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CENTRAL AREA COMMUNITY FORUM

Notes of the Central Area Community Forum held on 29 October 2013 at 7.00pm at The Gothic Warehouse, Cromford Mill

PRESENT

Derbyshire Dales District Council Councillors Ann Elliott (in the Chair), Bob Cartwright, David Frederickson, Garry Purdy, Lewis Rose, OBE, Peter Slack, Andrew Statham and Geoff Stevens MBE.

Dorcas Bunton (Chief Executive), Jim Fearn (Communications & Marketing Manager) and Ros Hession (Democratic Services Officer - Communities)

Derbyshire Council County Paul Jameson (Local Area Forum Liaison Officer)

Derbyshire Constabulary Inspector Richard Booth

Members of the Public Boys Brigade / Matlock Hospital League of Friends / First Taste - / Matlock Tennis Club – Tom Pilkington
Cromford Parish Council – Russ Boyack, Sue Mosley, Mike Whitworth
Matlock Bath Parish Council – M P Wilderspin
Middleton by Youlgrave – Peter Tapping
Tansley Parish Council – Ian Strange, Vicki Raynes
Wirksworth – Mr & Mrs J Brears
Ingrid Pasteur
11 in total

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Councillor Elliott introduced Members and officers from the participating authorities and welcomed everyone to the Forum.

DERBYSHIRE DALES DISTRICT COUNCIL – SUPPORTING BUSINESS IN THE DERBYSHIRE DALES

Dorcas Bunton began the presentation with:-

Economic facts about the Dales:

- Earnings in the Dales are the lowest in Derbyshire - average wage is £384 pw (county average £430 pw)

- Need to create more higher-paid jobs locally
- Most employment is in public administration (19%) and manufacturing and construction (17% of jobs)
- Tourism relatively small locally but important (8% of jobs)
- 91% of businesses are microbusinesses (<10 employees) – need more to grow
- Relative to urban areas, rural broadband is poor and getting worse

The District Council's Corporate Plan 2011 – 2015 included economic development as a top priority - "A clean, green and prosperous Dales"

Action in 2013/14 was to "Enable development sites and business growth"

Targets include:

- Providing support to 150 Dale's businesses by March 2014
- Support the 'Connecting Peak District Communities' broadband project involving 200 residents/businesses by December 2013

District Council initiatives included Derbyshire Dales Business Advice which offered

- free, independent, face to face
- helped create 141 jobs in 288 businesses

- Business clinics / start-up workshops
- Apprentices e.g. housing and leisure
- Agricultural Business Centre, Bakewell
- 'Love Your Market' campaign
- Peak Directions website peakdirections.co.uk
- Enabling development sites (planning dept.)
- Contracting with local firms

Partnership Initiatives - local partners agree that the key economic issues for the Derbyshire Dales are:

1. Growing microbusinesses
2. Vibrant market towns as employment and service centres
3. Broadband speed and access in rural communities
4. Increasing employment opportunities for young people in rural areas

Business Peak District

- Peak District Concordat & Prospectus
- Local free business events
- Free Branding toolkit
- Advocacy role for local business

Derbyshire Economic Partnership: Rural and Farming Network

- Direct link to Defra
- Inward investment & property search
- Managing LEADER programme

Dorcas explained the Connecting Peak District Communities Project which aims to combat digital exclusion. This can arise due to poor broadband provision and also within particular groups of people who lack the necessary skills and experience to use the internet.

Digital Inclusion workshops had recently been run at Chapel en le Frith and Cromford.

Dorcas then went on talk about the Peak District LEADER Programme (£2.3)

- Chaired by Derbyshire Dales District Council
- Grants to assist small rural businesses
- 203 jobs created

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)

- Two cover the Dales – D2N2 (Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire) and Sheffield City Region
- Control £hundreds of millions Government & EU funds
- Grants available to businesses (RGF)
- Will they support rural areas?

