

Sedbergh Economic Partnership – Meeting Notes

11am, 17 March 2023

Attending: Andrew Cobb (Chair), Joanne Golton, Matt Williams (SLDC), James Ratcliffe, Tony Reed-Screen, Sam Butcher (SLDC), Janey Hassam (SPC), Chris Woods, Sarah Campbell, Cllr Nick Cotton, Tony Roberts, John Barraclough, Peter Stockton, Libby Bateman, Jim Atkins, Claire Huggonson

Apologies: Ian MacPherson, Peter Marshall, Carol Moffat, Gillian Holmes (CCC), Cllr Robin Ashcroft, Debbie Richardson, Francine Bult, Debbie Wilson, Cllr Hazel Hodgson, Cllr Kevin Lancaster, Suzie Pye

1. Welcome and Actions

- AC welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- Sedbergh's new day nursery, Speckled Hen, is hosting a second open day on the 25th of March. The first one, earlier this month, was well attended. Demand expected to outstrip supply and the admissions policy is to be updated and all local families are eligible for a place. The new nursery is expected to open at the end of April.
- Sedbergh Primary have reported steady numbers for their wrap-around care offer of breakfast club and after-school club. Sedbergh Community Trust provided funding to support the initiative, this has enabled the school to commit to providing wrap-around care for a second year, but they will need extra funding if numbers do not increase. TRS has provided Gill Holmes' contact details to school as CCC may be able to help.
- The gap finance needed to secure affordable home delivery at the Station Road site was approved by Homes England. This means Broadacre Homes will be able to deliver the number of affordables originally forecast, once threatened by inflationary costs. Homes England may introduce own controls to make sure the affordables are delivered. There has been no news from Broadacre on take up or completion dates.
- The town twinning AGM was held last night and a new committee are in place. Plans to visit Zrece in May have been shelved due to lack of numbers, but there will hopefully be a visit from Slovenia during October half-term. The potential for business opportunities, particularly around hospitality and staffing, is high.
- JG has spoken with the recruitment team at Sedbergh School and local job fair to be arranged, plus one elsewhere in the district.
- Farfield Mill site discussion, regarding the adjacent buildings, still to be arranged.
- Councillor Brook visit to follow up, confirmed that Cllr Brook will take the economy portfolio as well as Leader role under new authority. Need to invite him to come to SEP on regular basis along with Cllrs Hodgson and Mitchell.
- Section 278 contribution of £12500 for the Station Roadworks confirmed. NC kindly shared proposals from Highways engineers which include narrow pavements signs and slow signs on the highway. Alternative proposed schemes are welcome, providing they meet the budget. Opportunity exists to match fund for a larger project with potential monies from the school. Money must be spent from the new housing site to the Spar area. Parish Council due to meet with local highways engineer. **ACTION: ALL** - please share thoughts on traffic and highways in Sedbergh with Janey. (For information, zebra crossings cost approximately £30,000). Would be useful to see Highways plans for Sedbergh for the next financial year, **ACTION: Janey** to enquire during visit.

2. Reorganisation

The new WFC council comes into force on 1st April and means existing ward councillors and county representatives will be finishing. Many thanks to Cllr Nick Cotton (and Cllr Robin Ashcroft) for attending and for his help and he is encouraged to not leave us completely.

The new WFC Council representatives will be Cllr Ian Mitchell and Cllr Hazel Hodgson – both will receive invitations to attend SEP. The new Chief Executive of Westmorland and Furness Council is Sam Plum, with Allison Hatcher as her Vice Chief-Exec. The Director for Thriving Places is Angela Jones and the Assistant Director for Inclusivity and Green Growth (e.g. planning, economic development, local plan) is Gareth Candlin. Matt confirmed that both he and Sam will continue to be involved in the Sedbergh Economic Partnership. **ACTION: MW** to share the new council structure and the new council plan. Thriving communities could be another link area as it includes culture and leisure. **ACTION: MW/ JG** to arrange future meetings with senior officers.

3. Events

Sheepfest – it will be held on the 26 August and will include a trail, British wool fair, activities for children, livestock visit, a bus loop to Farfield Mill and Peoples Hall. St. Andrews will be open, there will be a music festival area at the Black Bull, an artisan market, and window displays. This is bank holiday weekend so Sedbergh will be exceptionally busy and additional car parking will need to be secured.

Other events – the Artisan Markets will be held between Easter and August; Finkle St Fun and the Church Fair are on 22 July. Sedbergh School will once again be hosting a cricket festival in July. Farfield Mill are celebrating the Mills Weekend in May, Heritage Open Days in September along with a Meet the Makers Day planned for later in the year. An article in the Daily Mail included a visit to Farfield Mill, this is part of a wider promotion scheme with Cumbria Tourism which was part-funded by the Shared Prosperity Fund. Farfield Mill report a good number of visitors this year and may need to look at realigning their car parking as getting very busy.

