

Minutes of Economic Development

Meeting Date: Thursday, 28 September 2023, starting at 6.30 pm
Present: Councillor D Birtwhistle (Chair)

Councillors:

J Alcock	S Fletcher
S Atkinson	R Ray
R Corney	R Walsh
S Cowman	A Wilkins-Odudu
L Edge	G McCrum
R Elms	

In attendance: Director of Economic Development and Planning, Senior Economic Development Officer and Head of Strategic Planning and Housing.

Also in attendance: Councillors L Jameson and K Barnsley

Apologies received from Councillor M Graveston.

342 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

343 DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY, OTHER REGISTRABLE AND NON REGISTRABLE INTERESTS

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary, other registrable or non-registrable interests.

344 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

345 RIBBLE VALLEY ECONOMIC PLAN 2023 - 2026

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report presenting Committee with the Ribble Valley Economic Plan 2023 – 2026 and seeking approval to adopt the plan.

A report was submitted by the Director of Economic Development and Planning for Committee to consider the publication version of the Economic Plan for 2019 – 2022. The previous Economic Plan was adopted in September 2019 and covered the period 2019 to 2022. In June 2023, Members had approved that the Director of Economic Development consult on the plan for 2023 – 2026. A six-week public consultation period had been widely publicised and a summary of all responses and Officer comments were included in the report, along with the Councils responses in relation to the key themes.

The proposed Economic Plan for 2023 - 2026 was included in the report. The plan clearly set out the Council's objectives, and how it sought to meet these objectives via 5 priority action areas:

- people;
- places;
- business support and growth;
- connectivity; and
- tourism.

It was noted at the meeting that this was a high-level document, and further analysis would take place in order to form a plan to target specific actions/projects.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the publication version of the Ribble Valley Economic Plan 2023 – 2026.

346

MEMBER REPRESENTATION ON RIBBLE VALLEY TOURISM ASSOCIATION

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report for Committee to consider an invitation from the Ribble Valley Tourism Association (RVTA) for an elected member to join their Executive Committee and make recommendations to Full Council.

The RVTA was a membership organisation for businesses involved with tourism and the visitor economy in the Borough. The association provided a forum for discussion and debate and held meetings to which members were invited to attend, along with a number of membership activities which were detailed in the report.

The RVTA worked closely with the Council on tourism, promotional and development activities. In order to facilitate joint working with the Council, the RVTA formerly included an elected member on their Executive Committee. However, since the pandemic, when meetings were suspended, the position was vacant.

Committee were asked to nominate a member of the Committee to join the RVTA Executive Committee and recommend the appointment of that member to the RVTA as an outside body to Council.

***RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Nominate Councillor J Alcock as the representative for the Ribble Valley Tourism Association Executive Committee and recommend to Full Council the appointment of that member to the RVTA as an outside body.

347

RIBBLE VALLEY TASTE FEST & CLITHEROE FOOD FESTIVAL

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report to provide Committee with an update on the Clitheroe Food Festival 2023 and seeking approval to hold the event again in summer 2024.

Ribble Valley Taste Fest had been held between 5 and 11 August 2023, followed by a one-day food festival on 12 August 2023. The Taste Fest featured a series of themed 'walks with taste' incorporating cheese-making demonstrations, brewery tours and gin-tasting sessions at farms and food venues throughout the Borough. Thirteen businesses had engaged in the Taste Fest resulting in a total of 23 individual events. A summary of conclusions and the full list of events were included in the report.

Over 100 businesses and organisations had attended Clitheroe Food Festival on 12 August 2023, and all available stalls had sold out along with a number of sponsorship packages. A record number of crowds attended throughout the day and the town was particularly busy during a fly over by the Red Arrows. The increase in visitor numbers was thought to be down to extra promotion of the event and a breakdown of the statistics along with the positive feedback received from festival goers was included in the report.

Given the success of the events there was an appetite from businesses, residents and visitors to hold the event again in 2024. The costs associated with the Festival and implications were noted for Committee to consider.

Members of the Committee commended the Director of Economic Development and Planning, and her team, for a successful 2023 event and commented on the elements that had worked well. Members supported both the Taste Fest and Food Festival for 2024 and hoped that the Taste Fest would appeal to a wider range of businesses now that it had been established. A number of businesses had already registered their interest in participating in 2024.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Agree to hold:
 - The Ribble Valley Taste Fest from Monday 5 August to Friday 9 August 2024
 - The Clitheroe Food Festival on Saturday 10 August 2024; and
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Economic Development and Planning to organize and deliver both events in 2024, including authorising necessary expenditure.

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CHANGE TO CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

The Chief Executive submitted a report for Committee to approve a change to the membership of the Climate Change Working Group for the municipal year 2023/2024.

Committee had approved the allocation of seats on the Climate Change Working Group for 2023/24 on 15 June 2023, however, following the meeting Green representative Councillor M Peplow was replaced on the Economic Development Committee by Green representative Councillor G McCrum. It was therefore necessary to change the Green representative on the working group.

It was requested at the meeting that 2 further Committee Members be added to include the Chairman of the Committee, and a Conservative representative.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the revised membership of the Climate Change Working Group to reflect the change of the Green party representative, with the addition of two further representatives, with the revised membership as follows:

Climate Change Working Group – Councillors S Atkinson, L Edge, A Wilkins-Odudu, S Fletcher, G McCrum, D Birtwhistle, and J Alcock.

