

Minutes of Economic Development Committee

Meeting Date: Thursday, 16 November 2017, starting at 6.30pm
Present: Councillor R Swarbrick (Chairman)

Councillors:

S Atkinson	M French
S Bibby	K Hind
I Brown	S Hirst
P Dowson	J Holgate
P Elms	J Rogerson
R Elms	I Sayers
M Fenton (7.20pm)	

In attendance: Chief Executive, Head of Cultural and Leisure Services, Head of Regeneration and Housing, Regeneration Policy Officer and Tourism and Events Officer.

Also in attendance: Councillors R Sherras and N Walsh.

439 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor R Thompson.

440 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

441 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were no declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interest although the Chairman reminded Committee that he works for a broadband company.

442 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

443 UPDATE ON BROADBAND

Councillor Sherras was given permission to speak on this item and reminded Committee that in spite of lots of lobbying for superfast broadband in rural areas, there were still many problems and although connections had been made to cabinets throughout the borough this does not necessarily mean that householders will have access to superfast broadband. This meant a lot of people were losing out to the financial advantages of being on the internet at a reasonable speed and were therefore being deprived.

The Chairman welcomed Sean McGrath from Lancashire County Council to update Committee on the works being carried out in Lancashire. He gave Committee some statistics with regard to commercial and public investment in the Ribble Valley and the number of premises that had been broadband enabled. He asked that householders check their line speed on Think Broadband and then register any problems with the Superfast Lancashire website. He gave details about the initial contract and the extension programme that was currently taking place as well as the future programme with the aspiration of 100% broadband in Lancashire.

Members asked several questions of Mr McGrath with regard to the connectivity and how most rural areas of Ribble Valley can be enabled.

The Chairman thanked Mr McGrath and his colleagues for attending the meeting.

444

BROWN TOURISM SIGNS

The Director of Community Services submitted a report outlining the process involved for businesses who wish to get a brown sign installed to assist people to get to their location. He reminded Committee that the responsibility of brown signs was that of the local Highways Authority and to place a sign further afield such as on a motorway would require an application to the Highways Agency. The signs are designed to guide visitors to a tourist destination along the most appropriate route during the latter part of their journey, particularly if the destination is difficult to find and are not there as a substitute for marketing.

He informed Committee that simply applying for signage gives no guarantee of success and that each application is judged according with guidance and a range of eligibility criteria, as well as road safety and traffic management factors.

He also reminded Committee that the cleaning and maintenance of the signs is not the responsibility of the applicant but that of the highway authority and as such, as this is generally a low priority, signs become overgrown or discoloured, making them difficult to read or in some cases hidden altogether.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. ask the Chief Executive to write to the Lancashire County Council Chief Executive requesting that all brown signs and road signs in the borough are cleaned and where necessary the vegetation is cut back to make them visible;
2. ask the Director of Community Services to request Lancashire County Council to provide a presentation to the Ribble Valley Tourism Association on the process for applying for brown signs; and
3. ask the Chief Executive to investigate the costs for brown signs to be erected at Samlesbury and Gisburn on the A59 directing people to our main service centres and report back to Committee.

445 TOURISM PERFORMANCE STATISTICS 2016

The Director of Community Services submitted a report outlining the latest tourism performance statistics done by Marketing Lancashire. STEAM is an industry standard model that is applied at both County and District level resulting in year on year performance measurements for employment, bed spaces, economic growth and visitor numbers for both staying and day visitors.

The main issue of note was the significant growth in the Ribble Valley visitor economy amongst the best performing across Lancashire in terms of economic growth and top in terms of growth in visitor numbers.

RESOLVED: That

1. a press release be done highlighting the successful growth in the local visitor economy; and
2. that Council Officers continue to work with Marketing Lancashire to refine and update the accuracy of local tourism data as used annually to collate the STEAM study.

446 SUPPORT AND FINANCE FOR LOCAL BUSINESS

The Chief Executive submitted a report for Committee's information of an overview on the range of current measures available to support business and economic growth in Ribble Valley and Lancashire. The report outlined a number of organisations both locally and across Lancashire that worked both individually and in partnership that businesses in Ribble Valley can access for assistance in addressing a broad range of business requirements through the key pre-start, start-up and growth stages in business. The Council also worked in partnership with some of these organisations and often acts as a broker for local businesses seeking help, advice and information.

Committee considered this information and were impressed with the help available to businesses in the Ribble Valley. It was suggested that the word 'regeneration' would not necessary be a search word used for businesses looking to set up and perhaps an alternative would be more appropriate.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

447 REVIEW OF CURRENT TOURISM MARKETING ACTIVITY

The Director of Community Services submitted a report for Committee's information on current tourism marketing activity. This included the Ribble Valley Wedding Partnership, Go Ribble Valley Group Tourism Partnership, the 2018 Discover Ribble Valley Visitor Guide and the Ribble Valley Tourism Heritage Trail.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

448 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The Chief Executive submitted a report for Committee's information on an overview on a range of new developments taking place across Ribble Valley contributing towards the continuing economic growth of the area.

Of particular interest was the new £5m Christian Heritage Retreat Centre at Stonyhurst College.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

449 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Councillor Joyce Holgate, the Council's representative on the Ribble Valley Tourism Association, gave an update on their activities and informed Committee that the Association grows from strength to strength and are very active in the Ribble Valley.

The meeting closed at 7.45pm.

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact Marshal Scott (414400).