

Economy Policy Development Group Report

2017/18

We have dealt with a number of topics throughout the year at both formal and informal meetings.

Apprenticeships

We received a presentation detailing the new Apprenticeship Levy which had been introduced at the beginning of the year. Employers with a payroll exceeding £3m have to pay a levy of 0.5% of their pay bill. This affects the larger employers in Mid Devon. We will receive a further presentation, of a more general nature, at our March meeting. East Devon College will update us on the take-up of the new scheme.

Mills & Hydro Power Project

An application was made to the European Structural Investment Fund to further this project. Regrettably this bid was unsuccessful. However, there are a number of funding streams to support renewable energy generation activities, and bids have been submitted which we hope will be successful. We have also supported a team of Master's students to undertake a project that will help to advance the development of local mills.

Broadband

Superfast Broadband is an essential requirement for Mid Devon and has been discussed at most of our meetings. It is vital that local businesses have access to fast Broadband at the earliest opportunity. A recent bid had been made to "Local Full Fibre Network" for £2.4m across Greater Exeter. This will enable businesses to receive vouchers to access high speed Broadband. We are also actively exploring opportunities to enhance broadband provision, particularly in hard to reach parts of the District.

Tiverton Market

Tiverton Market has been a much discussed topic over the past months. It was decided that we would encourage local producers to attend normal markets rather than set up a designated farmers market.

In the longer term we will be looking at alternative methods of managing the market to see if there are better ways of operating.

We have agreed a Tiverton Market Environment Strategy, which will assist the market to operate in a more environmentally sensitive way. This will come into operation over the next few months.

We have also hosted a number of events in Tiverton in partnership with local groups. The Christmas light switch on was a particular success, bringing thousands of people into the town centre.

Car Parking

There has been considerable discussion regarding car parking income, with some members of the group unhappy with the current level of charges. There is a general appreciation that car parking does provide an income stream for the Council. If this income stream is reduced the shortfall will have to be found in other areas.

Strategy & Consultations

The group has been leading on responses to the LEP and other bodies, for consultations including the South West Productivity Strategy and the Great Western rail network. Both of these are highly relevant to the economy of Mid Devon. We have also been the leading group in the development of the local Economic Strategy helping to set local economic priorities and a vision for the District.

Townscape Heritage – Cullompton

An application to the Heritage Lottery Fund was made in December as scheduled. The bid is for £1.2m to support restoration of heritage buildings in the Cullompton Conservation Area, and the outcome of the application should be announced in May 2018.

My thanks to the staff who work in the Economic Development team for their continued assistance throughout the year. Also thank you to the committee clerk for her valued assistance.

Councillor Brenda Hull
Chairman of the Economy Policy Development Group