

Local Economy Policy Development Advisory Group
19 JANUARY 2023

Present: Councillors: Roger Noel (Chairman), Matthew Allen, Billy Greening, Mike Morgan and Jon Olson

Apologies: Councillors: Chris Brown, Peter Burgess, Nigel Jupp, Gordon Lindsay and Colin Minto

10 **TOUR OF THE CAMPING WORLD COMMUNITY STADIUM**

The Operations Manager and Treasurer of Horsham Football Club welcomed Members and gave a tour of the facilities, including the main stadium, community stadium and clubhouse facilities.

11 **HORSHAM FOOTBALL CLUB**

The Operations Manager and Treasurer of the Football Club gave a presentation about the club's history, achievements and aspirations. The club had moved to the Camping World Community Stadium in 2019 and it was run as a self-sustaining enterprise. They had built a reputation for excellent hospitality, and had the capacity to hire space for business meetings or leisure activities. It was noted that 85% of staff worked as volunteers. Community engagement was an important part of the club's ethos and they had won Horsham Matters Community Champions Award in 2022.

The presentation included details of the wide range of players that used the stadiums, including 8 – 11 year olds and local schools. The club was home to Crawley's women's team and had aspirations for building a women's team for Horsham.

Councillor Roger Noel thanked them for the tour and their hospitality and stated that he, along with the other Members, were greatly impressed with how the club was run and its excellent sports and leisure facilities.

12 **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The notes of the meeting held on 26 May were received.

13 **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - UPDATE**

The Head of Economic Development updated the group on issues facing businesses in the district. Many retail businesses had changed their business model as a result of Covid restrictions, with a greater emphasis on online presence and different work patterns. Some businesses, particularly in the hospitality sector, were struggling with recruitment and retention.

The Council's Training Business Programme for 2023 included support relating to these issues. The programme also included help with reducing energy costs and working sustainably, and a district wide space-needs survey and research into the viability of some flexible working spaces.

The Group were shown data on the number and performance of businesses in different sectors (September – November 2022) and how Horsham compared with neighbouring local authorities. More businesses had been set up than dissolved in every sector.

- It was noted that these figures focussed on the whole of West Sussex. The Head of Economic Development agreed that, for the end of this financial year, she would prepare figures for Horsham District showing the monthly trends for new and dissolved businesses by sector for 2022/23.

In addition to the Business Training Programme, the Group were updated on other projects supported by the Economic Development Team. These included rebranding and support for local markets, West Sussex Business Hub (a networking hub that 160 businesses subscribed to) and employment & skills support. Forthcoming projects included a new phase of the Plate Up Local initiative to help local producers work with retail and hospitality outlets. The Team engaged with local businesses through a fortnightly e-newsletter and a number of surveys were planned to help get an understanding of local needs.

The Group were advised of grant funding opportunities, including 30 LEAP (small business grants) that had been approved at the end of last year. The processes for delivering projects funded by the government's Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund were also underway.

14 **REVIEW OF THE ECONOMIC STRATEGY**

The current Economic Strategy had been adopted in 2015 and was available on the Council's website at [Economic Strategy 2017 -2027](#). The Head of Economic Development advised that a number of things had changed since then, both in terms of the internal structure of the team and the shape of the economy.

The strategy therefore needed updating, and she asked the Group to contact her with suggestions for what should be focussed on in the updated strategy.

15 **FORWARD PLAN EXTRACT FOR THE LOCAL ECONOMY PORTFOLIO**

There were no items for noting.

The meeting closed at 7.45 pm having commenced at 6.00 pm

CHAIRMAN