

Minutes of a meeting of the **Economic Success Panel** held at Thorpe Lodge, 1 Yarmouth Road, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich on **7 August 2018** at **10.00 am** when there were present:

Mrs J Copplestone – Chairman

Mrs C H Bannock
Mr G K Nurden

Mr P H Carrick
Mrs K Vincent

Mr J J Emsell

Also present was Miss J Keeler.

In attendance were the Head of Economic Development, the Economic Development Manager, the Economic Development (Partnerships & Growth) Manager and the Committee Officer (DM).

The Chairman paid tribute to the work of Mr S Clancy the previous Portfolio Holder for Economic Development since 2002 during which time he had championed many projects including apprenticeships and at times taken some difficult decisions. She was grateful for the support he had given her since her appointment.

9 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Mr G Peck.

10 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Minute no: 2 – Minutes – Better Broadband for Norfolk

The Chairman reported that, as part of the project, a sum of £560,000 was currently being held in the capital fund and was required to be held until the end of the project period. The objective was to achieve 97% Broadband coverage in Broadland and, to date, coverage had reached 95%. Any funds not used in achieving this target would be earmarked to help improve the service for the remaining 3%.

Minute no: 3 – Local Economy

Members received an update on the local economy and work of the Economic Development Department on the following:

- Job Seekers Allowance – 595 people aged 16-64 were currently in receipt of JSA – 0.8% of the total in that age group: Broadland being the lowest in Norfolk.
- Broadland Business Forum – Chris Skargill of Larking Gowen and Pete Waters of VisitNorfolk had attended the July Forum to present on Tourism. The next forum on 10 October had Brexit as the main topic. Local MPs were being invited to attend together with the Leader and the Portfolio Holder.
- Business Support / Training – a wide range of support and training continued to be offered for the whole spectrum of businesses in the district. One particular course would be led by Shaun Lowthorpe, previous editor of the EDP, and it was agreed to extend an invitation to this course to Members. Training courses were advertised by a range of means including a brochure, word of mouth, visits to industrial estates and using a database of businesses.
- Tots2teens was seeing a rise in the numbers of children with difficulties attending.
- VisitNorwich – the Council continued to subscribe to this and ensure it received value for money. The Council had been invited to take part in a pilot initiative to review tourism attractions in Broadland with a view to rolling it out to other districts. Support would be given to help Brundall to revamp the VisitBrundall website. An update report on Tourism would be made to the next meeting of the Panel on 2 October 2018.
- Business Plan / performance reports – these had recently been considered by Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet and two additional performance targets on tourism and business rate incentives were being developed. The timeline for consideration of the quarterly performance reports had been modified and a performance report would be submitted to the Panel's next meeting on 2 October 2018.

A concern was raised about the manner in which the disposal of the Eco-Cube business training facility had been managed. Officers explained the circumstances leading to the closure of the facility and the disposal of the building and that this had been dealt with appropriately within the Council's accounts which had subsequently been audited and approved. The decision to implement the disposal had been taken by the Portfolio Holder in accordance with the Council's constitution but a Member felt that, in view of the value of the surrender, this should have been dealt with by way of a report to the Council. The facility had originally been funded by way of a grant to the Council which also provided for a period of no rental costs. The aim had been to provide a facility to bring together businesses and schools which despite being sought by them had not received the support necessary to keep it running. Alternative uses of the

building had been explored but were not successful. A decision was taken to dispose of the premises before its retention resulted in any financial burden to the Council.

- The Cambridge / Norwich Tech Corridor – an initiative to maximise connectivity, promote tech based business clusters locations at either end of the corridor and attract investment to the area. The initiative provided another means of promoting investment opportunities within the Broadland area. The current website would be revamped and a project lead had been appointed, as well as marketing staff to promote the concept. In response to a question regarding the alignment of LEPs with the Corridor, the Economic Development (Partnerships & Growth) Manager explained the current arrangements but advised that the Government was planning a reform of the LEPs.
- The Financial Industry Group continued to progress and grow. The third annual finance conference was to be held in November.
- The Greater Norwich Manufacturing Group, part of New Anglia Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering (NAAME) had grown from 25 members when launched to approximately 100. Its tenth meeting had recently taken place. Among other things, the Group was actively fostering networking and collaboration amongst members.
- Bernard Matthews - a programme of investment was being developed by interested parties to help secure the future of the business and jobs. The element of the business associated with the slaughter of animals was being relocated.

