

Sedbergh Economic Partnership – Meeting Notes

11am, 15 September 2023

Attending: Tim Farron MP, Sarah Campbell, Joanne Golton, Sam Butcher (WAF), Janey Hassam (SPC), Cllr Hazel Hodgson, Cllr Kevin Lancaster, Matt Williams (WAF), John Barraclough, Jim Atkins, Peter Marshall (Vice-Chair), Steve Ewence, Chris Woods, Ian MacPherson, Gillian Holmes (WAF), Debbie Wilson, Tony Reed-Screen, Peter Stockton (YDNP), Tony Roberts.

Apologies: Andrew Cobb (Chair), Debbie Richardson, Francine Bult.

1. Tim Farron MP

Useful, productive round table discussion with Tim on issues affecting Sedbergh; mainly transport and housing. Tim aware of the employment situation in Sedbergh, recognising the correlation between vacancies unfilled, limited housing options and no public transport.

Transport - work has been underway to try and solve the public transport issue with a replacement of the W1 service, but barriers remain. Council Cabinet have the £500k Bus Services Improvement Programme and are committed to using it. Money expected to be given to help Sedbergh but legal advice on subsidising public services being looked at. Hazel informed SEP that new sustainable transport policy will be considered by the Council on 4 October. From April 2024, policy expected to be altered to allow the Council to subsidise public transport service.

(Gill advised of a funding report offer to members of the highways transportation working group to tie over the service whilst funding is sorted. The Grant Panel meet again at the end of Sept.)

The Western Dales bus are keen to replicate the current Saturday service on a Wednesday - there are no legal issues as this is an existing community service. The new Western Dales Wednesday service will hopefully operate from 14 October.

Sedbergh School would commit to paying for several seats on an early service to suit the workforce and would underwrite the seats to help support the service. **ACTION: Tim Farron** to facilitate school and Stagecoach discussions, JG to provide contact details.

Suggested that the A2B apprenticeship ticket and 16-18 yrs tickets could be expanded. These are subsidised tickets that parents apply for in advance, perhaps they may open to the public.

Housing - planning law set to change regarding lettings. Conversions to short-term let, e.g. holiday lets, will require planning consent as a change of use, conversion to long term lets would not require permission. This is to encourage the traditional rental market. Estate agents reporting a growing number post-COVID of homes going back to residential use from holiday lets.

Tim reported that planning permission changes are expected April 2024 regarding empty properties and holiday letting. The Council are looking at doubling council tax rates on second homes. There are still issues around Article 4 - Tim notes that the Scotland version, almost similar, has worked but had issues. The permitted development rights extension has raised concern.

Sedbergh needs more home for working families, Kevin pressed the point that Sedbergh is the largest town in the national park and is being stifled compared to other places - would be happy to take the full YDNP housing allocation here.

The Broadacres development is to be called Rawthey Meadows. Initial handovers now expected early December. At present they have released 10 shared ownership properties and 7 open market sales for people to apply, of these 7 are reserved. Broadacres have been working with South Lakes Housing regarding the rental properties and a large number have expressed an interest. Units will

be advertised for people to apply as soon as dates confirmed. They would like to deliver more homes in Sedbergh in the future. **ACTION: SE/ PM** to talk with Broadacre as a potential developer.

Tourism - Chris Woods raised the issue of the review of the core funding grant from Yorkshire Dales to the Tourist Information Centre. **ACTION: TF** to write to the National Park regarding the service review and urging them to keep the support in place.

Ian McPherson has spoken with the Chairman, CEO and Visitor Services Manager at YDNP and will keep everyone informed. Noted that the Information Centre has done very well to keep open with little funding support since it was taken on by the community approximately 15 years ago.

Broadband - Project Gigabit funding has been awarded to Fibrus to connect 60,000 houses across Cumbria. Sadly 1800 houses will not be connected due to service issues and Tim is pressing for a twin track approach to be approved/ funded to enable the B4RN project to step in to work to deliver these 1800. The voucher scheme could still be useful but it may be classed as double funding. The issue has been raised in parliament and Tim encourages SEP to write to BDUK and Culture Secretary in support of twin track approach and to allow everyone in the Sedbergh areas to participate in gaining access to superfast broadband. **ACTION: JG** to draft letter.

