

Community Board – North West Chilterns

Economic Regeneration

Briefing Report

Introduction

The Briefing Report submitted for the Community Board meeting of 30th September 2020, identified two cases that the Economic Regeneration Subgroup should consider, being:

- Recovery from the effects of the COVID Spring lockdown
- Short and midterm regeneration of business in our towns and villages.

Sadly at this time it has become necessary to implement another lockdown which hampers the scope of action we can take but provides an opportunity to consider which actions could be taken now and what might be implemented when the opportunity arises.

Actions Completed

The previous Briefing Report identified a series of actions which the subgroup would take:

- The subgroup agreed to meet monthly, more frequently should the need arise
- Meetings were held with two stakeholders in the Community:
 - Jacqueline Ford in the Planning, Growth and Sustainability Directorate at Buckinghamshire Council. Jaqueline was able to offer a valuable insight into the strategy and ongoing actions in some towns in the County and the lessons learnt
 - Philippa Batting, CEO, Bucks Business First. Philippa outlined the services provided by BBF to stimulate business in the Community.

Conclusion

Arising from the meetings mentioned above it became clear that:

- A great deal of expertise existed within both organisations that could be harnessed by the subgroup to develop economic regeneration strategies
- Successful projects had been implemented in some towns – there was a need to expand the approach to other localities in the Community.
- Successful projects depended on having a deep knowledge and understanding of the businesses operating in that locality. In some cases databases had been built which not only contained factual information about the business (type, location, contacts etc) but also tracked the success or otherwise of those businesses. Further help and guidance could be provided to those who requested it and supportive action could be provided to businesses that were experiencing difficulty
- There was also a need for a Business Survey, to analyse the needs and vulnerabilities of our businesses. Jacqueline Ford and her team are investigating the use of a QR code for people to scan, which will take them directly to a survey, and in addition ask for their details should they wish to stay in touch. This would be done centrally, with the information provided to each board after. This would also enable the Economic Development Team at Buckinghamshire Council to identify best practice and where support needs to be targeted for future business resilience

- Concern had been expressed in the subgroup about the fate of village amenities such as pubs, shops, community centres. BBF were able to provide a connection to the More than a Pub organisation which might provide assistance in some cases
- The subgroup considered an application for funding from Redkite radio. The subgroup approved the funding primarily because in these days of lockdown the radio station provided a vital link to people, particularly the elderly and infirm, who might be obliged to self-isolate.
- The subgroup would work to follow up on the lessons learnt.

Teif Jones

Chair of the subgroup

19th November 2020