

BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CORE SERVICES

TITLE: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (OSC) TASK AND FINISH GROUP (TFG) REPORT ON AN INCLUSIVE ECONOMY IN BARNSELY

REPORT TO:	CABINET
Date of Meeting	22nd March 2023
Cabinet Member Portfolio	NA
Key Decision	No
Public or Private	Public

Purpose of report

To report to Cabinet the findings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) from the investigations undertaken on its behalf by the Inclusive Economy Task & Finish Group (TFG).

Council Plan priority

Growing Barnsley
Healthy Barnsley

Recommendations

That Cabinet:-

- 1. Review the membership of the Inclusive Economy Board (IEB).**
- 2. Consult the OSC in the development of the Barnsley Inclusive Economy Strategy.**
- 3. Ensure urban development incorporates the needs of all Barnsley villages.**
- 4. Work to ensure a diverse offer in the Town Centre.**
- 5. Ensure access to good quality careers advice for all.**
- 6. Work to improve the public perception of jobs in logistics and manufacturing.**
- 7. Expand communications activity in relation to all this work, including developing a communications plan.**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As part of its work programme the OSC agreed to undertake a TFG investigation into what is being done to ensure an inclusive economy and good economic growth in Barnsley. This follows on from the OSC's previous work on poverty, acknowledging that Barnsley needs to have a sustainable inclusive economy which benefits all communities in order to reduce poverty in the borough. The OSC is also mindful that young people in Barnsley identified 'Jobs, Money, Homes and Opportunities' as their number one concern in the 2022 'Make Your Mark Campaign'.
- 1.2 It goes without saying that the Coronavirus pandemic hit the economy hard. This has been particularly felt in Barnsley, with legacy issues of already lower than average levels of economic activity, health inequalities and some particularly deprived communities. In response to the National Government's Roadmap out of national lockdown in February 2021, the Council and its partners worked together to develop Barnsley's Economic Renewal Action Plan. This is a short-term plan focusing on the immediate issues and opportunities to aid Barnsley's economic recovery. The plan is 'owned' by the Barnsley Inclusive Economy Board (IEB), working through its sub-groups to co-ordinate its delivery, focusing on:
- People:** Supported to work and adapt to the new economy;
Employers and Businesses: Supported to adapt, consolidate and thrive;
Places: Supported through place-based investment to create jobs, offer vibrant local economies and transform our communities.
- 1.3 The TFG sought to better understand the various aspects to this work including the IEB itself; to hear the views from a number of different key representatives; and consider what recommendations could be made for improvements. As a result of the investigation, the group have highlighted a number of recommendations in support of further improvement, the rationale for which is outlined in section 6 of this report.
- 1.4 The members of the TFG who undertook this investigation are as follows:
Cllrs Paul Hand-Davis (TFG Lead Member), Roy Bowser, Jeff Ennis, Steve Green, Joe Hayward, Ashley Peace and Chris Wray.

2. SCOPE OF THE INVESTIGATION & SUBSEQUENT FINDINGS

What the Task & Finish Group Looked At

- 2.1 Initially the TFG met to consider the scope of the investigation. This included hearing from the Council's Service Director for Regeneration and Culture (SDRC), who has an active role on the IEB. The group discussed the work of the IEB, its history and development as well as its priorities. The group considered how we get more and better jobs into Barnsley, including the growth of local businesses and key sectors within the area. The discussion touched on the development of key urban centres as well as sector academies at Barnsley College and work with local businesses to develop skills needed in the local area.
- 2.2 The group agreed to hold a series of meetings on the topics raised as well as arrange a site visit to a local business to hear their perspective on this work. The TFG undertook a number of 'check and challenge' sessions with officers and partners

regarding the work being carried out, future plans and key challenges. This involved asking questions of them regarding their work, their involvement and the impact of this on the borough and its residents. This included:

