

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 21ST SEPTEMBER 2017
title: TOWN CENTRES UPDATE
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
principal author: CRAIG MATTHEWS

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To receive an update on activities in connection with Clitheroe town centre regeneration.

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 Council are committed to ensuring the vitality and viability of the key service centres within the Borough (Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley), and recognise that they represent an important resource of retail, service, leisure and employment provision.

2.2 In connection with this, the Council continues to support initiatives that contribute towards these aims, and work in partnership with local businesses and town centre groups to help ensure that the Borough's key service centres are economically successful and attractive places.

3 INFORMATION

3.1 Ribble Valley Borough Council has a long history of working in partnership with local stakeholders and business groups. The two main towns of Clitheroe and Longridge in the Ribble Valley serve both the local community itself and the surrounding settlements within Ribble Valley.

3.2 With a total population of approximately 57,000, the catchment areas to these destinations in the wider region are often limited by the catchments of the larger regional centres in neighbouring districts such as Blackburn and Preston predominantly. It is therefore important that regular monitoring takes place to ensure that the vitality and viability of these two town centres continues and the local

business community in both Clitheroe and Longridge play an important role to assist in the long term economic success of the area.

- 3.3 Recent experience and research highlights that the future context for retailing in town centres will be very different and that centres must therefore adapt to the changing policy and economic landscape. Along with the growth of out-of-centre retail development, the economic climate has had an impact on consumer spending which in turn has had a negative impact on the vitality of the high street nationally which has led to an increase in vacancy rates within many town centres, as retailers attempt to compete in this challenging market and property owners struggle to let their shops to retailers.
- 3.4 Clitheroe and Longridge, like other centres nationally, play an important role in serving the requirements of the local community on a day-to-day basis. They form a focal point for the surrounding area and provide a wide range of services that are accessible to the population, including retail, employment, leisure along with such things as financial and health services. Town centres also help to foster local pride, promote identity and contribute towards the aims of sustainable development.
- 3.5 Both town centres themselves are constrained to some extent by their historic street layouts and development density, however recent developments have occurred on some edge-of-centre sites, which have either added to or complimented the development mix, but such edge of centre developments can also act as a standalone retail destination to a certain extent.
- 3.6 The Council, in recent years also, has also assisted in the creation of Town Teams in both Clitheroe and Longridge. These have consisted of representatives from local interest groups, business, civic and other local stakeholders.
- 3.7 The Town Teams were originally formed to support the promotion and revitalisation of each their town centres, helping them to fulfil their potential as attractive, vibrant and successful locations, bringing together their skills and knowledge and developing links with other local stakeholders. These worked well as a sounding platform for the Council to enable early feedback on any potential or future projects and bring together ideas for other town centre projects. However both these groups have not met for some time.
- 3.8 The majority of engagement is focused through the towns' local business groups. For example, Clitheroe Chamber of Trade membership has grown steadily to around 130 from less than 60 in recent years. The continuing growth of the Chamber has also led to stronger partnership working with the Council in activities to promote visitors such as the www.visitclitheroe.co.uk website as well as a Facebook platform. The Shop Clitheroe loyalty card scheme also operates successfully to promote shopping in the town centre.
- 3.9 Likewise, Longridge Business Group has also enjoyed an active membership in recent years. They also have a website www.longridgeonline.com along with their own Facebook platform. The Longridge loyalty card scheme, branded as 'Longridge Does Shopping' also operates in the town.
- 3.10 There is a continuing need to work closely with these established business groups and continue to develop initiatives and priorities to support the town centres of Clitheroe and Longridge along with other service and retail centres in the Borough to help ensure that they are economically successful and attractive places. The Council

will continue to provide individual support, information and guidance directly to these business groups in Clitheroe and assist in partnership working on activities to support trade in each of their locations.

CRAIG MATTHEWS
REGENERATION OFFICER

MARSHAL SCOTT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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