

Minutes of a meeting of the **Economic Success Panel** held at Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich on **5 June 2018** at **1.00 pm** when there were present:

Mr S M Clancy – Chairman

Mr J J Emsell

Mrs L H Hemsall

Mr G K Nurden

Mr S Riley

Also in attendance were the Head of Economic Development, Economic Development Manager, Economic Development (Partnerships & Growth) Manager, Economic Development Officer (Business and Skills) and the Committee Officer (JO).

Paul Wright (Apprenticeships Strategy Manager, Norfolk County Council) was also in attendance for the duration of the meeting.

### **1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Carrick, Mrs Copplestone, Mr Peck and Mrs Vincent.

### **2 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

*Minute no: 25 – Better Broadband for Norfolk*

The Chairman advised the meeting that the County Council had conducted a mobile phone coverage survey of Norfolk. He requested that the survey be forwarded to Members, so they could assess coverage in their Wards and lobby for a better signal, if necessary. The Economic Development Manager confirmed that she would forward the survey to Members.

### **3 LOCAL ECONOMY**

The Head of Economic Development provided the Panel with an update on the local economy.

At the end of April 2018, there were 680 residents of working age claiming Job Seekers Allowance in Broadland. This was the joint lowest figure in Norfolk and represented just 0.9 percent of the 16-64 age group.

A Business Breakfast Forum had been held at Sprowston Manor on 18 April 2018. Key speakers came from Chartered Accountants Price Bailey, as well as the training company Poultec, who had taken on a number of apprentices from Broadland when the Council ceased to deliver the service.

The next Business Breakfast would be on 11 July 2018. Invitations, with more details about the meeting would be sent to Members shortly.

A Business Rate Discount Scheme had been to Cabinet earlier that day and it had been recommended to Council that the scheme be adopted in order to attract new businesses to the district and to assist existing businesses expand.

The Performance Report 2017/18 and Broadland Business Plan would be presented to Cabinet on 31 July 2018. Over this period, 264 businesses had received assistance from the Council's Business Support Team and 135 businesses had offered new apprenticeships in the district.

Norwich City Council had confirmed that it would be reducing its contribution to Visit Norfolk and funding from some other local authorities remained uncertain. There was some concern that this could result in Broadland subsidising other local authorities. If this was the case, the Council might have to assess if this represented value for money for Broadland's Council Tax payers. Members would be kept informed of any further developments.

Efforts were being made to allow young people to have more control of budgets held by the Youth Advisory Board (YAB). However, a balance had to be struck to ensure that public money was spent on workable projects. The YAB had Young Commissioners in six of the seven high schools in the district and had recently held a survey that had received 3,500 responses. The YAB had not expressed an interest in establishing a Youth Council at this stage, although this would be suggested to the next Board meeting for consideration.

The Choices Programme, which helped people with low esteem or other problems get into the job market, was progressing well. Members were encouraged to contact Economic Development if they wished to attend one of the groups to meet participants

The Feasibility Study for collaboration with South Norfolk was progressing and a final report would be presented to both Councils on 12 July 2018. Economic Development was doing a lot of work for the Study on 'quick wins' such as the Joint Economic Growth Prospectus that would be considered later on the agenda.

In response to a query from a Member, the Panel was advised that the Government had a levy pot for apprenticeships, which employers could access to cover 90 percent of training requirement costs with the employer

contributing the remaining ten percent. The apprenticeships system had changed in 2017, which would have led to the central Government funding for the service delivered by Council to be halved. This had made the service unviable and was the reason for the decision to cease it later that year.

Members were advised that details of how the new vocational T Levels would operate were still to be finalised. The Economic Development Officer (Business and Skills) would be seeking to work with Thorpe St Andrew High School, who would be delivering the qualification in the district. T Levels would require 45 days good quality work experience to be undertaken, which could be difficult for small businesses to deliver. It was suggested a Business Rate Discount could be an incentive for providing work placements.

#### **4 APPRENTICESHIPS**

The Chairman advised the Panel that the Apprenticeships Strategy Manager and the Economic Development Officer (Business and Skills) had extensive expertise in delivering Apprenticeships.

