

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

meeting date: THURSDAY 28 SEPTEMBER 2023
 title: RIBBLE VALLEY ECONOMIC PLAN 2019-2022 UPDATE
 submitted by: NICOLA HOPKINS – DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING
 principal author: HASSAN DITTA

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide an update on projects delivered on the Economic Plan 2019-2022.
- 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

- 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 until the updated Economic Plan 2023 – 2026 is adopted. 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 during the pandemic shifted resources to ensuring multiple rounds of grant support were provided directly to businesses as opposed to the actions within the Economic Plan. It is also important to note that the pandemic changed the focus/ working processes of a number of businesses which is reflected within the emerging Plan.

3 THE ECONOMIC PLAN (2019-2022).

- 3.1 The existing Economic Plan was split into 5 action areas clearly setting out the Council's proposed actions.

People

Focuses on those actions that will support skills development.

Place

Focuses on those actions that recognise and respect the value and character of the Ribble Valley.

Business Support

Focuses on those actions that sustain competitiveness and strengthens business networks.

Connectivity

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

Tourism

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

3.2 The following progress has been made on projects identified for each priority area.

3.3 Priority Area 1: People

Develop a jobs / careers fair – the careers fair was delayed as a result of the restrictions imposed by Covid. A jobs and careers fair which was marketed as the “Valley of Opportunity” was successfully delivered in partnership with the DWP on the 8th March 2023. The jobs fair was attended by 15 business who had live vacancies and over 200 job seekers. The fair will be delivered on an annual basis going forwards.

Undertake a housing and Economic needs assessment – The project was delivered and may be updated again as part of the Local Plan process.

Explore options for delivering a work placement plan – As a result of Covid, this project was not delivered as businesses focus changed. It is still a key project and has been carried forward to the new draft Economic Plan.

3.4 Priority Area 2: Place

Develop key service centre action plans – Work has commenced with Longridge Town council on developing a service centre action plan and will be completed by the end of 2023. This is still seen as a key project and has been carried forward to the new draft Economic Plan to create action plans for Clitheroe and Whalley.

Explore options for serviced office accommodation or community business hubs – The ‘Serviced office’ model was listed highly during the consultation for the initial Economic Plan. The private sector reacted to the changing trends of working and there are multiple serviced workspaces throughout the Borough including Clitheroe, Whalley and Longridge negating the need for the Council to intervene.

Undertake place branding exercise – initial work has started on this project and the project has been carried forward to the new draft Economic Plan.

Expand the property search function - this service is offered by the Economic Development team where they work with new and existing businesses who are looking for new premises in the Borough or businesses looking to move into the area. This is seen as an important business support service as it allows officers to monitor business

movement and trends for business space. A project to further enhance this service has been identified in the draft Economic Plan.

Develop an on-line business directory – this project has been delivered by working with partners in Clitheroe, Whalley and Longridge.

Clitheroe - <http://www.visitclitheroe.co.uk/business/businessDefault.aspx>

Longridge - <https://lovelongridge.info/business?search=>

Whalley - <https://www.visitwhalley.com/>

3.5 Priority Area 3: Business Support

Set up business advice and support webpage/site – This project was delivered however as a result of changes to funding, Ribble Valley Borough Council is no longer able to access the support Boost Business Lancashire offers. This is as a result of funding changes and Ribble Valley Borough Council no longer subscribing to the services of Boost. Officers are working directly with external business support organisations to ensure the webpage is relaunched with relevant and up to date information.

Set up 'One stop shop' business support package – As with the previous project, this was also delivered however as a result of changes to funding, Ribble Valley Borough Council is no longer able to access the support Boost Business Lancashire offers. Officers are working directly with external business support organisations to ensure a new business support package is released with the latest correct information. Business support has been identified as a key priority in the new Economic Plan.

Quarterly meetings of the Ribble Valley Economic Partnership – The Economic Partnership group meet on a quarterly basis at various locations around the Borough.

3.6 Priority Area 4: Connectivity

Explore rail Improvements to Manchester and Preston –. Work has been ongoing since the existing plan was adopted to identify improvements. The Council will commit to continue to develop and implement options identified and the project has been identified in the new Economic Plan.

Develop a digital strategy – The project has not been completed due to priorities changing during Covid and a shift to providing essential support to businesses. This project was not identified during the workshops or consultation therefore has not been carried forward within the emerging Plan.

Integrate sustainable modes of transport within developments – This is an ongoing project with Officers actively working with developers to enhance services as part of new developments within the Borough. Examples include using Section 106 money to subsidise bus routes to developments.

3.7 Priority Area 5: Tourism

Develop cultural strategy – The project has not been completed due to priorities changing during Covid and a shift to providing essential support to businesses. This project was not identified during the workshops or consultation therefore has not been carried forward within the emerging Plan.

Explore options to increase visitor stay – This is an ongoing project which continuously evolves as trends change. Officers work closely with Tourism businesses and accommodation providers in the Borough to ensure the area is marketed in the appropriate way across multiple platforms.

Develop a strategy for the future of the castle and its grounds – The project has not been completed due to priorities changing during Covid and a shift to providing essential support to businesses. This project was not identified during the workshops or consultation therefore has not been carried forward.

Develop a Heritage Strategy - The Council no longer employs a Conservation Officer therefore no longer has the resources to complete this project. Unless additional resources are identified, this project can no longer be delivered.

Create one stop events directory – this is available on the Visit Ribble Valley website which can be accessed at <https://www.visitribblevalley.co.uk/events/>.

4 RECOMMEND THAT COMMITTEE

4.1 Note the report.

HASSAN DITTA
SENIOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
OFFICER

NICOLA HOPKINS
DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

Ref: NH/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/28 September 2023

**APPENDIX 1
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

