also under development which can be viewed www.longridgestation.co.uk.
- **Solar Initiative** – this is being driven in the Longridge Town Team by local company Obas UK in partnership with GB Energy, who have secured an agreement to supply Solar Photovoltaic panels to reduce energy costs. A contract has been agreed to install solar panels at the Obas Chapel Hill premises and planning that now be rolled out to other Longridge firms, schools and property owners in the area - providing them with the opportunity to install solar panels at no cost to themselves, which could reduce monthly energy bills by up to 75%.
- **Longridge Business Group** – membership is now steadily growing following Longridge Economy & Town Team Launch event on 15th September to develop a robust structure to help marketing Longridge as a Leisure / shopping / business and visitor destination in general (alongside similar principles being applied in Clitheroe). This will assist partnership working to support and strengthen activities and events in Longridge (i.e. Big Weekend, Christmas Extravaganza). Amongst discussions to assist this also, feasibility work is taking place as to whether Longridge town centre could become a **Business Improvement District (BID)** – some of the financing issues such as the business group could be assisted through the development of a BID for Longridge.
- **Longridge Events** - A Longridge Big Weekend is being planned for 2011 following the successful first event held this year. The weekend will celebrate all that is great about Longridge, Ribble Valley and Lancashire, especially food, drink, art, crafts, culture and music as a showcase event in the Longridge calendar, and following a very successful event this year the next Goosnargh & Longridge Agricultural Show is scheduled for Saturday 9th July 2011.

3.10 **Whalley Economic 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.

3.11 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. The Chamber are driving the action plan forward in partnership with Whalley Parish Council and Ribble Valley Borough Council. For example, signage has been erected on the

railway station and on the industrial sites to encourage visitors into the town centre and the group are working closely with the Regeneration Team to deliver the Whalley Economic Action Plan. They are currently progressing the following initiatives: -

- **Whalley Pickwick Festival** - In its' 22nd year, the newly named 'Whalley Pickwick Festival' following its review earlier this year is now bigger and better than previous years. This long-standing and premier local event was being held on the evening of Thursday 2nd December with entertainment, late night shopping and interesting gifts and foods on sale throughout the evening. This year's event opening took place on the stage at the bus station with special guests, choirs and music throughout the evening.
- **Whalley Live** - This will be the first ever event of its nature in Whalley. The event is a weekend of indoor and outdoor activities for the businesses/residents of Whalley and the Ribble Valley. It is designed to bring together the whole community with various activities over the two days. This includes local business, schools, churches, village hall; retail shops, groups, the wider community and open the village up to visitors to the area. A series of outdoor live stages will be created on the Swan Hotel Car Park / King Street / Whalley Abbey and Oakhill College. With the part closure of King Street, this would allow ease of access to residential areas. Access to the playing fields would be via Mitton Road.
- **Britain in Bloom** – Plans are underway for a project group to be formed to enable Whalley to compete for the prize of Village in Bloom in 2012. The theme will be based around the London 2012 Olympics. The Regeneration Team will support Whalley in the delivery of this project, which is a current priority within the Whalley Economic Action plan.

3.12 At the present stage the actions within these plans and their specific themes are being met from existing 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.

DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Ribble Valley Economic Strategy
Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan
Longridge Economic Action Plan
Whalley Economic Action Plan

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