

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

meeting date: 3 NOVEMBER 2022
title: RIBBLE VALLEY ECONOMIC PLAN 2023 – 2026
submitted by: NICOLA HOPKINS – DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING
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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide an update on the Economic Plan 2023 – 2026.
- 1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities
- Community Objectives – To sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley
 - Corporate Priorities - To encourage economic development throughout the Borough with a specific focus on developing a new Economic Plan.
 - Other Considerations – The Economic Plan will support a range of Council activities and assist in financial planning for the Authority.

2 INFORMATION

- 2.1 The current Economic Plan was adopted in September 2019 and covers the period 2019-2022. A copy of the existing plan is included in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 The existing Economic Plan is still a working document. Several projects identified in the Plan have been delivered and work is continuing to deliver the projects that have not yet been completed.
- 2.3 Due to Covid, not all projects have been delivered as the Council's priorities changed during this unexpected period. Focus shifted to providing multiple rounds of grant support direct to businesses and the Council did not have the staff resources to deliver the grant support and continue to deliver the Economic Plan.
- 2.4 A special Ribble Valley Economic Partnership meeting was held on Wednesday 12th October. The meeting was run as a workshop and allowed delegates to provide feedback on the key issues they are facing and expecting to face in the future.
- 2.5 The existing Economic Plan was used as a starting point for the session and a SWOT analysis carried out on the 5 Action areas. This format was successfully used to produce the initial Economic Plan therefore a similar methodology has been adopted to produce the updated Plan. The results of the first workshop are provided in Appendix 2.
- 2.6 Based on the workshop and SWOT analysis, new objectives and projects will be identified which will then form the draft Economic Plan. It is proposed to hold further workshops with the Economic Partnership to help develop and test the plan which will be presented to

members for consideration and if agreed will be subject to a six – week public consultation to allow stakeholders to provide feedback on the Plan.

- 2.7 A final version of the Economic Plan informed by the stakeholder process will then be presented to members with a view to adopting the plan.



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BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

For further information please ask for Hassan Ditta, extension 4424

RVBC ECONOMIC PLAN – 2019 -2022



Ambition

The prosperity of the economy in the Ribble Valley is demonstrated through the continuing high levels of economic growth in the area. However, there is a need to ensure that opportunities are available for businesses to continue to develop in the area. There is a need to continue to market and regenerate our market towns and villages as places to do business and to ensure that there is employment land available for development.

The issues of public transport, particularly accessibility to isolated villages, are part of a perceived need for a more flexible approach and a more accessible service.

Without economic prosperity, many other problems e.g. health, housing, crime, access to services are all much harder to address.

Our objectives

- To encourage economic development throughout the borough with specific focus on tourism, the delivery of sufficient land for business development, and supporting high growth business opportunities;
- To seek to improve the transport network, especially to our rural areas;
- To work with our partners to ensure that the infrastructure in the Ribble Valley is improved;
- To promote stronger, more confident and more active communities throughout the borough.

People:

focuses on those actions and projects that will be a catalyst for business growth, more local employment opportunities and the skills to support aspirational growth.

Places:

focuses on those actions and projects that will ensure the right land and premises are available along with opportunities to place the attractive environment at the heart of key sectors.

Business Support and Growth:

focuses on those actions and projects that will equip residents and businesses with the right information to support new and existing businesses along with enabling experience and knowledge sharing opportunities.

Connectivity:

focuses on those actions and projects that will act as the catalyst for job creation and growth.

Tourism:

focuses on those actions and projects that will promote the development of accommodation, improve hospitality and support events building on the attraction of the local area.

RIBBLE VALLEY ECONOMIC PLAN:

TO ENABLE BUSINESSES TO BE SUSTAINABLE AND TO CONTINUE TO DEVELOP IN THE BOROUGH



Action Area 1:

People

1. Develop a jobs / careers fair
2. Undertake a Housing and Economic Needs Assessment
3. Explore options for developing a work placement plan



Action Area 2:

Places

1. Develop Key Service Centre Action Plans
2. Explore options for serviced office accommodation or community business hubs
3. Undertake place branding exercise
4. Expand the property search function
5. Develop an on-line business directory



Action Area 3:

Business Support and Growth

1. Set up business advice and support web-page/ site
2. Set up 'One stop shop' business support package
3. Quarterly meetings of the Ribble Valley Economic Partnership



Action Area 4:

Connectivity

1. Explore rail improvements to Manchester and Preston
2. Develop digital strategy
3. Integrate sustainable modes of transport within developments



Action Area 5:

Tourism

1. Develop cultural strategy
2. Explore options to increase visitor stay
3. Develop strategy for the future of the castle and its grounds
4. Develop a Heritage Strategy
5. Create one-stop events directory



