



# **Discussion Paper on delivering actions which support Business Enterprise and Economy in the Outer West linking in with employment opportunities for local people**

## **Introduction**

The Community Committee topic will investigate how to support business enterprise and the economy in the Outer West area. This discussion paper sets out the challenges and opportunities facing businesses in the years ahead, and asks the Committee to identify a small number of specific themes or issues that warrant further investigation and consultation with local businesses.

The Community Engagement Plan at Appendix 1 outlines how the local authority and its partners will consult with local businesses to find out their views on this topic. Please note this is a working document and would like input from members and stakeholders.

## **Background**

- The Outer West Community Committee have historically had a great interest in innovative local business engagement, to support business growth and deliver private sector resources and investment
- Outer West Leeds is a strategically significant part of the Leeds Bradford Corridor, because it forms the boundary between Leeds and Bradford. Therefore because of its location Outer West Leeds has been identified as a key area for regeneration and sustainable growth.
- The Leeds Bradford corridor also offers an opportunity to use the economic growth of city centres to benefit the deprived urban areas that lie between them
- Outer West Community Committee have funded the Business Support local project which is currently being piloted in the LS28 post code
- There is also an opportunity to support and elevate proposals previously presented to the Committee for an Employment, Skills and Welfare Priority Neighbourhood Board.

## **Question 1: What influence does the Local Authority have over the sustainability of business enterprise and the economy?**

Leeds City Council services have some affect on the success of business enterprise and the local economy but there are also some limitations in terms of influencing private sector businesses which can present a challenge when looking at a vision for the area.

This section outlines the role of key public sector services on this particular topic.

### Leeds Policy Background

Over the next 15 years the service is planning for growth in retail and leisure spend overall in Leeds. The Core Strategy has a “Centres First” approach. This means directing new shopping proposals to sites within centres or to the edge of centres. The designated Town Centres within the Outer West Area are Farsley and Pudsey. New facilities opening within these centres will help boost their health and vitality,.

A number of issues are regularly highlighted by residents and Ward Members in relation to planning policy:

#### *Betting Shops*

The Government has recently signalled their intention to alter the planning status of Betting Shops. They currently fall within the A2 Use Class, which means that changes of use from other services in that class (eg banks, estate agents, employment agencies) to betting shops do not need planning permission. However, in the future, changes to betting shops from all other uses will need planning permission.

#### *High Cost Lenders*

There is concern that high cost lenders are opening in certain town centres and having damaging effects on vulnerable communities. Whilst sympathetic to the issue, town planning may have a limited role. Further research is being undertaken by the Financial Inclusion Team to explore the effectiveness of other local authorities in trying to use planning control to address this issue. The use of Article 4 Directions has been proposed for discussion, which would mean that any units converting to a High Cost Lender would be required to seek Planning Permission. There are, however, significant issues that need to be solved before an Article 4 Direction can be implemented, and the Financial Inclusion team are investigating this.

#### *Food and Drink*

Planning has greater ability to control hot food takeaways, drinking establishments and restaurants. The uses are separately defined in the Use Class Order. There are often physical nuisances in terms of noise and disturbance from visitors coming and going, noise from inside the premises, parking issues, music, outside seating, cooking smells etc. There can be cumulative impacts where such uses cluster together. Planning control often has good grounds to resist proposals altogether or permit with conditions that lessen the impact on amenity. These considerations are set out in Core Strategy policy which seeks to protect local amenity.

#### *Car Parking*

Many town centres do not have enough free or cheap car parking for visitors. The Portas Review highlighted the need for car parking to help town centres to compete with out-of-town, but noted that it is important for spaces to be available for town centre visitors, rather than being taken by commuters and shop workers. The Core Strategy is supportive of provision of car parking for shoppers and visitors to town centres, but there may be limited land opportunities and the Council has limited funding for such provision.

### Planning – Development Management

Development Management Planning Officers consider and determine planning applications and provide pre-application advice on schemes taking into account national and local policy.

The key material planning considerations that applications are assessed on are include among others:

- Principle of the development
- Highways Safety
- Visual amenity - design, layout (taking into account character of the area)
- Amenity of neighbouring properties/uses
- Landscaping including trees, esp. if they are protected.
- Conservation Area impact if applicable
- Listed Building impact if applicable

The majority of applications are advertised, which can take differing forms, for example site notices, neighbour letters, adverts in the press. Any comments received from the public must be noted and responded to as part of the determination of the application. The submission of an a objection does not necessarily mean an application will be refused.

