

HARTLEPOOL ECONOMIC FORUM

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

12.7.2010

1. Apologies

Michael McConnell
Judith Godfrey
Mark Rycraft
Marjorie James
Bill Beattie

In Attendance

Members

Ray Priestman – Chair
Peter Olsen
Sarah Ainslie
Judith Godfrey
Angie Wilcox
Marjorie James
Pam Hargreaves
Andy Steel
Peter Clark
Keith Bayley
Chris Humpleby
David Wise
Mike Lakinski

Non members

A Steinberg
P Wilson

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Members agreed that the minutes of the last meeting were a true record of events.

3. Matters arising

RP: Due to Dane Mills leaving the area, we need to identify a new Vice Chair of the Forum. Therefore, we would like to propose that Peter Olsen be nominated as the Vice Chair.

Members agreed that Peter Olsen would be the new Vice Chair.

4. Review of Economic Assessment

PW: The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 places a duty on local authorities to produce an economic assessment

of their area, so that we are better placed to respond to economic challenges and play a more significant role in promoting economic development. The Act requires this assessment to be published by April 2011.

Hartlepool's Economic Assessment will provide the necessary evidence base to increase knowledge and better understand local economic conditions and to analyse how the town makes a significant contribution to wider sub-regional and regional functional markets.

There are a number of prescribed consultees as part of the legislative process and in addition key businesses and business representative groups will be consulted. In addition all key partners including other Council Departments, Job Centre Plus, Business Link and the voluntary/community sector will be consulted. A range of consultation methods will be employed including workshops, one to one interviews, surveys and dedicated web page consultation framework.

A project plan and timetable has been designed which outlines the process for the completion of the economic assessment. The key timescales are shown below:

- Draft assessment completed by 30/9/2010
- Consultation with key partners starts on 4/10/2010
- Consultation ends on 29/10/2010
- Update Assessment from 29/10/2010
- Complete Final Assessment 1/4/2011

On completion of this assessment, the Economic Development Division will commence work on the Economic Development Strategy which should be completed by June 2011.

5. Major Developments

AS: £4,5 million of investment with Single Programme support is being made by UKSE at Queens Meadow. Work is due to start shortly and it is anticipated that it will take up to ten months for the new build which totals 17,000 sq ft.

PO: The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) confirmed that Housing Hartlepool has secured funding for new homes on Easington Road. These new builds will take 14 weeks to complete (which is half of the usual time required). It is hoped that this work will start in September 2010.

Within two to three months we will get confirmation of whether we have secured funding from the HCA for new builds in the Belle Vue area.

CH: Will these new buildings be accessible for disabled residents?

PO: Yes. Also, in terms of job creation we are encouraging the company Keepmoat to move into the area to undertake the manufacturing of key components of the necessary building parts.

AS: We have received the second part of the Future Jobs Fund (FJF) contract after achieving 500 starts. The new contract will take the overall contract to 720 starts.

AS: The government confirmed in May 2010 that the Area Based Grant would be cut. In reality this means a 10% cut to the Working Neighbourhood Fund (WNF).

AW: On behalf of a number of VCS groups across the town, we are concerned about the report that has been submitted to the Council's Cabinet on 2 August 2010 which sets out in year cuts of 10% and also identifies further cuts for this year and post March 2011. The report is proposing that the internal projects are cut by 8% and external projects by 12%. This report is disappointing because providers have already been asked to complete and return a proforma to confirm what cuts to their projects they can make.

PH: We are only passing on the cut that we have received from the government. As the Portfolio Holder I did not want the information within this report to be submitted to Cabinet. There will be a review of the WNF cuts at the meeting on 2nd August 2010 and a Council Working Group is also reviewing these cuts.

6. Final Report - Comprehensive Area Assessment

AS: As previously highlighted to members, in March 2010, a CAA review was undertaken on TVU and all of the five local authorities in the sub-region in relation to Jobs and Economy. Auditors were inspecting the TVU and the five local authorities to monitor their performance with respect to improving the growth of the local economy, improving skills levels and creating new jobs (particularly in growth sectors). As part of this inspection, the CAA self assessment was submitted and inspectors met a wide range of individuals and groups – including the business community and voluntary sector representatives.

Can I thank everyone who was involved in the CAA process.

The final CAA report has now been submitted by the inspectors and the following conclusions were given on the performance of the Hartlepool Local Authority area.

The audit commission has assessed Hartlepool Borough Council as providing a good service that has uncertain prospects for improvement. The report goes on to state that the service is a good, two star service because:

- the Council has a good understanding of the economic problems of the area;

- the Council engages with and supports local businesses well, ensuring that all their needs are met;
- they understand residents needs and the barriers they face;
- their efforts to get local people back to work are good practice and have been independently recognised as performing well;
- they makes good use of resources and have some understanding of the costs of the services they provide;

The report states that the service has uncertain prospects for improvement because:

- the short to medium term employment projections for Hartlepool and the Tees Valley do not show a growth in demand so it will become more difficult to help people into work;
- recent gains in growing the business base have not been sustained;
- The source of future jobs, how they will be secured and what will be done to ensure that they benefit local people are not clear; and
- The scale and pace of skills development required to deliver the desired economic change is large.

The report recommended that Hartlepool Council should work with Tees Valley partners to get more jobs in its area for local people through:

- finishing its economic development strategy so it has a clear plan about how it will support the growth of new jobs through business creation and expansion and inward investment;
- making clear what support is available to existing businesses and those who are thinking of setting up in business;
- improving business education in schools and colleges, drawing on experience of what works across the Tees Valley and beyond;
- working more effectively with private business in all council activities, including procurement; and
- sharing experience and expertise with Tees Valley partners on supporting people into work and making it clear which approaches are most effective.

I was slightly disappointed with the results. It is worth highlighting that Hartlepool's Chief Executive was not impressed with the process and the outcome of the inspection. Paul Walker has submitted a response to the audit report and stated that as the CAA is being abolished, he does not want the report to be published.

SA: How are you taking forward the recommendations?

AS: This will be fully highlighted within the emerging economic assessment and economic strategy.

7. Business Enterprise North East (BENE) Update

ML: We are currently awaiting confirmation from the government on the future of BENE. A White Paper on business support is due in the autumn. Part of this White Paper will consider the future of BENE. However, at the moment it is business as usual with business support and revenue support continuing.

8. Jobcentre Plus (JCP) Update

PC: Two big things are occurring within JCP including the emerging Works Programme which the government is aiming to have in place nationally by the summer of 2011. The Works Programme will replace all national programmes currently on offer including the Young Person's Guarantee and Flexible New Deal.

The Work Programme will give providers longer to work with individuals and greater freedom to decide the appropriate support for them. It will offer significant new opportunities for contractors from the private and voluntary sectors to deliver flexible and personalised support.

Also, as part of the national Drug Strategy, jobseekers with drug misuse issues will no longer be required to enter into mandatory rehabilitation programmes.

9. Any Other Business

None

10. Date of next meeting

Monday 13 September 2010 @ 5pm @Hartlepool College of Further Education.

Andy Steel would like to invite members to visit the new build at 4pm on the above date.