

# Sedbergh Economic Partnership – Meeting Notes

11am, 28 January 2022, via Zoom

**Attending:** Peter Marshall (Chair), Janey Hassan, Cllr Kevin Lancaster, Joanne Golton, Cllr Nick Cotton, Tony Reed-Screen, Ian McPherson, Peter Stockton, Matt Williams, Cllr Robin Ashcroft, Debbie Wilson, Chris Wood, Sam Butcher

**Apologies:** Helen Hoggarth, Jo Mowbray, Andrew Cobb (Chair), Gillian Holmes, Carol Moffat, Nicky Millington, James Ratcliffe

## 1. Welcome and Actions

Peter welcomed everybody to the meeting. Cllr Robin Ashcroft, Cabinet Member at SLDC was welcomed and thanked for his commitment to helping the economic prospects of the town. The group was reminded that the Partnership is about collaboration, effective communication and coordination of effort and making Sedbergh a strong economy.

- Most action items are covered under the agenda. No news forthcoming on nursery provision as they try to establish demand and a business case. However, the submitted Baliol application does include room for a nursery provider (interest shown from existing business in Kendal).
- Electric charging project still being progressed. Janey reports that the Parish Council (SPC) is looking for new installation quotes. **ACTION: J. Hassan** to seek advice from Cllr Diane Jones at CCC and talk to Andrea Burden at the National Park for potential Sustainable Development Fund help. **ACTION: R. Ashcroft** to follow up at SLDC for guidance as they successfully installed electric charges at Kirby Lonsdale some time ago.
- Sedbergh School have installed some EV charging points to support their fleet when it converts to electric. The first electric minibus has been purchased. The School are happy to contribute to charging points at Loftus Hill car park.

## 2. Sedbergh Growth Framework

Joanne went through the updated action plan and the current challenges facing delivery.

- Lack of collective business voice
- Delivery of more housing
- Tourism/ marketing co-ordination
- Delivery of childcare provision
- No public electric charging points
- Local budgets
- Baliol site
- Reorganisation and effect on Sedbergh
- Recruitment issues
- Town offer across hospitality and retail 7 days a week

**Business.** The lack of a collective business voice was being challenged through the creation of a new Business Network and work was underway. The needs to be up and running within the next few months. The Network will include an online business portal, social media channels and a series of socials/ meetings. A leaflet has been drafted and will be shared in person / online to start the process and gather feedback. However, this will take up the coordinator's time and we need to be mindful of that. Monies from the Chamber have been secured to help delivery.

**Housing.** More homes are needed to support jobs in the local economy. New planning applications are going in proposing delivery of more housing but both are at the loss of an

allocated employment site so compromise is challenging. Furthermore, a key problem area is homes for those not yet ready to purchase a house such as rented accommodation or shared houses.

**Marketing and Promotion.** There is a need for better marketing coordination for the town. Joint promotion work, key messages and the need to pool resources to make them go further is to be discussed at the first meeting of the Promoting Sedbergh group, next week (kindly hosted by Howgills apartments). We also need to let businesses know all the events planned over the coming year so they can make necessary arrangements to be open / manage staff numbers to cope with additional footfall.

**Budget.** SEP discussed budgets in relation to the ongoing coordination of activities in Sedbergh, through the Partnership. There are several organisations providing support and noted that SLDC are willing to provide input also. There needs to be more inclusivity in the Partnership with the private sector - increased business representation will result in a good mix of private, voluntary, and public viewpoints. **ACTION: All** to consider new business representatives and advise co-ordinator.

**Recruitment.** This remains a significant issue for the town. Sedbergh School gave the example of 46 vacancies waiting to be filled, across a wide skills spectrum. There are other businesses looking for workers including JMP, Dawsons and DT Close. One local distribution business has offered to fully train new employees rather than try and recruit qualified ones. Employment opportunities for veterans was discussed and CCC have a veteran's champion who may be able to help. **ACTION: N. Cotton** to share details.

Accommodation for new employees is the biggest barrier with a significant lack of housing options available. Discussions were had on potential HMO options which could be part of the solution, specifically at the Baliol site – this would also support young people into employment and apprenticeships.

### **3. Sedbergh Business Network**

Sedbergh needs a collective voice for business now that the Chamber has disbanded. Work is underway to raise awareness within the business community and find out how best to support it. A brief has been written for a portal / intranet option which has been suggested as a good starting point. This would link to other existing sites thus avoiding any duplication. Local businesses have been approached for feedback and key issues are recruitment, attracting staff, childcare (lack of), transport service, and infrastructure. The gateway to the town was mentioned as being important to perspective employees, home buyers, visitors and employers. **ACTION: JG to invite businesses to attend the next meeting.** Joanne will pull together a business directory to share, starting with the old chamber list. It is hoped that the beginnings of a portal will be agreed by the next meeting.

SLDC business survey closes next week, **ACTION: All to share the survey** via various social media channels and contacts

### **4. Planning matters**

**YDNP Local Plan.** Peter Stockton explained that policy / strategies covering each section will be up for consultation from April. There is also a sustainability appraisal ongoing and some policy will roll forward into the next local plan.

No decisions have been made on allocated sites yet, need to take into account landscape, flood risk assessments etc. There are 160 sites to work through before a public consultation. No firm timetable in place but perhaps late spring for publication of early proposed sites.

The SEP will be asked to comment on emerging sites and new areas of policy that the Park will consider, including the High Street, whole estate planning, rural based enterprise, how to facilitate home working, farm diversification.

The housing viability study is expected to be considered at the March YDNP meeting. It will look at the percentage of affordable homes in the various sections of the Park. Second homes and holiday lets remain a major issue.

**Planning applications.** The Station Road housing site, now fully approved, should begin this spring. Applications are in for the Baliol site and for residential development at Kings Yard. The Baliol application does not conform to planning policy as it stands. The site is being looked at to consider material benefits against existing policy action. SEP will respond to the application, **ACTION: J. Golton** to give feedback and summary table as an official response to the planning application. The Parish Council have objected to the application in its current form.

## **5. Partner Updates**

- Community Trust - SEP thanked Tony for organising a successful Christmas in Sedbergh featuring concerts, late night opening etc. Issues remain on when and who is to run it in the future.
- Tourist Information Centre - the artisan markets will be running one per month from May to September. Need to bring together a list of key events to circulate, to help accommodation providers and businesses. **ACTION: P. Marshall** to share School events calendar, **ACTION: D Wilson** to coordinate list.
- Parish council - met recently to discuss the Baliol application and have submitted an objection.
- Farming - Environmental Land Management Scheme worries for local farmers continue along with stewardship schemes. Farming incomes are dropping which is creating much concern to local farms and agribusinesses. National Park are holding a series of meetings for farmers.
- Sedbergh School - Technology Centre project has changed slightly to accommodate rising costs. It is progressing well and there is a new solution for delivery, to be shared shortly. There are staff shortages and lots of vacancies, looking at recruitment promotion. QES apprenticeship scheme with the Studio is progressing well. All weather pitch development is an important project for the school to remain competitive.
- CCC - nothing to report but actions to take away.
- SLDC - survey for business premises end date imminent.

## **6. Next meeting and agenda items**

Fri 18 March at the Hirst Centre, Sedbergh. A light lunch will be available for everybody from 1.15pm for a 2pm start. Tim Farron MP in attendance.