- Meeting with the Chair of Barnsley IEB who is also a former Chair of the Barnsley Rotherham Chamber of Commerce and Director/Owner of Visualised it Video Production, alongside the Council's SDRC, to understand the work of the IEB in more detail;
- Meeting with the Council's Head of Service for Regeneration and Culture, and the Group Leader for Urban Regeneration to learn more about initiatives to develop thriving urban centres in Barnsley;
- Meeting with the Council's Head of Service for Employability and Skills alongside the Chair of the IEB's 'Work and Opportunity Sub-Group' who is also a Careers Advisor at Horizon Community College in Barnsley to look at the work around getting more and better jobs in Barnsley;
- Meeting with the Council's SDRC to consider the findings of a former peer review of the IEB, specific actions from this as well as looking at the features of inclusive growth
- Undertaking a site visit to Ardagh Glass in Barnsley to understand more about their business, the challenges they face, employee initiatives as well as their work regarding Corporate Social Responsibility;
- Finally, a meeting with the Council's SDRC to discuss the TFG's findings and consider the associated Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

What the Task and Finish Group Found

- 2.3 The Chair of the IEB outlined the background to its development from the Barnsley Enterprise Partnership to its current format via engagement with key stakeholders. The IEB was formed to look at what is needed to make the economy better, what could be done to improve growth and not leave anyone behind. Local businesses were keen to support the Council to do this and work was needed to see how this could best be done. The IEB Chair works hard to ensure the right people are around the table discussing the right issues with a diverse perspective and are respectfully challenging of each other. By bringing local stakeholders together, this has helped to improve the understanding of the challenges they face, such as the governance and funding restrictions in the public sector. The TFG acknowledged that the IEB has appropriately been through a number of changes to ensure it is fit for purpose and are keen that this process of evolving continues.
- 2.4 Data on Barnsley's economic need was discussed and how this influences the board's work. The TFG challenged the involvement of young people and their voice on the board as well as those in local communities who struggle to get in work and then progress. It was acknowledged that there is disconnect between the job market and job seekers, for example where young people struggle to leave school with the right skills and know what opportunities are available. Similarly, there is a need to dispel myths around certain jobs and their salaries. The TFG are keen that the residents' voice is heard on the board and that the lived experience is understood and reflected in decision making.
- 2.5 The TFG welcomed knowledge of the IEB's work with stakeholder groups and their focus on 'wicked challenges', such as connecting individuals to job vacancies. Also,

that this work has resulted in the development of a logistics academy at Barnsley College to help with developing skills for the jobs available locally. The group acknowledged the future plans for the IEB including development of an Inclusive Economy Strategy.

- 2.6 The TFG's following meeting focused on the importance of having thriving 'Urban Centres' in order to have an inclusive economy. This includes the Town Centre as well as outlying 'Principal Towns'. The TFG acknowledged and welcomed the large amount of work and investment that has been made to improve the Town Centre as well as Principal Towns. This not only includes retail development, business growth and expansion, but also looking at options for empty properties, as well as having a thriving cultural offer to encourage people into these urban spaces. Investment has been made in improving shop fronts and urban spaces, utilising and employing local people to do the work. The TFG were also encouraged to hear of the creation of 'social value' such work brings, for example, bringing local businesses and communities together as well as improving relationships between the Council and local businesses.
- 2.7 As part of the local developments, the TFG welcomed knowledge of the positive work being done to build on Barnsley's good reputation for its disabled access across the Town Centre, with a mobility scheme in place on Eldon Street. Additionally, the TFG were keen on the work underway to provide support to young entrepreneurs. This included Barnsley hosting the 'Young Markets Regional Final' with a view to building aspiration in young people to run businesses.
- 2.8 In relation to the night-time economy, TFG members were advised of one of the key barriers to this development is having effective provision for getting people home safely at night. Currently, it is evident that there are shortages in the numbers of taxis available, as well as safe and comfortable spaces for people to wait for them. The TFG welcomed the work underway to look at how Barnsley retains the drivers it has, making sure there are appropriate safety measures in cars, that drivers have places for comfort breaks, as well as making sure they feel appreciated and valued, so stay working in Barnsley. The group were encouraged by the amount of data and intelligence available, particularly in relation to the town centre, which is currently being pulled together to give a holistic view to help identify what further work needs to be done, such as food hygiene ratings, numbers of licensed premises, footfall, anti-social behaviour (ASB) and numbers of void properties. The group also acknowledged a number of additional key challenges including attracting private sector investment as well as ensuring effective digital connectivity.
- 2.9 The group's next meeting shone a spotlight on the More and Better Jobs Strategy to support residents to get ready for, get into and progress at work. It is noted that it is led by the Council but is a borough strategy for all partners to take up. The TFG welcomed that the strategy has been reviewed and is much more succinct, focuses on transformative actions, and adds value to existing activities.
- 2.10 The group were given an overview of the wealth of data available in terms of employment and the jobs market. The data shows that unemployment in Barnsley is low (3.3%) compared with regional (4%) and national (3.7%) figures (June 2022). However, figures for Barnsley show that youth unemployment is higher than elsewhere, and that labour inactivity rates have soared. The group noted that labour inactivity is mainly driven by people who are long-term sick, of which, for the majority, this is due to poor mental health.