With regard to the role of the Council in supporting businesses facing potential closure, there was scope to support small scale local businesses with help and advice and with support by way of the business rates scheme etc. It was more difficult to help large scale major companies but opportunities were still taken to support them as had been the case with a recent boat company.

- Local Business Support – schemes in Aylsham, Reepham and Reedham continued to be supported and work was underway to help relaunch the Brundall initiative. A request was made to look at support for other areas, particularly those with a Neighbourhood Plan who were looking to implement action plans, but it was noted that there needed to be a local commitment to taking this forward.
- Heritage Open Day – a brochure had recently been launched at Catton Park promoting heritage events in Broadland.

- Multi Cultural event – plans were being drawn up for an event in September.
- WW1 Celebrations – a week of commemoration/celebration was being explored for November.
- Broadland News – this had recently been released and the future of the Buy in Broadland vouchers was being looked at in the light of GDPR.
- Community Activity Officer – following the recent retirement of a member of staff, a service review had been undertaken and savings of £15,000 achieved by delivering a revised service over 4 days per week. The remaining 1 day a week would be utilised to deliver a project on falls prevention using remaining funds from the Public Health grant.
- Broadly Active – a new web based record system was being developed, commissioned by Places for People, which would allow for the collection of data and client information which was GDPR compliant and which would help provide a more significant evidence base for the service, simpler reporting mechanisms and more thorough client tracking information.
- Dementia Cafés – work had begun to provide training and officer support to all cafes in the district to become more dementia aware.
- LEADER Funding – a team at the County Council were looking at options going forward for rural funding when LEADER funding ended following BREXIT.
- Local Investment in Future Talent – no suitable schemes in Broadland had as yet come forward.

11 GRANTS REVIEW

The Economic Development Manager reported that the Council had agreed in June last year to outsource management of its grants scheme to Norfolk Community Foundation. This had led to a redundancy and savings of £40,000 for the Council. Two schemes had been operating, one offering grants of up to £500 with no match funding for small scale projects, the other involving grants of up to £2,000 which needed 50% match funding. A capital grants scheme also existed up to £5,000 for up to 50% of capital costs. At that time, funding was available for a 2 year period and this was now coming to an end with approximately £35,000 remaining in the revenue fund and £36,000 in the capital fund. The NCF currently provided a good service processing and reporting on applications received with the Council deciding on applications by way of a portfolio decision.

Looking forward, discussions had started regarding the potential for individual Member grants for them to support projects in their communities. Such schemes were already being run by the County Council and South Norfolk Council. There was currently no budget provision for such a scheme and a growth bid would need to be made and arrangements made to manage and oversee the scheme. A range of issues needed to be explored such as the allocation of funds to Members, noting concerns that some Members represented a number of parishes and others jointly represented one parish. It was noted that South Norfolk was currently reviewing its scheme and there was an opportunity to engage with them during this process and explore options for a scheme serving both councils. Members were generally supportive of the proposal and it was agreed that officers explore the options further for a report to Cabinet in September. The Economic Development manager undertook to consult members of the Panel by email on the draft report.

RESOLVED

To agree that officers explore further the options for a Member grant fund and prepare a report for consideration by Cabinet in September and to consult members of the Panel by email on the draft report.

12 UPDATE ON COLLABORATION

The Head of Economic Development reported that work was progressing on fulfilling the actions contained in the feasibility study and the route-map. It was however becoming apparent that some of the timelines for work on economic development were very ambitious and were dependent on other factors outside the control of Broadland officers, including the appointment of the new Managing Director. Assurances were sought that the timelines were indicative and an acknowledgement that they may have to slip. Officers were keen to ensure a considered, cautious approach to delivering the target objectives rather than being propelled forward with urgency.

Members were supportive of a measured approach being taken. They were also keen to ensure that Broadland continued to prioritise its community work and to retain its working relationship with the business community in Broadland.

The Chairman commented that she would be attending a shared culture workshop shortly and would reinforce these views.

13 WORK PROGRAMME

- Tourism report – 2 October 2018
- Performance report – 2 October 2018
- Collaboration and Strategic Growth
- Car parks and electric charging points

14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

2 October 2018

The meeting closed at 11.50 am