### Assets

The Council owns a number of properties in the district centres, and services like a library or leisure centre attract large number of visitors. The Strategic Asset Management service is seeking to use council assets in the localities to focus on the following:

- To assist in the delivery of front facing locality based customer service provision through community hubs, pop up arrangements within individual buildings or clusters
- To work with Services to ensure that buildings are fit for purpose for both staff and visitors
- To use the council's assets to stimulate/assist regeneration, which may be through housing/commercial development
- To rationalise the number of council buildings, through making better use of the retained estate, via new ways of working, maximising space usage and sharing space with the third sector and other government departments via the One Public Estate pilot
- To increase the quality of the Council's investment portfolio

### Regeneration

The main purpose of the Regeneration Service in terms of town and district centres is to help secure economic and cultural regeneration in areas where market failure has occurred. Over the next three years, the team will have a lead role in project managing schemes designed to regenerate commercial centres, to ensure the sustainable development of heritage buildings at risk and to combine these aspirations into heritage-led area regeneration schemes.

The team's last Town & District Centres schemes in Outer West sought to foster economic regeneration and increased vitality and viability through investment in the public realm. Of the 17 centres that were funded two were in Outer West:

Pudsey  
Farsley

Going forward the main activities of the Regeneration team is;

- Work with colleagues in Economic Development to develop a toolkit of actions that businesses in local centres can adopt to respond to the changes faced by changing shopping patterns.
- Where funding and opportunities for engagement arise we will support the Area Leaders to develop capital projects to support the sustainability of town and district centres.

### Employment & Skills

The services provided by Employment and Skills are available to all residents in Leeds but these are proactively targeted at residents in disadvantaged communities with the highest benefit claimant rates. The service is one of a number of providers of employability support and skills programmes in the city including, DWP/Jobcentre Plus and a range of organisations from across sectors.

The service has worked with a range of partners to develop, design and deliver programmes that provide young people and adults with employability skills, work experience and progression into an apprenticeship or a job.

The Apprenticeship Hub was set up in July 2013 to promote apprenticeships to SME businesses and young people as a means to meet the skills needs of businesses and a career entry point and progression route for young people to a wide range of skilled and professional roles. The Hub engages with local schools and colleges to support young people to access apprenticeship vacancies and co-ordinates the activities of a large number of training providers to work collaboratively to provide a coherent city offer and sector specific expertise where appropriate.

The Education Business Partnership, EBP builds links between schools and local businesses to provide creative, realistic work related learning opportunities for children and young people aged 11 to 18. The EBP has co-designed sector related programmes with employers for young people to develop the skills and attitudes needed to gain employment. EBP supports businesses to better engage with young people from their local area and build capacity within communities.

Employment and Skills can support this agenda in a number of ways.

Communities:

- deliver and commission opportunities, in response to local need, to assist people to search and prepare for work. This ranges from first step, informal activity through Community Learning to more structured programmes including work placements and specific skills activity
- work in partnership with a number of organisations to improve the employability offer available to local people
- deliver bespoke application support and specific events within communities, where the recruitment to a business is on a sufficient scale
- promote and increase awareness of Apprenticeship opportunities and support to access

#### Businesses:

- support to develop or grow the workforce
- broker work placement opportunities, providing a 'try before you buy' opportunity
- support and advise on recruitment
- support to navigate the process for recruiting apprentices: including brokering matches, managing the administration of hiring and employing the apprentice and co-ordination of the training to reduce the administrative burden and the risk to the business thru the Apprenticeship Training Agency, a limited company, jointly owned by the Council and Leeds City College.

#### Ahead Partnership: Business Support Local

We can help local authorities and local enterprise partnerships to take a proactive, area-based approach to engaging with small, local businesses.

Aimed first and foremost at assisting small businesses to thrive and survive by signposting them to useful support, funding and networks, we also identify ways in which local businesses might support the wider area in which they operate for mutual long-term benefit. This might include engaging in schools, offering apprenticeships and placements, supporting local community initiatives and improving their local environment. A localised menu of opportunities can be adapted to meet area needs and ensure that businesses can play a full part in delivering local improvements.

Research suggests that those SMEs which use external business support (i.e financial, business development, mentoring etc.) are more likely to succeed. But SMEs find it difficult and time-consuming to find the right kind of support, and use it. BSL makes it easier and quicker for SMEs to identify and access the right business support.

#### **What We Do**

BSL provides:

- A signposting service to help local businesses identify and access the most appropriate specialist business support for them

- Peer learning groups - “Board Local” - where small facilitated groups of senior SME people share experiences and current issues with each other, and learn from each other’s experiences and approaches
- Specialist business workshops and other events on topics of interest to SMEs, such as accessing finance, sales and marketing, use of social media, protecting your brand and managing people

The first BSL programme is a locally-run programme led by Ahead Partnership in conjunction with Leeds City Council, Leeds, York & North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce and Leeds University Business School, to support small businesses across Outer West Leeds, (Wortley, Farnley, Calverley, Farsley & Pudsey).

**Question 2: What are the themes or issues to take forward for further analysis?**

The Community Committee is asked to consider the opportunities and challenges in this paper and identify a small number of themes or issues to take forward for further analysis and community consultation.