APPENDIX 2

People and Place

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location- Branding, promotion • Film opportunity- make use of it 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Weakness</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of slick promotion/branding • Unloved centres • Older estates- vehicle movement • Covid- an excuse to move it on • Staff- time/cost • Branding- wider offer • Dev- advice service
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Train incentives • Place Directory- what's on, modern • Students- link with college • Connectivity- rail • Business input to branding collaboration • Network events- lack focus • Marketing- directory • Instagram/TikTok 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People- Skills, capacity • Parking infrastructure- footfall driver • Need for employment sites/units • Transport costs • Cost of accommodation- entry level housing- house type • Service support for investors • Expansion sites- land needed

Connectivity

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A59 Infrastructure • Railways • Dog Friendly 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Weakness</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too much reliance on cars • Cost- bus • Lack of Uber • Lack if buses/direct transport/timings • Parking • Sunday opening • A59 • Pedestrian connectivity • Quality of roads-cyclists • Lack of coordination between centres • Road closures • Improve infrastructure- schools and transport links • Signage • Lack of fibre connectivity
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be a central hub • Assets 'Castle' • Collaborate- coach trips • Sunday opening • Dog friendly • Park and ride • Improve road links • Cycle transport- electric bike hire- scooters • Collaborate with schools and understand issues • Joined up when get to destination • Direct people where to go • Pull traffic out of centre • Events 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe- pandemic- buses and shopping • Nearby competition

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Point of contact for works being undertaken • Mike Cliffe (LCC) Connect with businesses/ involve LCC • Send updates to Chambers 	
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Tourism

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RV tourism association • AONB • Ribble Valley Brand • Historical assets • Country side • Walking • Restaurants- Michelin star • Weddings • Hotels • Steady flow of tourists- could be better • Craft production- local food and drink • Events- mod weekender • Food Festival 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Weakness</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facing potential recession • Could be seen as non-essential spend • Staffing crisis- image, skills • Transport- diesel/ petrol prices increasing • Public Transport • Inaccessible Heritage site e.g. Stonehurst can't open all year round due to school/safeguarding • Lack of accommodation/beds • Our online promos/websites arent as user friendly compared to other sites like visit Lancashire • Clitheroe has great potential but lacks the tourism infrastructure • Skipton vs Clitheroe- Skipton feels more like a tourist destination • Sign posting- should bring digital advertising boards into centre
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing could improve- Encourage businesses to pass over dates+ event info for us to promote • Create itineraries e.g. 72hrs in the Ribble Valley... • Promotional videos highlighting the RV offer • Curb appeal- could be more edgy+ work collaboratively to promote our offer • Collaborative advertising for businesses- mix of online and offline • Create a '5 year marketing strategy'- look at what other areas are undertaking • Gap in family offering • Staycations • Longer breaks/ shorter breaks more frequent as people can't go abroad due to lack of funds • Growth in Air BnB • Population increase in the valley • Outdoor venue space • Need to have a clear collective but also independent promotional offer for Whalley, Longridge and Clitheroe 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to travel abroad • Finances • Customers from outside the Ribble Valley won't travel • Air BnB- unregulated/ non insured/fire/ food hygiene etc • Public transport is bad but could actually get worse • People weren't going abroad this year- could good profits this year be "artificially inflated" because of this? • Supermarkets threaten independent shops • Shop closures/ vacancies are creeping in, reducing the offer

Business support and growth

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent businesses have a strong voice • Experienced local business leaders 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Weakness</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historically weak business support • Other authorities help whereas it feels like RV actively hinder and lose businesses money • Needs to be more communication between RV and LCC • Signage issues • Talent into the borough through school open days hindered by signage issues • Inconsistency on signage removals e.g. crafty vintage/ food festival • Welcome back funding was poorly spent- spent on consultants in Birmingham and the findings from the Ark report haven't been acted on • Marketing • Skilled staff • Improve communication- need to hear from us more often • Need more business visits • Social media needs improving but connection also requires a personal touch • Need to see results from the economic plan or people will stop turning up to meetings • Need the right people to come to meetings and the meetings need to have clear direction.
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links with schools for staff/ apprentices- fences to jump, too difficult, colleges/training, not the money it's the ease of access • Solar • Biomass knowledge- empress fencing has knowledge • Other alternative fuel systems make more efficient • Business Liaison Office to communicate frequently with businesses and be their first point of call • Chamber and Council need to meet frequently • Proactive officers- networking and facilitating conversations between other businesses • Networking- could be a separate strand of the Economic Partnership meetings • Make meeting venues more interesting • Push current businesses to keep growing and moving forward 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Energy bills • Universally rising costs • Interest rates • Inflation cost of doing business • Electric

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• UKSPF• Capturing passion of local businesses• Local manufacturing consultants need an input• Business climate- opportunity for a plan to be put in place to support new+ current businesses• Digital screens on high street to promote business | |
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