Over 2017/18 there had been 580 Apprenticeship starts in the district, which was the second highest number in Norfolk. There were around 40 training providers delivering across Broadland, which made it a very competitive market. Currently work was being undertaken to increase starts in Education and Training, which was one area that had declined, probably due to the increasing complexity in the framework.

It was also intended to hold some events to promote apprenticeship for small businesses and fill gaps locally that were not being provided by the large training providers, who required cohorts of starters to make their apprenticeship model viable.

Participation of NEETs (not in education, employment or training) was also high in Broadland. One area of focus was moving on those NEETs with GCSE grades D-G, which was 43 percent of their total number.

The Council was considering supporting a social enterprise, which would be helping to train entrepreneurs establish rural businesses at a project in Aylsham.

The Government was starting to recognise that quality was more important than the quantity of apprenticeships being delivered. In Broadland, there was a very good offer and officers were working hard, visiting schools and employers, to continue to maintain this level of service. The Chairman noted that apprenticeships represented a very good alternative for people more suited to vocational training.

### 5 BROADLAND ECONOMIC GROWTH PROSPECTUS

The report proposed developing a joint, web based, Economic Growth Prospectus for Broadland and South Norfolk Councils.

Identifying 'quick wins' around activities and methods of working jointly was a key element of the Feasibility Study into collaboration with South Norfolk Council currently being undertaken. Creating a joint Economic Growth Prospectus was one of the activities that had been identified.

The Growth Prospectus would align with the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership's Norfolk and Suffolk Economic Strategy, and would seek to attract increased levels of inward investment by setting out the opportunities for growth, the key investment assets of the area and the reasons why it was a great place to live and do business in.

It was estimated that that the cost for Broadland would not exceed £2,000 plus annual hosting costs of £250. A Memorandum of Understanding would be drawn up by the Council's solicitors to be agreed and signed by both parties prior to the commencement of the Prospectus's development.

It was understood that the website would be linked to both Councils websites, as well as being accessible to other relevant stakeholders and would include a downloadable PDF version.

Some concern was expressed that the cost of producing the Prospectus was unfeasibly low and would require more resource from the Council than was suggested in the report, as there was a lot of information that would need to be included to make the Prospectus a usable tool. It was also requested that a brief be produced setting out details of the ownership, supply, content and maintenance of the platform to be provided before a commitment to the Prospectus was made. However, it was also noted that the fundamental purpose of the Prospectus was to attract and promote interest in the area and therefore could be relatively simple.

Members were advised that more detail on the Growth Prospectus would be included in the Feasibility Study.

In summing up, the Chairman confirmed that the Panel agreed, in principle, to going forward with the Prospectus, but wanted more detail to ensure that Broadland would share equal content with South Norfolk, as well as confirmation of costs and the timing for delivery of the Prospectus.

### RECOMMENDED TO CABINET

to agree, in principle, to a Broadland and South Norfolk Economic Growth Prospectus, subject to more detailed information being made available.

### **6 NESTA GOOD HELP AWARD SUBMISSIONS**

The Council had made two submissions to the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) Good Help awards, which sought projects that helped people to help themselves. The Council had put forward 'Broadly Active' and the 'Choices Programme' with each submission supported by a short video. The shortlist for the awards would be announced on 8 June 2018.

The Panel was advised that the Communications Team were considering the production of some more short videos to promote Council services, as a result of this exercise. If Members had any suggestions, they were requested to contact the Communications Manager.

### **7 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chairman advised the Panel that he had asked the Head of Economic Development to do some work with the Head of Finance and Revenue Services on how the Council could help support the retail sector and halt the decline of the high street. Retail was the biggest employer in the district, as many Norwich shop workers lived in Broadland and the closure of large stores could have serious social implications.

He wanted Broadland to lead on this work, but he also wanted to involve other local authorities, including the County Council, as this was affecting market towns as well as the City.

### **8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

7 August 2018

*The meeting closed at 3.32 pm*