

MEETING:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Growing Barnsley Workstream
DATE:	Tuesday, 29 June 2021
TIME:	2.00 pm
VENUE:	The Assembly Room - The Civic

MINUTES

Present

Councillors Ennis OBE (Chair), Cain, Coates, Fielding, Gollick, Green, Hayward, Kitching, Lowe-Flello, Markham, McCarthy, Noble, Osborne, Pickering, Smith, Tattersall, Wraith MBE and Wray

1 Apologies for Absence - Parent Governor Representatives

No apologies for absence were received in accordance with Regulation 7(6) of the Parent Governor Representatives (England) Regulations 2001.

2 Declarations of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interest

Councillor Osborne declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No. 8 as he is employed as a Partnership Manager for Reed in Partnership, a contracted provider of the JETS Programme referenced in the report.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 1st June were received.

4 Economic Recovery of the Borough

Members were invited to consider a report of the Executive Director Core Services and the Executive Director Place regarding the Economic Renewal Action Plan as part of the borough's economic recovery from Covid-19. The report included comprehensive information about the Economic Renewal Action Plan, Barnsley Prioritised Recovery Plan and Additional Restrictions Grants.

The following witnesses were welcomed to the meeting and delivered a detailed and informative presentation on the Economic Recovery of the Borough:

Kathy McArdle, Service Director, Regeneration & Culture, Place, BMBC
Paul Clifford, Head of Economic Development, Place, BMBC
Martin Beasley, Enterprising Barnsley Group Leader, Economic Development, Place, BMBC
Cllr Tim Cheetham, Cabinet Spokesperson, Regeneration & Culture

It was explained that Barnsley had been hit harder than other areas due to its existing inequalities following the loss of manufacturing and the effects of austerity. The Economic Renewal Action Plan (ERAP) plans the work of BMBC and partners over the next 18 months to October 2022 to help Barnsley businesses bounce back

from Covid, and details what is being done to attract jobs, businesses and investment with a dedicated package of interventions in the short, medium and long term to grow Barnsley's economy and make it more sustainable.

The ERAP was approved at Cabinet on 7th April with a £2million programme to support recovery, together with an Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) offering coronavirus restriction business support made available from Sheffield City Region (SCR). There are 3 strands within the ERAP: people, employers and place and these are closely linked to the Barnsley 2030 aspirations. The £2m is split into £1m 'chunks', with £1m of regional funding to be spent by March 2022 and £1m from BMBC. The ERAP aims to support 870 businesses, safeguard 1500, create 550 jobs created and provide 1,000 individuals with employment support, with a move away from grant support during the pandemic towards capacity building and growth. The Culture and visitor economy has been badly hit and is in need of support alongside the community and voluntary sector. E-commerce support has also been made available to help 120 retail businesses 120 to get their businesses online and supply chain and procurement support to explore the development and capability to be able to access local supply chain again creating the conditions for growth.

ARG funding was first made available in Financial Year 2020-2021 to be used across Financial Years 20/21 and 21/22. The four South Yorkshire Authorities agreed to use the remaining ARG on four specific projects: Capital Expenditure Grants; Digital Innovation Grants; Business Productivity Grants and Outdoor hospitality Grants. Barnsley was offered £1m and spent £1.1m within a very tight timescale.

In terms of challenges, Barnsley had a very short period of time to get the funding out to businesses (around 4 weeks). Additional capacity was made available to coordinate delivery together with external peer support from the Local Government Association (LGA) which will be used as a case study on the recovery journey. Marketing and communications will be used to promote the opportunities and outcomes of the recovery work as it must be accessible. A number of risks have been identified, including the unknown post COVID context (to which data and intelligence is key); the shift away from financial support to capacity building; the need for strong partnership mobilisation and delivery resource and the end of furlough - which is a key risk in terms of employment. The Government has recently announced that the current £20 universal credit uplift is to be removed, which will have potentially devastating consequences for many people in Barnsley. Plan for the North is currently campaigning to retain the £20 uplift.

There are a number of national and regional funding opportunities available. Two bids have been submitted for the Town Centre and Elsecar along with a joint bid with Kirklees relating to Penistone rail line improvements.

In the ensuing discussion, and in response to detailed questioning and challenge, the following matters were highlighted:

There is a need to promote the work that has been done to attract people from other areas and overwrite the outdated perceptions and misconceptions of Barnsley. It was highlighted that an extensive marketing and advertising campaign is planned for the Glassworks, running from July through to December. Barnsley is also working with Welcome to Yorkshire, with a series of films linked to social media to reach

beyond Barnsley into Leeds, Sheffield, Rotherham and Manchester. Full details will be provided as they emerge. Barnsley has much to offer and this variety needs to be captured and sold to visitors beyond the Borough. Classic FM is currently promoting Leeds and the visitor economy and it would be nice to see Barnsley tapping into similar opportunities. Work is also underway with partners, including the National Trust. Wentworth Castle Gardens is a Gateway for promoting Barnsley outside the Borough and provides an opportunity for cross promotion, linking with Elsecar and Wentworth Wodehouse

It was felt that sometimes business support opportunities can be difficult and complex to access, which may deter potential applicants. The complexity largely depends on the funding stream. EU funding is still available until 2023 but is indeed complex and lots of businesses are put off by this. Barnsley is currently working with local businesses to simplify the process, putting some of it online to help with this. In July a grant will be available to support businesses to trade online, with a 'portal' currently in development to make the process as easy as possible. £1.6 m of grants have been moved in 6 months, which required a lot of support and 'hand holding' to encourage uptake. An animation is in development for the next campaign to engage interest and ensure the process is innovative, transparent and open. Barnsley was able to mobilise and get funds out to businesses within 24 hours of Government announcements, which was much quicker than other regional authorities.