2.11 In terms of skills in Barnsley, it is evident that young people are finishing secondary school with better qualifications. However, the higher the level of qualification, the greater the gap in the percentage of adults with that level of qualification in Barnsley compared with nationally, as shown in the table below:

Qualification Level	Barnsley No	Barnsley %	Yorkshire & H %	Great Britain %
NVQ4 And Above	47,800	31.2	38.0	43.6
NVQ3 And Above	79,200	51.6	58.2	61.5
NVQ2 And Above	112,800	73.4	76.3	78.1
NVQ1 And Above	131,200	85.5	86.4	87.5
Other Qualifications	8,000	5.2	5.7	5.9
No Qualifications	14,300	9.3	7.8	6.6

2.12 The TFG note that a key challenge is to grow the skills in the adult population and support them with career development, as well as developing digital skills. Individuals need to recognise the skills they have and the transferability of them, as well as being open to learning new ones. The TFG also discussed the lack of consistent, good quality careers advice available for all ages. There are a number of new big businesses in Barnsley; however, there is a disconnect between job-seekers knowing what they do, as well as a lack of awareness about what their 'employment offer' is.

2.13 It was highlighted that work also needs to be done to manage the expectations of young people in terms of their salary when they leave education, and that they will likely need to start on a lower salary, gain critical skills such as good communication and teamworking, and then progress. Similarly, businesses need to understand that they are developing young people as the 'raw material' and it will take time to do this. Unfortunately, investing in this is often the first thing to go when businesses need to cut costs. However, employers need to recognise the importance of investing in employees and by doing this they are more likely to retain them, in-turn saving on recruitment and further training costs. The TFG acknowledge the good work done by the Council in terms of winning an award regarding the Kick Start employment scheme. Also, that officers in adult social care are looking for placements for those with learning disabilities.

2.14 The TFG were also made aware of another key barrier to employment in Barnsley for all ages is transport. The TFG welcomed that work is underway with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) to map connectivity to employment sites. However, feel that this is an issue that should have a greater voice and influence on the work of the IEB.

2.15 The following meeting of the TFG focused on the findings and actions put in place as a

result of an external Inclusive Economy Peer Review undertaken in 2019 and the development of the IEB. The key messages from the review recommended: development of an Inclusive Economy Strategy and consistent narrative; ensuring there is a shared vision for inclusive growth; influence regional strategy; assess the fragility of the Barnsley business base; develop sector specific skills pathways; incorporate the carbon agenda; develop social value with key stakeholders; consider transport challenges; develop citizen engagement; and focus on place-based growth.

