

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

meeting date: THURSDAY 28 SEPTEMBER 2023
title: RIBBLE VALLEY ECONOMIC PLAN 2023 – 2026
submitted by: NICOLA HOPKINS – DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING
principal author: HASSAN DITTA

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To present the Economic Plan 2023 – 2026 (Appendix 1) and to seek Committee approval to adopt the new Economic Plan.
- 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 BACKGROUND

- 1.3 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 2. The existing plan was reviewed in 2022 with a revised draft Plan produced.

3 THE ECONOMIC PLAN (2023-2026)

- 1.4 At the Economic Development Committee meeting on 15th June 2023, Committee authorised the Director of Economic Development and Planning to consult on the Draft Economic Plan.
- 1.5 A six-week online consultation period commenced giving businesses, residents and other stakeholders the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Economic Plan. This consultation period ended on Monday 4th September 2023.
- 1.6 The consultation was promoted extensively online utilising the Council's website and social media channels. Parish Councils were advised of the forthcoming consultation at the Parish Council Liaison Committee on 22nd June 2023 and the consultation link was sent directly to all Parish Councils in the Borough. The link was also sent to all members of the Ribble Valley Economic Partnership consisting of 132 members and to all members of the Ribble Valley Tourism Association consisting of 244 members.
- 1.7 A summary of all responses and officer comments are provided in Appendix 3.
- 1.8 The feedback received from consultees has been split into three key themes, which are set out below along with the Council response to this themes;

- What are the incremental actions/steps that will make the listed actions reality?

The Economic Plan is an overarching document that has been split into 5 action areas with specific projects listed for each action area. As the projects within each action area are developed, the individual project plans will list actions and steps along with key performance indicators which will be used to manage the projects. During the project planning stage, key stakeholders will also be involved to ensure the projects are relevant and suitable.

- No mention of the partners RVBC are going to engage to fulfil these action points or the funding it will require.

Stakeholders were involved in helping to create the draft Economic Plan. As with the previous point, during the project planning stage, relevant key stakeholders will be identified and involved for each individual project plan. Funding for some projects including supporting businesses to lower their carbon footprint project has already been secured. The Economic Plan is an overarching policy document which will be used to support funding bids as opportunities to bid for funding to deliver the projects arise. The document will also be used to support larger funding bids in the future.

- The plan could have been more ambitious.

It is important that the Plan is deliverable within available resources and timescales. The projects identified within the plan are deliverable given the current resource and funding opportunities available to the Council.

1.9 The Tourism Association submitted a collective response supporting the Tourism Action Area with members looking forward to contributing to the detail of the action points in due course.

1.10 On the basis of the comments received and response given above, Committee approval is sought to adopt the new Economic Plan.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

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

- Resources – Members will note that the plan sets out a number of actions that will have budget implications, all of which will be the subject of individual reports to the relevant Council Committees in due course as part of the Council's budgetary process. The Council is currently in the early stages for preparing the budget for 2024/25. Our core Government Funding is unknown at this early stage. As is normal, service Committees will receive guidance for considering any growth requests. The plan will also provide a vehicle to inform bidding rounds for external funding where relevant, which will also be subject to future reports as projects come forward.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – The Plan is a high-level document and the Council is expected to monitor the local economy and identify the most appropriate tasks required

to implement the actions in the plan. The delivery of individual tasks/projects will follow Council procedures and policies as well as any relevant legislation.

- Political – The Council has identified economic development as a key political priority.
- Reputation – The adoption of the new Economic Plan will demonstrate the Council is a well-run council that seeks to deliver corporate local economic ambitions.
- Equality & Diversity – The adoption of the Economic Plan raises no Equality and Diversity issues. Implementation of the Plan will be in compliance with the Equality Duty.

5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

1.12 Adopt the proposed Economic Plan 2023-2026.

HASSAN DITTA
SENIOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
OFFICER

NICOLA HOPKINS
DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

For further information please ask for Hassan Ditta, extension 4424

Ref: HD/EconomicDevelopment/28 September 2023

APPENDIX 1

PROPOSED ECONOMIC PLAN – 2023-2026

Ambition

The prosperity of the economy in Ribble Valley is demonstrated through sustaining businesses and nurturing the entrepreneurial drive in the local community.

Sustainable economic prosperity is an important component to the quality of life in Ribble Valley in terms of health, housing, reduced crime and access to services. To ensure this, our objectives are;

- To support businesses throughout the Borough to remain competitive
- To support skills development including linking with schools/colleges and creating networking opportunities
- To work with our partners in the Ribble Valley to improve infrastructure including non-private transport, digital connectivity and moving towards a carbon free Borough.

People – Action Area 1

Focuses on those actions that will support skills development.

