

Matter 17 – Economy policies

Issue – Does the Plan set out positively prepared policies for supporting a strong and thriving economy, which are justified, effective and consistent with national policy?

HVV Response

We made our concerns regarding the achievability of Kirklees' economic strategy known during Stage 1. Despite the Council's response, we continue to have concerns regarding governance and transparency. We remain of the view that it would be more realistic to aim for 72% to 75% employment rather than have a fixed 75% target. This would have a knock-on effect on the job growth numbers. We are also of the view that Kirklees' approach is old fashioned and takes a very limited view of the potential for economic growth. A flexible approach based on the realities of the post-recession post Brexit world would be easier to realise, meet the needs of local people and require less land.

a) HVV Response

The HVV survey of local businesses makes telling comments about their views on the standard of education and training provision. We believe that Kirklees is overtly fixated on advanced manufacturing and production, which translates into its policies regarding the workforce. We understand that Kirklees wants to improve the quality of local people's lives and improve their earnings capacity (Huddersfield is one of the lowest waged areas in the country).

Formal provision is focused mainly on young people. Retraining and adult education is now extremely limited and difficult to access. We question the contact Kirklees Council has had with valley based businesses to ascertain their training and skill needs.

The Council's links with employers, particularly micro and small, in the Valley are at the best limited. The respondents to HVV 2012 business survey were critical of the support available to them and this was reflected in the 2016 survey.

b) HVV Response

We do not believe that Kirklees has a good understanding of the rural economy. Its surveys exclude sole traders and the self employed who constitute a significant part of the Holme Valley economy. The Council has resisted all attempts to work collaboratively and has excluded both the Honley and Holmfirth Business Associations from the Economic Strategy consultation.

We can see no evidence of any action being taken in the last 25 years to increase local employment opportunities. Indeed, the Council was silent when a major employer closed.

No action has been taken to support tourism in the Holme Valley. The Economy Strategy states "*Promotion of tourism should be centred on the Huddersfield and Welcome to Yorkshire brands and we should seek to gain enhanced representation for Kirklees within the latter.*" It goes on to say "*A new approach ... will maximise the district's social, industrial and commercial heritage This is well placed to take advantage of the wider marketing and promotion by Welcome to Yorkshire and has a particularly valuable link through the Bronte name. Kirklees again is uniquely positioned ... within easy reach of those visiting sites such as the Lowry Gallery in Salford, the Hepworth in Wakefield or the Bronte Parsonage in Haworth.*" Holmfirth is an internationally known brand and the Holme Valley is renowned for its challenging cycling terrain. Neither merit a mention. Is it any wonder we question the emerging policy in the Local Plan?

We can see no justification for taking Green Belt land for economic use. If Kirklees was genuine in its commitment to brown field first and more realistic in its jobs growth assessment, the need for new sites would not require incursion into the countryside.

c) HVV Response

We have no faith in Kirklees' commitment to protecting the countryside, based on its recent decisions to allow housing to be built on land close to the Peak District Nation Park. Similarly, it gave planning permission to a plan for restoration which the PDNP subsequently turned down.

d) HVV Response

The Council has failed to implement its town centre first policy by approving Aldi's application to build a supermarket in Thongsbridge. The committee gave no consideration to the impact this would have on town centre businesses. We can have no faith in its commitment to implement section 4 of Policy 10 when it fails to implement its current policy.

What Young People had to say:

In the Summer of 2017, 72 young adults aged between 15 and 25 responded to an on-line survey. About 60% told us that they felt as if they belonged in the Holme Valley and it was a really good place to live and bring up a family.

There were no significant concerns about crime, safety or substance abuse.

Generally, people in the Valley were thought to be healthy and happy but there could be more opportunities for young adults to be involved in the life of the Valley communities. They wanted their voices to be heard and nearly half thought that their contribution could be valued more.

Over half of the young people (55%) confirmed they knew someone of their own age in the Valley who had needed to access support for depression or any other mental health care conditions (including eating disorders, anxiety etc.)? This is supported by 90% of them stating that better support for people suffering depression or mental illness or bullying in the Holme Valley is needed.

Most thought that the support of their families was strong but more support was needed for those in debt, and to help carers and unemployment people find assistance including child care, training and work experience. Help for older people and young single parents could also be improved as could help to reduce the cost of fuel through energy efficiency.

About 50% felt that recreational facilities were sufficient and just over 30% thought there were sufficient attractions for their age group. Services, market and shops for day to day necessities were good enough for about 80%. The town centre was a good place to visit in the evening and night life was good for about 70%.

Public transport was good enough for over 60% and local people make good use of footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes. About half were satisfied with the provision for outdoor activities but a third felt that were insufficient.

Being active and having access to locally sourced, cheap and health food was important to nearly 80% of young adults.

Better information is needed for family carers and about reducing the use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs.

About half of the young people thought local businesses had a positive attitude towards young people wanting to stay in the Valley to work. Over 40% thought employment opportunities were not good and over 60% thought they would have to look beyond the Valley for a job and to gain experience.

Nearly 70% thought that better support was needed for those wanting to set up their own business and better places were needed to encourage people to come and visit the Valley e.g. camping and caravan sites. Around 50% thought the Valley should rebrand to encourage more tourism.

The top priority for young people was more affordable and appropriate housing. This was followed by:

- More access to health and wellbeing services, including mental health
- Increased employment opportunities for young people in the Valley
- More assistance to help young people wanting to stay, live and work in the Valley



What Businesses had to say:

In the Summer of 2016 we carried out a survey across the 1,000 local businesses registered in the Holme Valley. 100 organisations were involved in a professionally sampled telephone interview, with a further 147 going online to give feedback via a web survey.

Responses came from professional services, retailers, marketing and media businesses, IT, arts and crafts, manufacturing and other sectors, demonstrating the broad spread of businesses at work in the Valley.

Around one third of those taking part in the telephone interviews thought being in the Valley offered them many business advantages. 80% thought the Valley was a good place to live but a more positive approach to business could be taken by local people.

Most of all the participating businesses had traded for more than 5 years and nearly a quarter employed between 1 and 5 people.

Of those responding, about one fifth had had recruitment difficulties for staff at most levels and about three quarters had no plans to recruit in future. Of those who would be recruiting, they would be seeking professional and technical and operative staff, in the main. Overall, employment prospects in the Valley, including those for young people, were not good.

A significant proportion saw training and apprenticeship programmes as inadequate for their business and for young people. They also thought that young people were not taught the right things for their business needs and were pessimistic about their futures.

Support for new businesses, including that provided by Kirklees Council, was seen as lacking with over 80% believing

Kirklees and the Parish Council were not very supportive of businesses. More could be done to attract new businesses and industry to the Valley.

The Holme Valley, according to over 60% of businesses, needs a strong brand and more awareness is required across the rest of the country regarding the Valley's business and tourism opportunities.

The area was seen as traditional, affluent, creative, static and developing but was not seen as deprived, modern or technology driven.

Co-operation and partnership working between businesses could be improved though about 40% already worked with others. A business hub would be useful.

About half had growth plans and felt that help with accessing funding, developing new customers, improving existing products and services, networking nationally and marketing the business would help.

The lack of car parking affected about one in five businesses and traffic was the factor that mattered most to most businesses.

The other top priorities for all of the local businesses, including the web survey were:

- Encouraging entrepreneurs to come to the Valley
- Improving employment opportunities, particularly for young people
- The provision of education and training for all
- Visitor attractions
- Affordable housing

