

Sedbergh Economic Partnership – Meeting Notes

11am, 20 January 2023

Attending: Andrew Cobb (Chair), Debbie Wilson, Joanne Golton, Peter Marshall, Tony Reed-Screen, Sam Butcher (SLDC), Cllr Hazel Hodgson, Cllr Kevin Lancaster, Janey Hassam (SPC), Chris Woods, Sarah Campbell, Cllr Nick Cotton, Claire Robinson, Debbie Richardson,

Apologies: Cllr Suzie Pye, Carol Moffat, Matt Williams (SLDC), James Ratcliffe, Gillian Holmes (CCC), Cllr Robin Ashcroft, Tony Roberts, John Barraclough, Francine Bult

1. Welcome and Actions

- Andy welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- Sedbergh has approx. 43 vacancies currently. Sedbergh School are presenting potential career opportunities /jobs to local colleges and this could be extended to other employers. **ACTION: JG** to meet with Louise Brophy to consider expanding message, recruitment event to include apprenticeships. People do travel significant distances to work in Sedbergh. Masterstaff recruitment have recently moved to Garstang – might be worth contacting them for additional new pool of labour supply.
- HH meeting with United Utilities on 7th of February and will report any issues of sewage at river bathing sites along Lune and Rawthey. Currently working with volunteers testing water content to affect a management plan.
- Chris reported a good Late-Night Opening with lots of people and a last-minute Santa. There was much work to organise so special thanks to Debbie W. Feedback was very positive. Not sure who will run it going forward - need Main Street businesses to be more involved / improve take up.
- Cllr Jonathan Brook visited Sedbergh on 6/12/2022, JG circulated a summary note. The event went very well and thank you to the businesses that took part. **ACTION: AC** to follow up in three months' time. Cllr Brook's visit included a discussion on the buildings adjacent to Fairfield Mill – **ACTION: JG** to arrange a small group to discuss options, to include Kevin Lancaster and Debbie Richardson. Many ideas circulated regarding future uses of the buildings including work hub, training space, bakery, microbrewery. The economic development team at SLDC may be interested as any future redevelopment could deliver job and cultural opportunities plus potential housing units.
- Small working group expected to meet w/c 6 Feb to draft strategy for Main Street.

2. Rural Prosperity Fund/ Shared Prosperity Fund update

Sam Butcher provided an overview of the new Rural Prosperity Fund, which provides up to £1m for capital projects. The fund replaces Leader+ and will run from April 2023-25 supporting small businesses, community infrastructure projects, business hubs and cultural assets.

The project is linked to the Shared Prosperity Fund, which recently confirmed the first round of grants. Applications for Years 2 & 3 will be open from April 2023 for eight weeks. Expressions of interest from round one will carry forward into rounds two and three. The local SPF has nearly £3m left in the pot with approx. £2m expected to be allocated for business support and the rest for community projects. **ACTION: SB** to keep SEP informed of key dates/ actions.

3. Main Street

Business meetings – JG continues to discuss trading conditions with local businesses. Recently, JG/PM met with Kate at Al Forno and several useful ideas to help local businesses emerged.

JR keen to stress that the recent Three Hares closure was an operational decision and presents a positive business opportunity going forward for the Black Bull.

Focus groups to be arranged with a selection of businesses to talk directly with existing/ potential customer base. Pupil involvement encouraged from both Settlebeck and Sedbergh School. **ACTION: JG** to set up focus groups over the next 4-6 weeks as part of a commitment to helping businesses in the main street (and the town?) inviting input from residents, businesses, young people.

Social media has recently highlighted the demand for takeaway outlets in town. Delivery options e.g., Deliveroo/ Just Eat could present income opportunities locally but there needs to be local takeaways in operation. Existing hospitality businesses could facilitate but needs coordination – the new working group could assist.

4. Planning Update

Local Plan – sadly YDNP not present to provide update. Local Plan team have contacted Sedbergh landowners regarding potential sites identified for future housing development by officers. The landowner adjacent to Toll Bar would like to submit a site for consideration and TRS/ JG are due to meet with them next week to assist drafting letter for planned uses and boundary. **ACTION: PS** to provide date for release of proposed allocation maps.

