Local Economy Policy Development Advisory Group
22 JUNE 2016

Present: Councillors: Gordon Lindsay (Chairman), John Bailey, David Coldwell, Leonard Crosbie, Tony Hogben, Liz Kitchen, Adrian Lee and Paul Marshall

Apologies: Councillors: Peter Burgess, John Chidlow and Stuart Ritchie

Also Present: Director of Planning, Economic Development and Property, Economic Development Manager, Parking Services Manager and Governance Project Manager.

1   **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Burgess, Chidlow and Ritchie.

2   **TO AGREE THE TIME OF THE MEETINGS OF THE GROUP FOR THE FORTHCOMING YEAR**

The group agreed that the start time of the meetings for the group be 17:00.

3   **INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Lindsay welcomed members to the first meeting of the Local Economy Policy Development Advisory Group, which was also the first meeting of the new advisory function, established by Council in April. Councillor Lindsay explained that the terms of reference for the group was to advise himself as the Cabinet Member on his portfolio of responsibilities.

4   **PRESENTATION FROM THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MANAGER ON A NEW ECONOMIC STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN FOR HORSHAM DISTRICT 2016 -2020**

The Chairman welcomed the Economic Development Manager and the Director of Planning, Economic Development and Property to the group.

Officers explained that whilst the council had an Economic Strategy for 2013-2023, it now required replacement with a new Economic Development Strategy to provide structure and focus to the work of the Economic Development Team. The group was being asked its view at the earliest stage of policy development.

The Economic Development Manager presented to the group a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. That analysis led to five emerging priorities:

1. Enterprise – support our local businesses to become more productive and resilient to support long –term economic growth
2. Inward Investment
3. Promoting the District Offer
4. Skills and Employment
5. Infrastructure – to address the barriers to economic growth.

Members were asked for their view on the five emerging priorities. Members views included:

a) Whether the emerging priorities linked with West Sussex County Council priorities;
b) The 'strategic fit' of future proposals for Gatwick airport;
c) The importance of the national planning framework;
d) Cross cutting links between economic development and other services within the council;
e) The existing industrial or commercial sites which may no-longer be an attractive offer to modern businesses;
f) The potential impact of and on farming sites in the rural parts of the district;

Officers and the Cabinet Member explained in turn that:

a) There was a county wide economic development strategy that had informed the preparations of the five emerging priorities for HDC;
b) That an action plan would be forthcoming to turn the strategic priorities into actions;
c) The Cabinet Member was in dialogue with the Member of Parliament for Horsham about strategic economic matters;
d) That two planning officers were designated as Business Link officers;
e) That the council's property portfolio was under constant review; and that
f) Planning officers had been encouraged to visit working farms and that Members should note that Neighbourhood Planning was increasing in its importance

The Economic Development Manager returned to the presentation to explain that Business Rates retention was a key opportunity for the council to explore. The Government proposal that local authorities may retain 100% of new business rates by 2020 required the council to have the vision to promote strategic sites / identify new employment sites, to provide proactive support for existing businesses and to prepare for potential growth in business rates. Officers explained that new business rates should be seen as a revenue stream and that forecasts were that the reduction in government grant could be offset by the revenue gain in business rates. Other local authorities were expected to be competitive in attracting new businesses to their areas and HDC required a strategic approach, particularly with regard to North Horsham. Members noted that the council could not offer 'tax breaks' to new businesses but that advice

and assistance on external funding streams would assist new businesses to choose the Horsham District as their preferred location.

The Economic Development Manager summarised the proposed key themes of the strategy as:

- Encouraging inward investment, attracting high quality new businesses into the district;
- Support for existing businesses, finding sites and premises to allow for expansion;
- Growing the visitor economy and supporting the market towns; and
- A new strategy for business engagement that identifies need across the whole district.

Members were supportive of the key themes and noted that the council would signpost businesses to support rather than providing financial support directly. Members felt that the council should take opportunities to be innovative, and noted that the private sector was driving the development of Horsham forward. The Chairman surmised that the role of the council was to facilitate economic development.

At the conclusion of its discussion, the group advised the Cabinet Member that:

1. The views of the policy development advisory group be considered in the preparations of the draft economic development strategy;
2. The draft economic development strategy be considered by the group at its October meeting.

5   **RURAL PARKING UPDATE**

The Parking Services Manager briefed the group on rural parking. A review of the council's rural car parks had commenced on 21 June 2016. As a result of the loss of central government grant, and the need to plug a projected deficit of some £4m arising largely as a result of that loss, the council had to review its rural car parking arrangements. The Council was spending around £160,000 each year to provide 24 car parks in the rural parts of the district.

Surveys would be undertaken to fully understand the usage of rural car parks and the views of key stakeholders. Considerations would include:

- Overall costs, including business rates, utilities, insurance and enforcement;
- Maintenance: re-surfacing, re-lining, and cleaning;
- Standardising the range of existing localised parking options which currently confuse customers. For example in some areas it is free all day, in other areas it is limited to two/three hours and then charged;

- Enforcement both on and off-street: Many parishes wanted to see more on-street highway offences enforced and ensure that users do not overstay their maximum duration times
- Season ticket prices: These charges needed to be similar across the district and reflect the true cost of providing such facilities.
- How local areas can cope with increasing parking demand in the future and what further investment may be needed to address local needs; and
- How the council could support parishes and market towns in maximising their economic vibrancy.

The Council was looking to conclude the research work before the summer holidays and that officers would be able to consider options in August. The outcome of the review would be in place by 1 April 2017.

Members noted the briefing and supported the view that the council should look to recover the costs of the service, and that consistency of charging, including for season tickets would be desirable. Members noted that changes to parking arrangements could have knock-on effects to on-street and free parking areas that needed to be mitigated.

At the conclusion of its discussion, the group advised the Cabinet Member that:

1. The views of the group be noted by officers;
2. That the matter be added to the Forward Plan as a Cabinet key decision in line with the timescale identified by officers; and
3. That the inclusion of the item on the Forward Plan specifies the date of the Local Economy Policy Development Advisory Group where the draft report to Cabinet would be considered.

6   **TOWN CENTRE SUNDAY/BANK HOLIDAY PARKING UPDATE**

The Parking Services Manager explained that Sunday charges had been introduced on 1 April 2016. Parking Services had not received any complaints about the charge since its introduction. Enforcement could now be addressed and usage data was now being analysed. Members asked whether any effect on footfall had been seen. The Chairman clarified that more comparative data was required before any trends could be understood. Members were urged to note the strategic importance of parking to the growth of the town centre and that balance was necessary between all-day parkers and short term users.

7   **SMART PARKING UPDATE**

The Parking Services Manager updated the group on the progress of the smart parking initiative. Members heard that the expansion of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR), contactless payments, and smart parking accounts were opportunities that were being explored. The benefits would be consistency and certainty of charging which would benefit both car park users and the council.

Members asked officers to consider the potential impact of shops that offered customers a payment refund in return for a minimum spend, and whether such intelligence could help inform the council's approach to further parking initiatives.

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

Members were asked to note that consideration of the Forward Plan would be a standing item on all Policy Development Advisory Group agendas. All Cabinet reports would require the views of the Policy Development Advisory Group to be captured in section 5 of the report. The visibility of the Forward Plan had been improved by the introduction of new software.

Members noted that the following items were key decisions which could only be taken by the Cabinet at a public meeting having placed a minimum 28 day notice on the Forward Plan:

   a) Economic Development Strategy
   b) Rural Parking

The meeting closed at 19:00 having commenced at 17:00

                                                             CHAIRMAN

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