Dorcas concluded the presentation by talking about some local success stories

- Buxoplas Pipe Systems – Bradwell
 - develop pipe products for the drinks and renewable energy industries
 - 5 new staff taken on in 2013
- Mobile Visual Information Systems – Tansley
 - supplied 200 solar powered signs for London Olympics
 - “best start-up business in Sheffield City Region”
- FMC Electronics – Bakewell
 - manufacture and export printed circuit boards
 - started 2011; now employ 6 people
- NEST (UK) – Great Hucklow
 - Design and manufacture the ‘Tum Tum’ range of children’s cutlery and houseware products selling to retailers including John Lewis
 - Established in 2012; employ 3 people
- Harlequin Nutrition – Ashbourne
 - Manufacture and supply ‘salt lick’ blocks to some of the largest animal feed suppliers in the UK / worldwide
 - Now employ 3 people

Questions and comments were then invited from the floor and issues were raised as follows:-

- Mr Brears noted no further funding was available until 2015. Dorcas confirmed that only transitional funding existed at present, but further funding would be available from the LEADER programme in 2015.
- Mr Brears went on to ask how a funding application can be made.
- Councillor Rose and Dorcas urged interested parties to contact Heather Bradford, the District Council’s Business Advisor. Jim Fearn added that contact details were available on the District Council’s website.
- Derbyshire Dales Business Advice, c/o Derbyshire Dales District Council, Town Hall, Bank Road, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 3NN
- Email: business.support@talktalk.net Form: online enquiry form Tel: 07825344653
- <http://www.derbyshiredales.gov.uk/services-business/support-and-advice/business-advice>
- Dr Wilderspin noted that some broadband was only 1.8 Mbps in Matlock Bath which was below the level of 2 Mbps which the government wished to promote. Dr Wilderspin understood that Derbyshire County Council were in the process of ensuring all schools were on super-fast broadband.

- Dr Wilderspin believed the strength should be at least 8Mbps. He also understood that the plan was to install fibre / Infinity into the Matlock exchange by the end of 2014 and contemplated the cost to individuals to have this level of connectivity to their property.
- He urged customers to ensure they are receiving the service they are paying for.
- Mr Brears asked who was paying for the school upgrades to which Paul Jameson replied that there were a number of funding sources for the Digital Derbyshire Programme. BT is contributing £12.87 million to the project, DCC are contributing £4.9 million, a further £7.4 million is coming from the Government's Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) funds as well as £2.5 million from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).
- The objective was for 95% of households and businesses to have access to superfast broadband by 2016.
- There will be a phased approach to the roll-out of improvements, with first areas predicted to be upgraded in 2014. A map of the expected roll-out can be viewed on the Digital Derbyshire page of DCC's website. The map is at high level only and does not give details at address / postcode level. It should be stressed that the expected deployment plans will be subject to change as further work is progressed.
- Mr Brears asked if adequate provision would be made for the more rural areas to which Paul replied that the 'white areas' (less than 2 Mbps) would be targeted.
- A member of the public asked what provision is the District Council making in the Local Plan for industrial units to attract businesses in to the area? Dorcas explained that within the Local Plan, there will be employment sites, but the District Council would have to consider if it wanted to incentivise these.
- Councillor Stevens added that the District Council is trying to attract businesses and create higher paid jobs. The shifting trend is to work from home and the establishment of micro businesses hence no need for large sites in the Dales.
- Dorcas added that the Business Advisor has supported over 100 businesses and LEADER 103.
- Councillor Cartwright noted that sites do exist such as Dunsley Mill at Via Gellia, but perhaps the District Council could do more to market. He also noted business opportunities at Cawdor Quarry.
- He noted the role that Derbyshire Dales has to play in the supply chain in supporting businesses in larger areas such as Derbyshire and Sheffield.
- Councillor Cartwright was pleased to see successful companies in the Dales, but felt that increased advertising of their success may attract others business.
- Dorcas agreed more could be done in terms of promotion and 'packaging' successful businesses to encourage and attract more.
- Vicki Raynes spoke of the Tansley site which had permission for a mixed residential & commercial site which perhaps the District Council could help to promote & market. Councillor Rose highlighted that funding is an issue.
- Mr Brears noted that certain businesses want certain sites with access to specific road networks and services.
- Councillor Stevens added that the LEPs are working hard to promote Derbyshire Dales as a business area.

- Ingrid Pasteur noted that there are small business units for which there is no take up eg Molyneux Business Park at Darley Dale.
- Councillor Slack added that business sites are available in Middleton and Wirksworth and perhaps would be taken up when the economy sees an upturn. He also added that transport and communication is an issue.
- Councillor Purdy had recently attended a Business Peak meeting chaired by Jim Harrison of Thornbridge Brewery. He noted that units are being taken up at Cromford Mill and must appreciate & recognise that the country is coming out of the worst recession ever experienced and the District Council is doing as much as it can to nurture local businesses.
- Vicki Raynes noted Connecting Peak District and asked if any sessions were available for units such as the Brookfield Industrial Estate.
- Dorcas was not aware of any and highlighted that CPD is generally looking at solutions for the community, but noted a good point and would see if any help could be provided or if Heather Bradford could signpost.

