

Meeting Date: 06 January 2015

Public/Private*: Public

Title: **Economy, Enterprise and Housing Portfolio Holder's Report –
Councillor Heather Bradley**

Carlisle Economic Partnership

Following its review in 2011 the Carlisle Economic Partnership set itself a challenging action plan. A lot of these actions have now been successfully implemented including:

- Business Support – Cumbria Growth Hub & Business Interaction Centre
- Business Development – Pirelli and Steads
- Skills & Employment - Knowledge Transfer Project (Retail)
- Infrastructure - City Centre Free Wi-Fi project/Superfast Broadband
- Image – Carlisle Story/Sense of Place branding and toolkit. Implementation has followed through branded projects such as: the Carlisle Ambassador programme, Civic Centre Foyer refurbishment, Tourism Information Centre, GP Recruitment events, Public Realm signage & Interpretation.

The Carlisle Economic Partnership is currently reviewing the action plan and has highlighted two priorities in which to focus its efforts in 2015. These are around infrastructure and skills, both areas which partners feel could be of significant economic benefit. Work is now underway with partners to identify and agree activity.

Durranhill Industrial Estate

Following success in securing £2m from Cumbria LEP, a planning application has been submitted for a new road access from Eastern way and widening of the existing Brunel way junction to improve access to the estate. It is anticipated works will commence early in the next financial year.

Carlisle District Local Plan (2015-2030)

The next draft of the Local Plan – the ‘publication’ or proposed submission draft – has now been submitted for consideration by the Executive at their meeting of the 15th December. Executive will be asked to make the Local Plan available for consideration by Environment and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel with any observations being reported back to a special meeting of the Executive on the 26th January 2015.

Executive will be asked at this subsequent meeting to refer the Local Plan to Council, subject to consideration of any feedback from scrutiny, where approval to consult on the proposed submission draft of the Plan for a minimum six week period will be sought, as well as permission beyond this to submit the Local Plan to the Government for independent examination. The necessary delegated authority required to progress the Local plan through these next key stages in a timely manner will also be sought from Council. If the requested permissions are forthcoming then the next public consultation on the Local Plan would commence in mid to late February next year with the submission of the Plan to Government anticipated in May.

To aid transparency in the plan preparation process responses to the previous preferred option stage two consultation of the Local Plan, including an officer response to individual comments and changes resulting from these, will very shortly be published on the Council’s website, alongside updated evidence base documents including the revised Strategic Housing Market Assessment and Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.

Heritage and Conservation

Conservation and Design Officers from Carlisle and Lancashire meet quarterly across the region, to compare best practice and to keep abreast of legislative changes. On 4th December Carlisle City Council hosted a joint meeting of the group, with the newly opened Cumbrian Museum of Military Life at Carlisle Castle as the venue. Afterwards there was an opportunity to tour the Museum followed by a visit to the Grade II* listed Carlisle Citadel Station. Virgin Trains Staff facilitated access to the hidden and unused areas of this unique 1846 building, discussing ideas for increasing its intensity of use. Its hidden aspects include an abandoned station master’s apartment, unused first class waiting room and dining rooms, an underground staff canteen unused for 50 years and the vaulted spaces of the undercroft, backing onto the Carlisle baths.

Affordable Homes Programme 2015-18

Riverside have submitted a planning application for a site adjacent to the empty Border Terrier pub at Morton Park. This is the first of the four schemes in Carlisle District awarded funding by the HCA in the new Affordable Homes Programme to come forward for planning. This 18 property scheme comprises a mix of 2, 3 and 4 bedroom houses, all for affordable rent.

Changes to Affordable Housing Threshold in Section 106 Agreements

New planning legislation has been introduced at the end of November which means Councils can no longer seek affordable housing contributions on developments of 10-units or less in the urban area, and which have a maximum combined gross floor space of no more than 1000 sqm. This complies with our Local Plan affordable housing threshold in most of the urban area, but has implications for affordable housing delivery in rural areas.

In designated rural areas, Local Planning Authorities may choose to apply a lower threshold of 5-units or less. In addition, in a rural area where the lower 5-unit or less threshold is applied, affordable housing and tariff style contributions should be sought from developments of between 6 and 10-units in the form of cash payments which are commuted until after completion of units within the development. Rural areas, described under section 157(1) of the Housing Act 1985, includes National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and areas designated as rural by the Government.

Homelessness Strategy

The draft final Inter-agency Homelessness Strategy 2015-20 was amended and subsequently agreed by partners at a meeting on Friday 28th November 2014. The multi-agency working group will continue to meet on a bi-monthly basis to develop the timescales within the action plan until the Strategy is approved and published by Carlisle City Council in Spring 2015. Following this a launch event is planned. The strategy will be monitored and reviewed by the multi agency working group.

Empty Homes

National Empty Homes week from 1-5 December profiles the work done to bring empty properties back into use. Through the cluster bid funding secured from the Homes and Communities agency we have brought 54 homes back into use and generated £1.4m into the local economy.

Small Business Saturday

Small Business Saturday was held in Carlisle on Saturday 6 December in an event led by Economic Development in collaboration with the Federation of Small Businesses and Virgin Trains. Local businesses were offered the opportunity to have one of 20 free market stalls, in the City Centre. The requests for stalls exceeded the number of available, however as the station was offered as an alternative, everyone was accommodated.

Business advice and support was available on the day from the FSB, Chamber, University and City Council who also had a presence. Students from William Howard School were given their first opportunity to experience life as young entrepreneurs and found it a valuable learning experience as part of the Young Enterprise programme.

The stalls were grouped together in blocks of four and displaying the Small Business Saturday branding to clearly show that they were part of the national event. Feedback for the event was excellent, with businesses saying how valuable the trading experience had been and how pleased they were with the levels of sales achieved.

Virgin Trains hosted Pop Up stalls on the station, provided first class travel to and from Lancaster for FSB delegates and a free room for the FSB lunch. The FSB used Carlisle as the basis for their principal event in the North West. The delegation of 40 members were welcomed to the City by Colin Glover and John Stevenson, given City of Lakes branded information packs and literature including complementary tickets to Tullie House, Castle and the Military Museum.

The event was an exemplary example of partnership working to support new and existing small businesses in Carlisle.

Le Jog Rally

On Sunday 7th December Carlisle hosted the penultimate stage of Land's End to John O'Groats Classic Reliability Trial, involving 78 competitors from the UK, Italy, France and Germany. Hero Events, organisers of Le Jog, booked competitors and crew into accommodation at the Crown and Mitre (85 rooms), The Hallmark (38 rooms) and IBIS (12 rooms) on Sunday night prior to a ceremonial start at 7.30am on Monday morning, presided over by the Mayor.

The event, celebrating its 20th Anniversary, was held in Carlisle after negotiations earlier in the year, led by Economic Development, enabled all the classic cars to be parked in the City Centre overnight which was an enormous logistical benefit to the organisers.

Competitors and organisers were welcomed by the Mayor, (himself an avid vintage car enthusiast) on Sunday night and were given City of Lakes postcards and packets of biscuits donated by McVities prior to their departure on Monday morning. City of the Lakes pop up were also on display at the Crown and Mitre for the duration of the event.

The event organisers were very complimentary about the help, support and enthusiastic welcome they had received in Carlisle.