Applications – JG had previously circulated a note from South Lakes Housing to confirm withdrawal from the Station Road development. Former partner, Broadacres are still proceeding and taking applications for units on the site. Broadacres have submitted an amendment to their planning consent which will be discussed by National Park committee next week. The request was an amendment to the 106 obligations to enable an application to Homes England for grant monies. The request allows Broadacres to remove affordable/ shared ownership properties but should the grant application be successful, the original scheme would be delivered. **ACTION: JG** to write letter of support to YDNP committee as it is essential that the development continues. SEP agreed that any comment should include regret for the current situation, give support to the recommendation and seek assurances of delivery and commitment to local occupancy / affordable units.

Birks Farm campsite application decision is expected in March. This is to extend the Farm and Fell camping site from 28 days to 5 months. There are existing issues to overcome including highway improvements and it remains work in progress. The application has raised a series of emails from businesses sharing concerns about the need for a campsite to help the local economy, especially Main St. **ACTION: JG** to provide an evidence-based response to the application (similar to Baliol). SEP discussed the growing need for quality campsites in the area, Cross Hall and Holme Farm are the two other local sites but are not within walking distance of the town. The Birks Farm campsite has recently been listed in the top 20 best UK sites for wellness.

Permissions – 7 new housing units have been approved at Kings Yard. A developer is being sought to take the site forward.

The Astro turf site development is underway with the main contractor starting mid-February. There will be a need to arrange lorry movements to minimise impact as earth is moved from the site. The facility is expected to complete at end of July and will include local school/ community access.

The Technology Centre at Sedbergh School has been approved and commitment remains despite a funding gap. Current cost is estimated at £8m with expectation that it will be delivered 2025/26 academic year. This will enable new educational curriculum delivery at Sedbergh, giving the school an edge in a competitive market. Community access/ creative hub for business is key. (NB: in view of the planning permission for this project SEP may need to review/ update any proposed bid to SPF2.)

5. Projects (delivery of Growth Framework)

Nursery – Claire Robinson provided an overview of the new Speckled Hen nursery, set to open in April at Memorial Lodge opposite the Spar. CR has been looking at childcare services since the closure of the main local childminder in 2020.

The search for staff is underway and this project provides excellent opportunities for apprenticeships for local pupils, helping young people with their skills progression and career. The demand for nursery places is present but it will have a small start with 20 full time places available. The nursery has a 3yr lease on the building and hopefully growing numbers will mean a move to bigger premises in the town.

Discussion took place regarding drop off points, safe crossing points and staggered start times. **ACTION: JG/ NC** to flag new development with CCC Highways and request potential traffic safety measures such as a speed indicator. The area could be busy, particularly with the new housing development, **ACTION: SB** to look at S278 agreement to see if there is any funding earmarked for traffic calming or safe crossing points.

CR has started to let local parents know of child places (primarily 0-3ys) and will be publishing admission policy. Will officially open waiting list/ places when staffing has been secured.

Wraparound – the after school/ breakfast club care at the Primary School is still available but take up is small. Need to encourage keeping this offer to help working parents but may need to rethink closing times as 5:00 PM is quite early when compared to other schools. There could be a positive knock-on effect with the opening of a nursery.

Parking - SPC provided a short update on parking. The parking strategy is in drafting stage and an application is in for electric vehicle charging for government funds, awaiting answer. May need to renew the quotes.

Business Portal – Need to promote the site, use forum regularly and promote via social media. Many hours have gone into this - important that the uptake is there.

6. Any other business

- There is a pressing need to support local businesses -use it or lose it. There is a poster campaign running in the windows on Main Street but more is needed. Feedback on further ideas and provision much valued, **ACTION: All** to share ideas with DW.
- Town Twinning meetings have taken place recently and the AGM is on 16 March. Members are planning a visit to Zrece in May 2023. Plans progressing for Zrece students to come to Sedbergh in October and student exchange in February 2024. The support and participation of both Settlebeck and Sedbergh School is most welcome. Communication ongoing regarding visa recruitment options with the deputy ambassador. **ACTION: ALL** consider joining the visit to Slovenia in May – it will be an excellent informative experience.

Next meeting 11am, Friday 17 March at the Hirst Centre, Sedbergh