Post meeting note - It is the county-wide Digital Derbyshire programme that is working towards provision of superfast broadband. The contact is Natalie Ward at Derbyshire County Council Natalie.Ward@derbyshire.gov.uk

(The local Connecting Peak District Communities project is arranging seminars to raise awareness of broadband, but has unfortunately it has no say with the county programme with regard to when and where broadband will be provided.)

- Vicki Raynes noted that the annual salary in Derbyshire Dales was the lowest in the county, but how did this compare to unemployment.
- Dorcas did not have the figures to hand, but recollected that the unemployment rate was not high compared to others, but would provide the statistics.

Post meeting note - Unemployment, rates in the Derbyshire Dales are invariably lower than surrounding districts. (The September 2013 unemployment rate for the Dales is 1.2%, compared with 2.4% for Derbyshire as a whole.) However, whilst people in the Dales tend to be in work, they are on average paid significantly less than elsewhere. Overall we can say that economic prosperity is not higher in the Dales compared to other areas. This is because of the low wages paid for jobs in the Dales.

- Dr Wilderspin congratulated Dorcas on her presentation which was one of the best he had seen.

QUESTION TIME

Questions and comments were then invited from the floor and issues were raised as follows:-

Fire Service Issues

- Mr Brears raised concerns about the loss of fire stations. He appreciated that the Chief Fire Officer had financial constraints, but felt it important to finance fire stations for example if the Wirksworth station were lost, it would be serviced by Duffield.
- Dr Wilderspin noted how fire expands considerably within the first 10 minutes, making time of the essence. If response times are longer due to fire station location, he feared that by the time the Fire Service attends the fire will be out of control and there is potential loss of life.
- Councillor Purdy explained there would have to be a public consultation on proposed service changes and noted that the East Midlands Ambulance Service

public consultation placed a lot of pressure on the ambulance service to re-think its future provision.

- Councillor Stevens added that a member of Derbyshire Fire & Rescue's Senior Management Team is to attend the Council meeting on 21 November to talk about their proposals and allow District Council members to ask questions. Members of the public are able to attend and there is a Question Time facility – further details will be available on the website.

Dog dirt bins

- Mr Brears urged that the dog dirt bins are emptied regularly at Blackrocks as they are often overflowing – perhaps additional bins are required or the frequency of emptying increasing.

Post meeting note – the matter has been reported to the District Council's Environmental Services Section.

Part-night street lighting

- Ingrid Pasteur of Darley Dale asked what progress was being made with part-night street lighting.
- Councillor Purdy noted Derbyshire County Council's intention was to save energy and money and that an increase in crime was not anticipated.
- Inspector Booth reported that part-night street lighting was being trialled in many areas. There had been mini spates of crime, but it could not be proved that this was due to the part-night street lighting.
- Paul Jameson advised that Darley Dale was in this year's programme, but that limited resources existed to roll out the programme.

Obscuring of street and other lights

- Dr Michael Wilderspin commented that overgrown trees can obscure lights and hence make areas darker. He noted this in Matlock Bath with regard to County Council street lights and District Council lights in car parks. Dorcas undertook to look into the car park lighting.

Post meeting note – the matter has been referred to the District Council's Car Park Section.

Police matters

- Mr Brears had concerns about a reduced level of rural policing due to budget cuts.
- Inspector Booth advised that there would be an increased use of Safer Neighbourhood Teams and Neighbourhood Watches. The aim was to allocate scarce resources where and when they are needed and accept that it was not always viable to patrol.
- Councillor Slack noted reduced police resources in the Wirksworth and Middleton areas. Inspector Booth explained that an officer was being identified to replace the PC who had sustained an injury. There is a dedicated PC and PCSO for the Wirksworth area.
- Mr Brears asked if each division could apply to take on newly qualified officers to which Inspector Booth replied the establishment is looked at once a month.
- Councillor Purdy noted a matter of financing. He had attended public meetings where the public had voted and were not prepared to pay an additional few pence per week to increase police resources.

- Dr Wilderspin noted that crime rates had fallen, but was this due to alternatives to prosecutions. Inspector Booth explained that crimes are still recorded and that the justice system may be affected as there may be other ways to deal with the punishment.

CONCLUSION AND THANKS

Councillor Elliott everyone for their participation and advised that the next Central Forum would take place on 10 February 2014, venue to be decided.

Meeting closed at 8.15 pm