The Director of Community Services submitted a report providing Committee with a position statement regarding the Council's Carbon Emissions and suggesting priority areas of work and terms of reference for the Climate Change Working Group. The report was accompanied by a presentation to the Committee.

The Climate Change Act 2008 had set out emission reduction targets that the UK should comply with. In May 2019 the UK Parliament had declared a 'Climate Change Emergency' and in December 2020, it was declared that the UK would set targets of 68% reduction in emissions by the year 2030, and 100% by 2050, to become the first major economy to reach 'net zero' target.

In September 2021 the Council adopted the RVBC Climate Change Strategy 2021-2030, under which the Council's ambition was to become carbon neutral by 2030. The Council measured its Carbon Emissions annually through One Carbon World (OCW) and a detailed summary was included in the report. It was the role of the Climate Change Working Group to review the Climate Change Strategy in agreement with the Economic Development Committee and to ensure that the action plan was implemented effectively.

Many schemes to further reduce the Council's Carbon Emissions had been agreed and the report summarised the following proposed areas of work for the working group:

- Overseeing the refresh of the Climate Change Strategy and action plan based on the 2023 Peoples Survey and recommendations from the OCW report
- The installation of solar panels at Council Offices
- The installation of Electric Vehicle Chargers on rural car parks and at Longridge and Edisford
- The feasibility of rolling out Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) to all refuse vehicles
- Upgrading all Council Office lighting to LED
- Launching a recycling campaign
- Launching a 'Good Housekeeping' initiative for staff to reduce energy and waste.

The suggested terms of reference were included in the report.

Committee discussed the strategy at length, and it was felt that whilst the proposed areas of work were important, Members also wanted to ensure that wider issues and the goals of the Borough and its residents were also considered. It was suggested that if the Working Group tried to achieve too much at once they may not fully complete projects, and that the group should focus on what they can do and not what they wish to do. Members noted case studies from other Councils and asked for similar 'outside the box' thinking. It was noted that a balance should be sought taking the economy of Borough into account when considering the strategy for Climate Change.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Committee consider the information as noted in the report and the accompanying presentation; and
2. Approve the establishment of the Climate Change Working Group and the adoption of the Terms of Reference (ToR) as noted in the report.
3. That the Committee ask the Working Group to ensure that in reviewing and agreeing the priorities of the proposed 2-stage process that the Working Group ensure that:
 - Objectives are realistic and within the remit of RVBC responsibilities and budgetary controls; and
 - That the Working Group work towards developing and enhancing the economy of the Council and ultimately its business sector.

350

RIBBLE VALLEY ECONOMIC PLAN 2019-2022 UPDATE

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report for information providing an update on projects delivered on the Economic Plan 2019-2022.

The Plan, which was included in the report, had been adopted in September 2019 and covered the period 2019 – 2022. The report included an update on the projects which had been identified under the 5 key actions areas; People, Place, Business Support, Connectivity, and Tourism. It was important to note that during the period of the pandemic the Council's priorities had changed and therefore focus and resources had shifted to ensure multiple rounds of grant support was provided directly to businesses, as opposed to the actions within the Economic Plan.

351

REVENUE OUTTURN 2022/23

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report for information on the outturn for the financial year 2022/23 on the revenue budget for this committee.

Following a number of variations in both income and expenditure during the year, there was an overall underspend of -£27,897 on the net cost of services, including after transfers to and from earmarked reserves.

352

REVENUE MONITORING 2023/24

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report for information on the position of the 2023/24 revenue budget for this Committee for the period April to August 2023.

The comparison between actual and budgeted expenditure showed an overspend of £10,119 for the first five months of the financial year 2023/24.

353 CAPITAL MONITORING 2023/24

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report for information on the progress on this Committee's 2023/24 capital programme for the period to the end of August 2023.

There had been no spend or commitments made against the capital programme budget. The position of the one capital scheme budget was that it was unlikely to be spent by financial year-end.

354 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from representatives on outside bodies.

355 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That by virtue of the next item of business being exempt information under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be now excluded from the meeting.

356 CLITHEROE TO HELLIFIELD RAIL PROJECT

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report for information updating Committee on the Rail Feasibility Work which had been ongoing with LCC and Northern Rail.

A key rail priority for Ribble Valley and Lancashire was the reinstatement of passenger services between Clitheroe and Hellifield, which had closed in 1962. This would close an east-west 'connectivity gap' and provide improved sustainable linkages between Greater Manchester, Lancashire, North Yorkshire and West Yorkshire.

In March 2020 the Council applied to the Department of Transport's (DfT) Restoring your Railways Fund, however, in June 2022 the Minister for Transport confirmed that the application would not be further progressed, as noted in the report. The Council had continued to explore options and using part of the Councils 2022/23 UKSPF allocation, a feasibility study had been conducted by Northern Trains, the findings of which were included in the report.

In August 2023, both the Leader of the Council and the Director of Economic Development and Planning had met the Minister for Transport (Rail and HS2), at Hellifield Station, along with Lord Alton, representatives from LCC, Northern Rail, North Yorkshire, and Mr Nigel Evans MP. The Councils aspirations and work to date were discussed and Members were informed of the next steps which had been agreed.

Members of the Committee thanked the Director of Economic Development and her team for their ongoing work on the project, and commended Lord Alton for his contribution. It was important to note that the Council were unable to make the

decision on such a project as they were not the transport authority, however, Members were keen to keep pushing the project forward in any way possible.

The meeting closed at 7.45 pm

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact the committee clerk, Rebecca Tait 01200 414408 olwen.heap@ribblevalley.gov.uk.