Barnsley is looking to make the Get Back into Work Programme universal across the borough, working closely with Area Councils and partners such as the DWP, voluntary and community sector, education and employment support providers, to plan effective employment outreach work using community hubs etc for targeted support and intervention. There is a need to develop a skills pathway as there is a shortfall in both higher level skills and getting people 'job ready'. A refresh of the jobs strategy will be coming to Cabinet shortly. Skills currently needed in Barnsley include: teamwork, problem solving and digital skills. Sector pathways currently being developed include: The Glassworks (retail and hospitality), logistics and warehousing, health and social care. There is a need to reduce the numbers of economically inactive people and address the qualifications shortfall in Barnsley. There is a shortage of lorry drivers in Barnsley. Local solutions are being developed to promote opportunities and encourage more people to take up that profession.

Getting young people work ready and providing apprenticeships and internship opportunities is very important in Barnsley. BMBC and Berneslai Homes are leading the way by providing apprenticeships for young people within the Council. A Youth Employment programme is being developed including 80 one-year 'kickstarter' places for young people. An Employer Promise is being developed to identify apprenticeship opportunities and ensure young people get on the job training. It is anticipated that the biggest employers will all sign up to this. There are a number of sectors in Barnsley where businesses want to recruit but there is a shortage of workers and a skills mismatch. Businesses are being encouraged to match employment opportunities with young people graduating University. A number of large employers are coming into the area and open days and recruitment days are planned to encourage local uptake.

The Digital Access programme aims to provide 100 laptops and supporting software/data dongles and accessories for ESF Employability programme

participants, who will receive a loan device for up to 12 months with an unlimited data dongle for 3 months. Information about how many participants have accessed employment will be provided by Tom Smith.

Barnsley should be proud of the capacity of the team and partners to pull out all the stops to get support out to businesses rapidly. It has been a very difficult 12 months but all BMBC teams have worked together to tackle Covid 19. Support moved within 24 hours from being office based to an online webchat function, answering queries and providing support to businesses in dire need of support. The BMBC Finance team have been very supportive, providing funds to be spent immediately and reimbursed later and more widely Regulatory Services has worked positively to help business navigate COVID compliance challenges combined with the ongoing support from Public Health It is clear to see that the whole Council and wider partners have worked collectively to provide an coordinated response to the pandemic helping to provide resilience within our local economy.

Members can provide 'check and challenge' to make sure the correct support is being provided to communities, sharing information about Enterprising Barnsley far and wide and signposting aspiring businesses to the help and support available through the programme. Barnsley is creating an environment where businesses can flourish and Members can be ambassadors to help create this positive environment.

It is crucial that Barnsley continues to build on the success of the work done throughout the pandemic and continues to see growth in SMEs, new starters, employment and skills support. Sadly some businesses have closed and there is a need to safeguard for the short term and then promote a growth trajectory. We want to see a thriving town centre with low vacancy rates and businesses employing more people and growing, with the money spent on Barnsley retained in Barnsley. Henry Boot delivered has delivered a huge amount of social value as part of their project and has helped to raise Barnsley's economic profile.

Active travel will be promoted in Barnsley and outlying areas to minimise environmental impact. The Trans Pennine Trail (TPT) will be further developed as an active travel route with funding coming through SCR. This is an exciting time to develop active travel hubs and consolidating and promoting active travel links across Barnsley with a good foundation to build on which will also attract visitors into the Borough. A number of charging points are to be installed in the town centre and across the Borough to support electric vehicles and SCR are looking at the development of electric buses to reduce carbon emissions.

The Principal Towns Programme is an opportunity to invest in local economies and grow all our local urban centres, as each area has its own unique requirements. The programme has been very successful to date but there is lots more to do to develop it further and in conjunction with local Members. A separate Principal Towns Investment Plan is being prepared and will be coproduced with local communities, using active travel as a way to connect communities. It was highlighted that because of the scale of the ambition of the programme and the fact that it is locally driven it cannot be done quickly. Work is ongoing behind the scenes on many of the large-scale projects such as Penistone Paramount and Penistone Town Hall whilst residents in other Principal Towns and Local Centres are now beginning to see their

projects come to fruition. Elected Members will be kept in the loop about the improvements in their local areas under the programme.

BMBC has six key account managers who each manage around 70 businesses each across various sectors, including digital businesses, retail, hospitality, manufacturing and the public sector. There is a need to work closely with the biggest businesses and anchor organisations in Barnsley. These include the NHS, Berneslai Homes, Premier Foods, the Company shop and Hermes. Barnsley has a diverse and mixed economy. A major international digital conference has just been held in Barnsley and Barnsley College's Digital Campus is based in DMC1 and DMC2, the only college in the area delivering digital skills.

RESOLVED that

- (i) Witnesses be thanked for their attendance and contribution
- (ii) The update be noted;
- (iii) Information about the Digital Access programme participants who have successfully accessed employment be obtained;
- (iv) Information should be shared with members about campaigns to promote the Barnsley offer for visitors;
- (v) The service should further manage the expectations of businesses by clearly documenting full criteria for grant applications so that businesses understand why they are not successful;
- (vi) Information demonstrating the evaluation of the laptop scheme to determine success, should be obtained;
- (vii) Employment figures and a summary to demonstrate how these link to the critical success factors of Barnsley 2030 should be obtained;
- (viii) The service should consider expanding their offer and promotion to university students;
- (ix) The service should closely monitor capacity to deliver the plan in order to effectively meet the needs of local businesses, and
- (x) Members should consider adding further check and challenge sessions to future work programmes

Chair