

North West Chilterns Community Board
Economic Regeneration Action Group
Briefing Report for Community Board Meeting on 27th July 2022

Purpose: This report provides a brief overview of the work undertaken by the Action Group since the Community Board Meeting on 10th February 2022.

Priority Objectives: The Action Group have updated their objectives which are as follows:

- To seek schemes and initiatives that support local businesses (urban and rural).
- To prioritise schemes and initiatives that help achieve the Council's Climate Change and Air Quality Strategy.
- To consider any adhoc application in regards to Economic Regeneration.

Action Group: The group continue to meet regularly. Recent work and projects planned/discussed have included:

- **Risborough Area Community Bus:** This local bus has provided local services to Princes Risborough and the surrounding areas for over 10 years. It has provided much needed transport to the elderly particularly those without their own transport.

Prior to covid the passenger numbers were up to 2000 per month and brought much needed footfall and income to the town centre. Post covid restrictions passenger numbers have dropped by about 50%. The income to both the Bus and the Town Centre is considerable.

The Bus needs to attract new passengers and indeed a younger age profile to provide longevity to both the bus operation and town centre business viability. The Community Board awarded funding on 8th June 2022 to deliver a social media campaign over a three month period to attract younger passengers.

- **Visit Buckinghamshire (VB) – Marketing and Promoting “Local”:** Tourism is an important element of the economy which was particularly hard hit by the Covid pandemic. The impact was seen quickly and any recovery has been patchy.

The Community Board awarded funding to VB in December 2021 to deliver a project which aims to help the recovery and rebuilding of the local visitor economy. The project commenced in May 2022.

An event will be organised in September 2022 where local businesses will be invited to learn more about this project and to allow some networking between them.

- Continue to investigate other sources of data that evidence the needs of local business, organisations and individuals.
- **Broadband:** As well as specifically reviewing our Boards local needs, we have also linked up with the South West Chilterns and Beaconsfield & Chepping Wye Community Boards, and Buckinghamshire Council (BC), to progress this important service . A meeting was held between all parties on 26th May 2022 to discuss the following programmes which will enable the ongoing enhancement of digital infrastructure in Buckinghamshire. (a brief description has been provided):

- **Bucks Rural Broadband project (Live programme):** This Defra funded programme aims to connect the most rural businesses from below superfast connectivity (<30mbps) to gigabit capable (≥1,000) broadband.
 - **Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme (Live programme):** Central Government provides up to £1,500 for rural residents and up to £3,500 for rural businesses to gain gigabit-capable broadband. Residents/businesses can apply directly to Building Digital UK (BDUK) for these vouchers.
 - **Project Gigabit (New programme):** This programme targets properties that would have otherwise been left behind in broadband companies' rollout plans and prioritises those that currently have the slowest connections. Buckinghamshire is part of a regional group which also includes Hertfordshire and East Berkshire, known as 'Lot 26'. BC will work directly with the Government's delivery agency BDUK, and suppliers, over the coming months and years, to get the maximum investment for Buckinghamshire residents and businesses.
 - **Project Gigahub (New programme):** Over the next three years, up to £110m of government funding UK wide will be invested into connecting rural buildings with no existing or planned superfast broadband such as schools, GP surgeries, libraries, and other public buildings to bring new fibre right into the heart of communities for the first time. These buildings will then act as 'hubs', from which infrastructure can then connect surrounding homes and businesses. There is an opportunity for us to work with local partners to identify priority locations and suitable buildings for these hubs in Buckinghamshire.
- Research into other possible project opportunities.

Chairman: Cllr Matthew Walsh