2. Welcome and Actions

- Public Transport – for clarification, Western Dales would withdraw the Wednesday offer if the Stagecoach option for a frequent service came to fruition.
- Terms of Reference – revised draft circulated prior to meeting taking on boards comments from partners. New version is theme-led and more concise. SPC discussed the terms of reference at their meeting last night and would like to incorporate further changes. **ACTION: JG** to amend and bring back to next meeting for approval.

3. Discussion Paper – themes

Joanne circulated update paper and there was a general discussion on housing, Main Street, connectivity, business environment, promoting Sedbergh. Many points had already been covered earlier in the meeting with Tim. Other key points:

- Views shared on Udales building and the use of compulsory purchase order given that the property has been empty throughout for over 25 years. Udales and Browns available for pop-up hire for next 3 months. Pop-up shops could help promote Sedbergh and the council could play a matchmaking role connecting willing landlords and shop-seeking tenants, using the WAF Business Survey. **ACTION: SB** to ensure Sedbergh retail and commercial properties are listed on the Council property register.
- Matt spoke about Ulverston and Kendal working on Vision/ Plan for the future. Should Sedbergh consider a similar approach with the expansion of the Framework document to have a more detailed town centre plan? **ACTION: ALL** to give further consideration and discuss within representative groups.
- The town centre area could also benefit from a fresh public realm audit to help identify areas for improvement. **ACTION: JA/ IM** to discuss next steps.
- Main Street needs to increase offer available to visitors/ residents including takeaways and restaurants and regular events/ shopping themes. **ACTION: JB/JG** to set up Main Street Task Force sub-group to identify quick win projects/ cost options. JB will lead with support from MW/GH.
- Discussion on role and importance of 72 Main Street and concerned expressed over levels of funding support. **ACTION: KL/ IM** to discuss core funding at future parish council meeting.

- Sam Plum, CEO of the Council, will visit the town in the coming months – this will help to raise profile. **ACTION: JG** to help HH arrange visit.
- Chris talked about the need for Sedbergh to have a programme of promotion, clearer ‘messages’ to be shared by YDNP tourism, Welcome to Yorkshire and CT. **ACTION: CW** to progress plans. **ACTION: JG** to approach Cumbria Tourism and press need to re-engage, maximise channels (reach) to benefit the town.
- Zrece town twinning visit is expected mid-October.
- Highways officers due to Sedbergh soon for meeting on crossing points (perhaps link to street audit action). **ACTION: JG/ JH/ SE** to arrange.
- Feedback awaited prior to consideration of New Bridge for coach parking - for full site investigation by the WAF Highways team a proposal should be sent to Hazel for council consideration.

4. Planning Update

Local Plan – Peter provided an overview. The review of open space is affecting layby/ coach parking progress. SPC could put in planning permission for a change of use to take it forward quicker; this would also need Highways to provide input. The alternative position is SPC to wait for the local plan to see if the class usage is altered.

Baliol – The planning application was refused in June; JG spoke with the agents this week and it is unlikely to be resubmitted anytime soon. The owners of the site have put it forward in the Local Plan as a mixed-use site with significantly more housing to make it more viable.

5. Council News

Parish Council – first phase of electric vehicle charging points installation is underway in Joss Lane car park. Additional works needed for Loftus Hill car park means up to 16 weeks before that phase can be completed.

Westmorland and Furness – several live funding streams and working groups now set up to make recommendations to the Locality Boards. South Lakeland Locality Board (SLLB) is one of three local boards across the WAF area, our Sedbergh link officer is Gill Holmes. The SLLB has four Working Groups - Children and Young People, Building Community Assets and Addressing Inequalities, Climate Action and Increasing Biodiversity and Highways.

SLLB Funding is to be spent by year end and only one Locality Board is coming up - need to make sure interested organisations know the date and can apply. No applications have been received from Sedbergh to date, Gill currently in conversation with the primary school about funding to support wrap-around care provision. **ACTION: JG/ GH** to help promote this funding to various community groups using Lookaround, local website and via Debbie at the community office.

Hazel reported a WAF bid for £4.5m to Innovate UK Net Zero Living Programme to help address local barriers to net zero and promote networks in communities.

6. Any other business

- SEP has no more funds for a project manager, additional resource must be found. Approach will be made to WAF and SPC.
- Settlebeck School to provide update on intake and current projects at next SEP.
- Kevin raised issue of changes to farm payment schemes and asked SEP to note the frustration from the local agricultural community. **ACTION: JG** to invite Carole at Farmer Network to SEP.

Next meeting 11am, Friday 20 Oct at the Hirst Centre, Sedbergh