Cumbria Tourism – staying a county-wide organisation, not affected by reorganisation. Sedbergh tourism potential is big and need to better links with hospitality on event dates, encourage more cross promotion. A further option is to encourage My Cumbria Card town status for Sedbergh which may encourage residents from across the district to visit. **ACTION: JG** to invite CT to next meeting to discuss.

4. Attracting New Business

Focus Groups Local Plan – JG provided feedback from a recent pilot focus group meeting held at AlForno. This featured several staff and students from Sedbergh School and the business owners at AlForno and Zero Pantry. The session was helpful to understand consumer habits and demand, challenges facing businesses and potential opportunities. Interesting to hear Zero Pantry regularly turning away customers seeking takeaway hot drinks. They may look to expand into a cafe in the future. Will roll out initiative and run next focus group with students from Settlebeck and other businesses on the High Street. **ACTION: JG** to arrange with Sarah Campbell.

Attracting new business – new ideas discussed to help invigorate Main St. The Browns retail shop could be used as a pop-up shop. **ACTION: MW** to share copies of SLDC's quick lease (used to facilitate the pop-up shop in Kendal which proved very popular, created a buzz in the town and helped fledgling businesses).

The calls for takeaway provision and the need for a cafe operating seven days a week is growing. The Black Bull will be extending its hours and garden food offer from spring. Coach visitors do come to Sedbergh but there is more room for growth; Farfield Mill is starting to seek out the coach market, perhaps a link up could be encouraged between town and mill. Cumbria Tourism support and guidance may help the situation and perhaps have more links with local events and visitor recommendations to places like Thorns Hall to encourage their guests to visit town.

5. Planning Update

Baliol – the application is making progress; this will be a revised application with more space for employment and affordable housing. YDNP is confident of a good scheme.

Local Plan - YDNP Local Plan consultation #6 is due out on the Friday 24th March. This will produce a set of maps with land for development to include housing, employment, new boundaries for development, open space and will go to statutory bodies and interested partners, such as SEP, for comment. This consultation exercise has a deadline for comments of 12 May.

The maps will cover 33 sites across YDNP for housing. Landscape sensitivity studies will be released then also. A new Housing plan availability assessment will also be published and will explain why sites given good consideration and why some discounted. Consultation gives the public the opportunity to react / suggest new. In the employment land maps, the Toll Bar extension will be included in these site proposals. **ACTION: JG** to set up small focus group to look at in more detail. JG can share the feedback and respond formally.

The proposed sites for housing will look at five or more as relevant to affordable housing. Smaller sites not allocated and dealt with separately. More chance to drive policy that way. Planners would look for contributions (planning gain) for two to five dwellings and one house development would always be local occupancy. All new units to be principal occupancy as part of new Local Plan policy, as already the case in places like Lake District, Exmoor, North Yorkshire Moors.

The current Baliol scheme sits within the existing Local Plan so as a key employment site it would not necessarily be given over to housing if Toll Bar was extended - a longer term view is needed on business needs for the Toll Bar. The permission for the current Baliol employment site will reflect this.

6. **Prosperity Fund**

SPF – SB had previously emailed SEP members to give an overview of the SPF, the fund deadlines and processes. The former economic team from Cumbria County Council will take on the administration of the scheme. Round 2 project calls and criteria are being created with a launch date expected in May. Monies expected to be used to support leisure, culture and business support, possibly town centre interventions. **ACTION: SB** will keep SEP informed, although it is suspected that this level of funding will be much reduced from original thought with a large chunk earmarked for business support countywide. Phase 2 of the SPF could potentially help Settlebeck and Sedbergh School skills projects, the new technology centre or local business support schemes.

Rural SPF – this will provide small scale grants for community and business; this will include capital diversification monies for farmers and other rural businesses. There is £1,337,962 to spend over three years. **ACTION: SEP** to help promote the scheme locally. Expected to be a 50% split for community project/ business projects, waiting on Defra to approve allocations. This could be a good scheme for lots of local businesses.

Also – YDNP advised that the budget for Farming in Protected Landscapes has quite a lot unallocated. This is aimed at farmers helping transition from current to future payments scheme. **ACTION: All** to use networks to let farmers know.

7. **Any other business**

- Key agenda items for next time include parking strategy update from SPC, visitor economy benefits from My Cumbria Card, discussion on Local Plan proposed site allocations.
- Locality boards expected for the old District Council footprints. LEPs are to be abolished as per the announcement in the spring Budget. Local member budgets for Councillors under the new authority unknown at present.

Next meeting 11am, Friday 28 April at the Hirst Centre, Sedbergh