

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 5

meeting date: THURSDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 2018
title: RIBBLE VALLEY BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP
submitted by: NICOLA HOPKINS – DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING
principal author: COLIN HIRST – HEAD OF REGENERATION AND HOUSING

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To consider the formation of a Ribble Valley Business Partnership to support economic growth in the borough.

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, subject of this report, will support the delivery of economic activity and provide an opportunity to demonstrate the Council is a well-managed authority.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Council has a long established record of working in partnership with a number of local groups and bodies with a view to understanding local business related issues, developing initiatives and promoting economic growth and wellbeing in the local economy.

2.2 The Council has links with the local Chambers of Trade for Clitheroe and Whalley, with regular contact. In Longridge local business has come together as a business group in relation to specific initiatives and the Council has worked with the businesses to provide support. Across these centres this has included Town Team approaches as well as specific project groups, together with maintaining contact and liaison. These connections have helped develop working relationships and understandings of town centre, particular retail issues in dealing with the Council's business.

2.3 Under the auspices of the East Lancashire Chamber of Commerce, the Council supports the Ribble Valley Business Leaders' Network with regular meetings which provide the opportunity to explore relevant issues with a range of manufacturers and businesses in the borough, although the number and diversity of these can vary it does provide the opportunity to contribute to issues on both the borough wide, sub regional and indeed national footprints and to gain intelligence on issues of concern for local businesses. Individual businesses will also seek meetings with the Regeneration Team to discuss issues on an ad hoc basis which can be related to business pressures, business development or funding matters.

2.4 There has also been longstanding links with local networking groups in which the Council participates and provides a valuable opportunity to exchange information and understand current business issues across a diverse range of local businesses. The Council has also supported since its inception over the last 4 years, the Ribble Valley Business Awards which provides an opportunity for businesses to come together and share success and innovation.

2.4 The former Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership previously provided an overarching umbrella forum in which many of these groups relevant to the local economy could come together and although the Council has continued to develop linkages with local businesses through the established groups, there is not a single umbrella forum that can draw relevant issues together easily across the key local economic sectors including manufacturing services, tourism and food for example.

3 RIBBLE VALLEY BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

3.1 Given the Council's commitment to support and grow the local economic as a key priority, and uncertainties are emerging across wider national and international economic issues, there is considered to be some merit in re-establishing the opportunity, led by the Council to provide a strategic forum to raise local economic issues.

3.2 As Members are aware there is a review of the Council's Economic Strategy, objectives and priorities has been undertaken with the preparation of a revised economic strategy being progressed. The proposed business partnership will provide a valuable platform to help develop the strategy and get stakeholder input. The partnership will also provide the opportunity for the Council to feed local business interests into parallel work being undertaken by the Lancashire Economic Partnership (LEP) as it progresses its work and initiatives now developed to support economic investment in the area.

3.3 It is proposed to establish a Ribble Valley Business Partnership that will complement the existing working arrangements across the established groups but will be an opportunity for a single forum to bring relevant interests together to inform the Council's work. If agreed an initial meeting is proposed to explore areas of common interest to help determine the key areas that the Council can consider in developing its own strategy which will lead to a programme of regular meetings mostly likely on a quarterly basis.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – Costs for the Ribble Valley Partnership will be met from existing revenue budgets. Any specific emerging projects that require individual resourcing will be subject of further reports to this Committee and Member agreement as appropriate.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – None.
- Political – The Council has identified supporting the local economy as a key priority.

- Reputation – The reputation of the Council will be enhanced as an authority that is well managed and seeks to work in partnership with stakeholders.
- Equality & Diversity – The proposal will promote opportunities for strengthen inclusivity.

5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

- 5.1 Agrees to the creation of a Ribble Valley Business Partnership and that Committee is kept informed of progress as appropriate.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

(If any)

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

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