

Sedbergh Economic Partnership – Meeting Notes

11am, 10 May 2024

Attending: Peter Marshall (Chair), Debbie Richardson, Joanne Golton, Cllr Judith Derbyshire, Caroline Wagstaff (WAF), John Barraclough, Jim Atkins, Steve Ewence, Gillian Holmes (WAF), Jo Moffat, Sam Butcher (WAF), James Ratcliffe, Nigel Close, Paul Thomas, Peter Stockton (YDNP), Libby Bateman, Sarah Campbell (Settlebeck), Rosemary Marsden (CiC), Tony Roberts.

Apologies: Matt Williams (WAF), Andrew Cobb, Chris Woods, Tony Reed-Screen, Debbie Wilson, Victoria Hudson (Primary School)

1. Welcome and Actions

Peter Marshall chaired the meeting in Andy Cobb's absence.

YDNP Strategic Housing Market Assessment – the SEP response to the questionnaire is available on the SEP website.

Business Information Evening – this was held at the White Hart Social Club at the end of March. Approximately 30 people attended and heard information on the work of the SEP, early feedback from the Main Street survey, various grants and business advice available through WAF. The event was well received and all attendees would like more. A follow-up email has been sent to thank attendees and to confirm further events will be held. **ACTION: JG/ SB** to keep sharing information and spreading the SEP collaboration message.

Tourism - some outstanding tourism-related actions will be followed up shortly. Need to work on the live and work message, Sedbergh still very much under-promoted and undersold. Peter referenced the Kendal BID document as an example of plan to promote the town. **ACTION: JG** to progress visitor strategy draft, wider tourism meeting and CIC tourism project bid with CiC and WAF.

2. Main Street

John Barraclough shared the Main Street survey report, providing details on background, shop visits, questionnaires and feedback. 32 shops and businesses were visited along Main Street and Finkle Street and 27 questionnaires collected, an 81% return rate. It was a good exercise for the SEP and was useful to build trust and rapport. There were 136 individual comments - good content for a new task and finish group to work through and prioritise.

There were significant concerns that Main St looked and felt tired with many comments on opening hours, car parking and footfall. **ACTION: JG & JB** to set up a task and finish group and to consider how to promote that to a much wider audience, initially use the business network as a vehicle to drive it.

ACTION: GH will discuss with colleagues at WAF and see what might already be working on. **ACTION: JB/JG** to ask businesses to prioritise key issues and use infographics to share rather than just a report. Sarah Campbell kindly offered to use Settlebeck to send out message to parents and collect feedback from families.

3. Housing

Cllr Judith Derbyshire (portfolio holder for Housing and Homelessness) and Caroline Wagstaff (Asst Director for Housing) attended from WAF. Judith explained her housing background and how WAF want to provide and find housing solutions. The Council is still grounding in, new roles are being filled and work in communities expanding.

SEP discussed need for up-to-date parish-wide Housing Needs Survey and the benefit of an Economic Housing Needs Assessment, which provides information about employer requirements.

Sedbergh School have recently re-run the Housing Survey for employees, with 76 responses received back to date. The school need more accommodation to support existing and potential employees,

approximately 4 more houses. The school already own several houses that they use for staff but also rent local housing stock. Ideally, an HMO-style solution to help single workers would help support the school and also other businesses in Sedbergh. Tony Roberts introduced the survey which included income levels, demand, household data etc. **ACTION: JG** to share survey with other local employers to gather more demand information and to share with WAF housing teams (Stats person: Megan Prian). **ACTION: PM & NC** to pull together further information on demand.

There are 1323 homes in Sedbergh with 170 not permanently occupied (approx. 58 of these are holiday lets). Vacancy numbers remain at 40+ for the area and Sedbergh has capacity in schools, dentists and other support structures to welcome more homes. Sedbergh is the YDNP's largest town and can meet current housing allocations, it is important to keep Sedbergh self-sustaining. Shared accommodation needs were discussed and landlords/ owners should be encouraged to considered making changes to existing property including above-shop storage conversion. Debate continued on the need for short-term action particularly around shared room or lodgings. Consideration for temporary housing solutions to cover the short-term rather than more surveys pushing projects long-term.

With reference to the 100% premium council tax on second homes, Cllr Derbyshire hopes some will return to the coffers for affordable housing.

Station Road site is on track for first properties to be completed on 28 June. All properties have now been released but not fully advertised, just using Broadacres own website. Interest has been strong with minimal marketing and plans to increase profile are in pipeline. 11 shared ownerships still available and 5 open market homes, rental plots will be advertised in next 2 weeks.

Concluded that help is needed on delivery of difficult 'stuck' sites including Baliol and Udales and potential joint ventures/ grants should be made available. The new WAF housing enabler, Jeremy Hewitson, will be in post soon and will attend the next SEP meeting.

4. Planning Update

Following on from housing discussion, Peter Stockton acknowledged the proactive approach to house building in Sedbergh, houses are being built and it is important to keep momentum going. The Local Plans team would welcome additional evidence but plenty is already in place, however evidence will help the case for intervention from WAF etc.

With reference to current housing need, focus should be on working with local landowners and landlords to make efficient use of what we have now.

Local Plan – The YDNP working group are looking at allocation sites (3rd tranche) which should complete by early June and covers the Sedbergh area. Highways information and United Utilities landscape assessments have all been submitted. In July, the informal final consultation on sites will be underway. Maps will be produced to show all preferred allocated sites, ranging from 10 and 50 units in size.

Planning news - There was no update on the timescale of implementation for the change of use class. The residential use class changes will impact on local plan and subsequent housing development delivery.

5. Partner News

Locality Boards – confirmed same funding levels as last year including community grants. The CiC tourism bid due in shortly, **ACTION:** Jill, Chris, Joanne to meet to progress. Gill Holmes is retiring at the end of September and will be replaced by Lynn Richardson, who will attend going forward.

Sedbergh School 500 years – Peter confirmed large programme of events for the school and for the community. Work will soon start on informing local accommodation providers and promoting/ informing community and businesses of the events. School is seeking input on events and how they could support/benefit the Main Street. **ACTION: PM** to circulate more information.

Booktown Festival – this runs 25 May -1 June, lots of events planned. The Sedbergh Music Festival is the following week and includes performances from the BBC Singers and saxophonist Jess Gillam. These events are not yet sold out and SEP discussed capacity to promote the larger events further afield, using the opportunity to also promote Sedbergh. Encourage committees to perhaps push further, collectively promote. **ACTION: JG** to add ‘promote live and work’ to next SEP agenda.

Settlebeck – the proposed Academy trust status is progressing, legal issues (e.g. land) are slowing down the process. It is in the final stages and hopefully Settlebeck will be operating as a trust from the 1 September. The school is doing well and currently enjoys 96% on roll.

6. Any other business

- Rosemary reported that the new bus services is seeing new visitors coming in from Penrith, Kirk Stephen and Appleby. The service remains quite difficult to understand online, so more information needed to be shared. **ACTION: SE/ PM** to talk with Mark Hodgkiss at WAF on Sedbergh School early bus provision.
- SEP will write to the Parish Council requesting re-engagement. **ACTION: JG** to share SPC letter for comment, will be send to the clerk ahead of their AGM.

Next meeting 11am, Friday 12 July 2024 at the Hirst Centre, Sedbergh

Dates for diary: Festival of Writing & Ideas is 25 May – 1 June, Sedbergh Music Festival runs 16-27 June. Artisan Markets will take place on 25 May, 29 June, 27 July, 24 August, 21 September. Sedbergh School will be running summer courses and the cricket festival is in mid-July.