

Local Economy Policy Development Advisory Group
26 MAY 2022

Present: Councillors: Jonathan Chowen (Chairman), Matthew Allen, Chris Brown, Billy Greening, Gordon Lindsay and Colin Minto

Apologies: Councillors: Peter Burgess, Mike Morgan, Roger Noel and Jack Saheid

Also Present: Jon Olson

4 **NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The notes of the previous meeting, held on 9 March, were received.

5 **ECONOMIC UPDATE**

The Head of Economic development provided an update on Current Projects and data relating to the local economy. Current projects highlighted included the Horsham District Mystery Trails, a programme of free training for independent retail and hospitality businesses, and Journey to Work (J2W) supporting people aged 50 or older who are seeking to reskill or get back into work.

Graphs were presented indicating footfall, and incorporations / dissolutions and liquidations. It was noted that, whilst all town centres showed a boost in March this was considerably more extreme in Steyning. No clear reason was identified. It was also noted that the business incorporations / dissolutions and liquidations in West Sussex as a whole during the first quarter of 2022 showed that the greatest activity was in the Business Services sector. It was agreed that a Horsham based presentation of this data would be useful.

Business survival rates were also presented and reflect a prevailing trend for Horsham being higher than both national and Coast-to-Capital levels. In line with other local authorities within West Sussex, Claimant rates have increased in March 2022 compared to 2020.

6 **UPDATE ON LEVELLING UP ROUND 2 AND SHARED PROSPERITY FUND**

The presentation went on to address Round 2 of the newly launched Levelling Up Round 2 Fund, focusing on three key themes:

- Transport investments
- Regeneration and town centre investment, and
- Cultural investment

The application window is open from 31st May to 6th July. Bids are accepted up to a value of £50m for Transport projects, and £20m for other categories. It was

advised that Horsham District is in the lowest priority category. There are some projects under development – such as the regeneration of the Bishopric and a feasibility study for the Arun trail. It was agreed that options related to the LC WIP would be revisited in case there was scope for a bid, but also recommended that having a few “oven ready” schemes, particularly in regard to transport investment, would improve our ability to take advantage of short notice opportunities.

7 **UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (UKSP)**

The final element of the presentation addressed the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) which is a central pillar of the Levelling Up agenda and provides £2.8bn new funding for local investment against three priority areas:

- Community and Place
- Supporting local business
- People and skills

£1m has been allocated to Horsham DC, over 3 years, and will be received in any event, but the use of this funding will need to engage local stakeholders and reflect local priorities. Further guidance is expected in the Summer but it is certain that a local Partnership Group will need to develop the investment plan.

A prospectus, setting out targets, outcomes and further detail on appropriate projects will be shared with members of the PDAG

The timescale is quite daunting since investment plan submissions must be received between 30th June and 1st August and a plan involving and endorsed by partners will need to be developed within this timeframe. The considerable resources needed to prepare a bid will need to be considered against the opportunities that a bid will present.

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

The Forward Plan was noted.

9 **OTHER BUSINESS**

It was suggested by Councillor Colin Minto that there would be merit in holding the next meeting (scheduled for 12 September), at the Horsham Football Club premises at Hop Oast. Councillor Minto agreed to make initial enquiries and furnish contact details for final arrangements.

The meeting closed at 7.00 pm having commenced at 6.00 pm

CHAIRMAN