

# RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

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Agenda Item No. 9

meeting date: 1 FEBRUARY 2018  
title: ECONOMIC EVIDENCE BASE  
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
principal author: COLIN HIRST, HEAD OF REGENERATION AND HOUSING

## 1 PURPOSE

1.1 To consider the proposal to undertake an initial refresh of the Council's economic evidence base.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Community Objectives - To deliver a sustainable local economy
- Corporate Priorities - To undertake relevant economic activities to secure economic growth and to maintain a healthy local economy.
- Other Considerations - The work the subject of this report will support the delivery of economic activity and contribute to the forthcoming Local Plan review.

## 2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Council holds and can access a range of information to inform its work in relation to economic development using a number of sources. Members will recall that as part of the evidence base to inform the Economic and the Core Strategies, reports were commissioned to inform the Council's work.

2.2 The Council first commissioned a broad report jointly funded by the Council, Lancashire County Council and the Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership. That report entitled Ribble Valley Employment Land and Retail Study (2008) provided a combined assessment of a number of issues. It combined the need for a review of the supply and demand for employment land and premises with a retail health check of each of the main centres and was intended to provide a baseline for economic projects and to inform the Core Strategy. It also served to identify opportunities supported by economic evidence of public sector interventions to promote a sustainable local economy.

2.3 This work was refreshed as part of the Core Strategy evidence base in 2013 and expanded to incorporate other areas required to address issues at the Examination in Public for the Core Strategy such as the need to have evidence on the leisure economy in addition to retail to meet planning requirements.

2.4 All of these key areas of evidence are considered to be in need of updating and will be key to progressing both economic development functions and the review of the Local Plan.

### 3 PROPOSED ECONOMIC APPRAISAL

- 3.1 In updating our evidence base it is seen as a first step to provide an overview of the key structure and economic health of the borough by sector and to identify opportunities where the Council can support further economic growth. Other more detailed work will need to be commissioned in relation to the review of the Local Plan to deal with the Council's requirement to comply with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework for example specific matters like employment land and town centres, and further work on this will be undertaken as part of the scoping of the review of the Local Plan due to take place later this year.
- 3.2 At this stage it is considered valuable to establish an economic baseline that can also help inform the scope of the wider review of evidence. This should also include an updated business survey to gain further insight on the needs and aspirations of local businesses to inform the Council's economic strategy. The survey can also be used as a vehicle to develop and promote greater engagement with the business community.
- 3.3 It is proposed that the business survey element be undertaken by Infusion, our research and consultation partner as part of our partner agreement. The only additional costs to the Council would be to cover any additional printing and postage costs that fall outside the contract. This, it is anticipated would be no more than £600 and can be contained within service budgets.
- 3.4 At this stage Members are asked to consider the commissioning of a baseline evidence report and the business Survey. The baseline evidence report would provide a current overview of the local economy, help identify key sectors where interventions can help drive economic growth and through an analysis of strengths and weaknesses identify areas of activity which the Council can consider undertaking direct intervention in a focused way, including partnership working or areas where further lobbying may be necessary to secure a strong and sustainable local economy that takes best advantage of the opportunities available. This will inform future reports to this committee.
- 3.5 The headline appraisal will enable the Council to review its current activities which have been previously guided by the adopted Economic Strategy and the core objectives subsequently adopted that related to the key areas of economic focus, namely:
1. Employment Land and Premises - developing measures which ensure that current employment land of premises provision in the area meet with business economic and employment growth needs, to identify measures to bring these forward including options to deliver land and premises and maximising opportunities from empty properties in the borough.
  2. Clitheroe Market – to bring forward options for an appropriate scheme for the future of the market development area in line with the aims within the Clitheroe town centre masterplan.
  3. Tourism and Visitor Economy – to further develop measures, activities and events to support tourism and the visitor economy in the Ribble Valley.
  4. Transport and Infrastructure – promoting the extension of rail services from Clitheroe to Hellifield and improvements to services between Clitheroe and Manchester, and Clitheroe and Preston in working with the County Council and other providers to improve local infrastructure.

- 3.6 As Members will be aware, these matters have been incorporated into the Corporate Strategy and form the headline priorities for the Council in relation to current economic development activity. The baseline review will enable activity in these areas to be reviewed and help focus interventions.
- 3.7 It is proposed that bids be invited to prepare a report that identifies and provides an overview of the strategic economic context and baseline, including a review of relevant policies and strategies that impact upon Ribble Valley such as those of the LEP, Northern Powerhouse, and Transport related agencies. The study should also provide an assessment of business and labour market trends drawing on published data in addition to providing an understanding of the functional economic area for which economic needs can be supported. An overview of the current property market in relation to employment land and business premises would also be of value.
- 3.8 In the light of the context and understanding established by the overview and analysis set out in paragraph 3.7 above the study should provide the Council with a SWOT analysis to assist the council in identifying opportunities for economic growth and from which the council can review its wider economic activity.

#### 4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications
- Resources – The work will be funded from existing regeneration budgets. Any consequent work would be subject to further consideration by committee
  - Technical, Environmental and Legal – The Council is expected to monitor the local economy and its health and identify any actions needed.
  - Political – The Council has identified economic development as a key political priority.
  - Reputation – The work proposed by this report will assist the Council in demonstrating it is a well-run Council that seeks to identify local economic aspirations.
  - Equality & Diversity – The work will support the Council's aim in delivering a sustainable local economy to the benefit of all its community.

#### 5 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

- 5.1 That Members agree to the commission of an initial economic appraisal and that a business survey is undertaken.
- 5.2 That the Chief Executive be asked to prepare an appropriate brief for the appraisal consistent with the matters set out in paragraphs 3.7 to 3.8 in this report.

COLIN HIRST  
HEAD OF REGENERATION AND HOUSING

MARSHAL SCOTT  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

BACKGROUND PAPERS  
Economic Evidence Base documents

For further information please ask for Colin Hirst, extension 4503.