- 2.16 The TFG questioned and challenged the SDRC on the progress made. The discussion highlighted the importance of 'anchor' institutions in Barnsley and as the local largest employers, how they can influence the development of an inclusive economy. Similarly, it was positive to hear of Barnsley College developing several academies and sector alliances. The TFG welcomed plans for an IEB sub-group to focus on poverty and noted the lived experience and voices of residents being critical in this, as well as the voice of officers from across Council services who provide front-line service delivery.
- 2.17 The group were pleased to hear of the encouragement for local businesses to expand and that they are taking on more staff. Also, that Enterprising Barnsley provides a 'bootcamp' offer to support those wanting to start their own business, which includes opportunity for them to network with others. However, more communication activity is required to better promote this offer.
- 2.18 The TFG welcomed the plans to ensure high speed broadband, digital capability and developing digital skills in Barnsley, acknowledging that Barnsley's economy will not survive without them. Similarly, that all this work is being mindful of social value, climate change and zero carbon agendas.
- 2.19 The penultimate meeting of the TFG involved a site visit to Ardagh Glass in Barnsley. Ardagh Group is a global supplier of sustainable, infinitely recyclable, metal and glass packaging for brand owners around the world. The TFG were given a tour of the Barnsley site which produces glass bottles. The group were impressed by their advances in manufacturing, focus on developing and utilising green energy sources for production, as well as their investment in their employees. Members met a number of employees who had worked for the business for several decades and had progressed from being apprentices at Barnsley College into senior management roles.
- 2.20 Ardagh employees gave an overview of the company's work in relation to their corporate social responsibility which had involved going into local schools and charities. They also provided the group with information on the sector academy they have developed at Barnsley college in order to train apprentice engineers. During the visit, Ardagh employees and the TFG discussed the importance of job opportunities in Barnsley. Ardagh highlighted how they give apprentices 'shop floor' experience and opportunity to gain important skills in a working environment such as communication, teamwork, and ensuring they turn up on time ready to work. The TFG note the value of developing these skills and their transferability to any job, the importance of which must not be overlooked in any type of work that an individual undertakes.



- 2.21 The final meeting of the group provided opportunity to reflect on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats highlighted throughout the investigation. As a result, a number of key recommendations were identified by the group and are reflected in section 6 of this report.
- 2.22 The TFG would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who provided information, attended meetings and assisted with the TFG's investigation; it is much appreciated. Particular thanks are given to Ardagh Glass for facilitating a very insightful visit to their Barnsley premises.

3. IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

3.1 Financial and Risk

There are no specific financial implications or risks associated with the report, although in responding to the recommendations in the report, the financial and risk implications of these would need to be fully assessed by the appropriate services responding. Consultations have taken place with representatives of the Director of Finance (S151 Officer).

3.2 Legal

There are no specific legal implications, although in responding to the recommendations in the report, the legal implications of these would need to be fully assessed by the appropriate services responding. Consultations have taken place with the Service Director for Law & Governance.

3.3 Equality

The TFG is keen to ensure that all Council operations and activities are considerate of the needs of all its communities. The TFG acknowledge the importance of opportunities for people with disabilities to access employment to ensure that we have a truly inclusive economy, and it is important that work undertaken is cognisant of this. As highlighted in the report, the group welcomed knowledge of the positive work being done to build on Barnsley's good reputation for its disabled access across the Town Centre. Similarly, the work being done by the Council's Adult Social Care Department

to provide employment placements for those with Learning Disabilities.

3.4 Sustainability

As this report does not require a decision, the sustainability decision-making wheel has not been included.

3.5 Employee

There are no specific employee implications, although in responding to the recommendations in the report, the employee implications of these would need to be fully assessed by the appropriate services responding.

3.6 Communications

As highlighted in the findings and recommendations of the investigation, the TFG are keen to expand communications activities in relation to the work to enable Barnsley to develop and grow an inclusive economy. In order to have an inclusive economy, the TFG acknowledge it is imperative that all communities have access to employment and skill development support services, and the availability of these needs to be communicated effectively.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 Consultations have taken place with: Inclusive Economy TFG members, OSC members, the Council's Cabinet members, Council officers from the Growth & Sustainability Directorate, Chair of the IEB, Chair of the IEB's More & Better Jobs Strategy Group, Ardagh Glass and the Council's Senior Management Team.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 No alternative options have been considered in the writing of this report.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Overview and Scrutiny is a statutory function in local government to enable Councillors to provide 'critical friend' challenge of local services and make recommendations to drive improvements.