- Work with partners to deliver recruitment events
- Enhance digital skills of employees
- Improve connectivity between schools and businesses

Place – Action Area 2

Focuses on those actions that recognise and respect the value and character of the Ribble Valley. Enhance sustain and maintain the character environment

- Deliver on town centre action plans
- Undertake place branding exercise
- Integrate property search onto the Council website

Business Support– Action Area 3

Focuses on those actions which sustain business competitiveness and strengthen business networks.

- Provide support to businesses in the Borough
- Support businesses to reduce their carbon footprint
- Create networking opportunities

Connectivity – Action Area 4

Focuses on those actions that will act as the catalyst for digital connectivity and public transport connectivity.

- Explore rail improvements
- Develop an electric vehicle including bikes charging strategy
- Work collaboratively with partners to improve sustainable modes of transport in the Borough

Tourism – Action Area 5

Focuses on those actions that improves the visitor experience and support events building on the attraction of the local area.

- Develop a new destination management plan
- Develop a marketing plan including the development of an interactive website
- Develop a coordinated approach to the promotion of new and existing events

- **APPENDIX 2**
- **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 3
CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Name	Summary of Comments	Our Views
Consultation response 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst the plan outlines various actions, it would be useful to include key performance indicators to help track progress. • Does the plan consider inclusivity and address the needs of all community members (including marginalised groups and underrepresented businesses?) • The plan doesn't mention funding strategies for implementing the proposed actions. • The plan should highlight more specific sustainability measures to ensure a green and resilient economy. • Regular assessments and periodic updates to the plan are necessary to allow for changing economic and environmental conditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KPI's will be identified and put in place for each individual project at the project planning stage. • Workshops and a six-week consultation period was held to allow all groups to provide feedback so all groups have had an equal opportunity to provide feedback on the draft plan. • Funding will be identified, and bids submitted for those projects that have not yet secured funding. • Partners identified and funding in place to deliver a scheme to support businesses on their sustainability journey. • RVBC will monitor changing economic and environmental conditions and the Economic Development Teams work programme changes in response to current conditions.
Consultation response 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plan could have been more ambitious- it's not delivering anything that shouldn't be standard procedure. • The projects identified don't support young people in the area • Plan should work alongside network operators to support the most vulnerable in the Ribble Valley. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realistic and deliverable plan rather than an overly ambitious proposal which may not be deliverable. The plan is deliverable within available resources and timescales. • Specific project identified to work with young people in schools by involving key stakeholders and linking young people with potential career and training opportunities. • Network operators will be identified as stakeholders during individual project planning stage which will allow the most vulnerable to be supported.
Consultation response 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this document a pre-cursor to a more detailed implementation plan which will include specific and measurable actions, targets and timescale? • Improving connectivity between schools and businesses is a very broad statement. What is the plan for this? Enhancing vocational training, apprenticeships, or further education opportunities? Can we learn from neighbouring boroughs? • What are the actions proposed to retain an unspoiled rural environment? This should be a prerequisite for developing further tourism. • There is no reference to the rural economy which is an essential characteristic of the Ribble Valley 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each project identified will have its own project plan completed prior to delivery which will involve relevant stakeholders and funding providers. • A more detailed project plan will be drafted during the project planning stage. Working with key stakeholders, a project will be identified that best supports the unique challenges young people face in the Borough. • The destination management plan which is one of the projects identified in the Economic Plan will identify methods to ensure the unspoiled rural environment in the Ribble Valley is retained.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No mention in the plan of how RVBC intended to engage with the Parish Councils to help deliver objectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The support that will be provided to businesses will not be sector specific and will focus on all sectors in the Borough including the rural economy. For each project, relevant stakeholders including Parish Councils will be identified and engaged with in due course.
Consultation response 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is the plan going to be executed? No mention of partners or time scales etc? Why have rail improvements not already taken place? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partners and stakeholders will be identified at the individual project planning stage. The timescales for each project will be different however all projects will be delivered by 2026. Work has been ongoing for a number of years with stakeholders to improve the rail network in the Borough.
Consultation response 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The plan seems Clitheroe centric with Longridge tagged as an afterthought. When completing a branding exercise for the Ribble Valley, the three centres need to have their own distinct identity, independent from one another. Tackling lost business because of Brexit and the consequent difficult trading conditions isn't mentioned. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Longridge specific projects have been identified in the plan such including the creation of a Longridge Town Centre Action Plan. The individual Action Plans ensure that the three main town centres in the Borough retain their own distinct identity. As part of the business support programme, support will be provided to help businesses that are dealing with the current trading conditions.
Consultation response 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ribble Valley Tourism Association would like to support, in broad terms, the Tourism Action Area 5, which will provide a coordinated approach to tourism marketing and development. Their members look forward to contributing to the detail of the action points in due course. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ribble Valley Tourism Association will be stakeholder for a number of projects and will be able to contribute to the detail of the action points.

Main themes

- What are the incremental actions/steps that will make the listed actions reality?
- No mention of the partners RVBC plan on engaging with to fulfil these action points or the funding it will require.
- The plan could have been more ambitious.