6.2 The recommendations in this report are made as a result of the OSC's Inclusive Economy TFG undertaking a detailed investigation into work surrounding enabling Barnsley having an Inclusive Economy. The TFG were reassured by the amount of work being done in this area and have made the following recommendations in order to support the continual improvement of services.

6.3 Recommendation 1: Review the membership of the IEB

As highlighted in the findings of the group, there are a number of 'voices' which need to be heard and strengthened on the IEB. This includes the 'lived experience' of residents, young people, the voluntary sector and transport sector. The TFG considered several ways this might be done possibly through having individual representatives on the board, and/or strengthening links with existing bodies such as Barnsley Alliance, and/or developing panels to gather feedback from relevant

individuals which is then fed back to the IEB.

6.4 Recommendation 2: Consult the OSC in the development of the Barnsley Inclusive Economy Strategy

The TFG are aware the IEB is in the early stages of developing an Inclusive Economy Strategy for Barnsley and plan to have this in place by the end of 2023. The group are keen to be involved in the development of this given its importance and impact on all Barnsley communities.

6.5 Recommendation 3: Ensure urban development incorporates the needs of all Barnsley villages

TFG members welcome the investment made in the Town Centre and to Principal Towns. The group were advised that plans are in place for investment in local villages, but this work had not yet commenced. As local members, they are aware of the importance of local, but more isolated businesses, but that still require investment.

6.6 Recommendation 4: Work to ensure a diverse offer in the Town Centre

The TFG recognise the work undertaken to develop Barnsley Town Centre and the challenges in getting new businesses in Barnsley. Given the number of existing and planned void properties, the group are keen to ensure that those being attracted cater for all ages and not just young people. This is in terms of the retail, hospitality, health and wellbeing, learning, and cultural offer.

6.7 Recommendation 5: Ensure access to good quality careers advice for all

As noted in the report, members feel there is a gap in the provision of good quality careers advice, not only in schools, but accessible to all those in the working age population. This is needed to support both those wanting to get in work, as well as those who may be looking for alternative or advancing career opportunities.

6.8 Recommendation 6: Work to improve the public perception of jobs in logistics and manufacturing

In Barnsley, a number of anchor institutions are large businesses involving manufacturing and logistics. They are critical to the local economy and a number of them are keen to undertake work to be 'good neighbours' in the Barnsley community. On visiting Ardagh Glass, it is evident that there are a number of excellent career opportunities on offer and chance to progress throughout the company. They are keen to be involved in and contribute to local communities, and value their employees.

6.9 Recommendation 7: Expand communications activity in relation to all this work, including developing a communications plan

Throughout the investigation, the TFG were made aware of a host of initiatives in place and being planned to develop and grow an inclusive economy in Barnsley, a number of which they weren't previously aware of. The members felt the IEB and its work should be promoted and celebrated. Similarly, the work of Enterprising Barnsley and support provided to local business and new start-ups requires further promotion. It is also noted that a number of the recommendations above would need a wealth of communications activity to ensure opportunities reach all Barnsley communities.

7. GLOSSARY

BMBC	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
IEB	Inclusive Economy Board

ONS	Office for National Statistics
OSC	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
SDRC	Service Director for Regeneration and Culture
TFG	Task and Finish Group

8. LIST OF APPENDICES

There are no appendices for this report.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Barnsley Economic Renewal Action Plan:

<https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/media/19481/barnsley-economic-renewal-plan.pdf>

Barnsley More and Better Jobs 2021-24 – An Employment & Skills Strategy for Barnsley:

https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s85028/BARNsLEY_V4.pdf

Barnsley Inclusive Economy Peer Review:

<https://barnsleymbc.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s64480/Inclusive%20Economy%20Review%20Action%20Plan.pdf>

If you would like to inspect background papers for this report, please email governance@barnsley.gov.uk so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

10. REPORT SIGN OFF

Financial consultation & sign off	Senior Financial Services officer consulted and date <i>Avanda Mitchell</i> 09.03.23
Legal consultation & sign off	Legal Services officer consulted and date <i>Sukdave Ghuman</i> 13.02.23

Report Author: Anna Marshall/Jane Murphy

Post: Scrutiny Officers

Date: 9th March 2023