

BUSINESS VOICE

Note of breakfast briefing Friday 16th March 2018

Industrial Strategy after the White Paper and Budget - is Huddersfield missing out?

Attendees:

Richard Thewlis (Huddersfield Giants)	Anthony Tillotson (Harron Homes)
Bill MacBeth (Textile Centre)	Ian Brierley (JL Brierley)
Edmund Thornhill (Thornhill Estates)	Julian Wiley (Halo CleanTech)
Carl Sykes (Syngenta)	Prof Bob Cryan (University of Huddersfield)
Moin Valli (Valli Opticians)	Simon Broadbent (Thos Broadbent & Sons)
Lawrence Yates (The Woodman Inn)	Sandra Babbings (Prohms Healthcare)
Lesley Sutton (Revell Ward LLP)	Jason McCartney (University)
Mark Hanson (Hanson Surveyors)	Paul Kemp (Kirklees Council)
Paul Joyce (Ramsdens LLP)	Adam Fletcher (Ridley & Hall)
Gareth Davies (VoodooSMS)	David Antich (CJ Antich and Sons)
Sir John Harman, Geoff Priestley, Jeremy Garside (Huddersfield Choral Society)	

Apologies from Graham Leslie (Leslie Country Inns), Andrew Wright (Reliance Precision & W Yorks LEP), Andy Hobson (Fantastic Media), Gareth Davies (KSDL)

John Harman welcomed attendees and re-introduced Professor Liz Towns-Andrews who in October had presented a preview of Government's work on preparing an Industrial Strategy. With the strategy published in November, and a series of financial commitments in the Budget, we were now able to see what opportunities it presents in Huddersfield. There was also a strong political element to the financial allocations, which strongly favour those areas with "devolution deals".

Liz Towns-Andrews then gave a presentation summarising the White Paper and the Government's stated policy intentions. Of the 5 foundations of policy - ideas, people, infrastructure, business environment and place - she emphasised the importance of place and that Huddersfield needed to build a compelling place-based case. She drew attention to the prominence of micro-businesses in the local economy and that their growth is inhibited by the fact that skill levels need to be improved.

She reviewed the priority challenges set out in the White Paper (AI and data, economic mobility, Clean Growth and an Ageing Society) and the sector deals announced so far or thought to be in the pipeline. These led to an analysis of the likely opportunities for Huddersfield. A copy of her slide presentation is to be made available to members.

In the ensuing discussion a number of specific opportunities were raised. **Julian Wiley** said that though his company was squarely within the Clean Growth sector, it was very hard to work out what support could be available from a range of public sector initiatives. The

proposal made by the University to create a single point of contact where business needs could be "triaged" and guided towards relevant support was a good idea.

Others agreed but also emphasised that the real driver of business growth comes from the private sector and how well individual firms are led. **Paul Joyce** gave the example of Sheffield, which had succeeded in bringing a number of leading manufacturing companies into the city; they and their supply chains had done more to boost the economy than anything else. He asked if anyone could remember a single major company coming into the Huddersfield economy, though a number had grown from it and left. **Mark Hanson** picked up this point and drew attention to the local plan inspector's report which is due later this year - the quantity and quality of land for economic development is a real issue.

Several participants made reference to the role of the Town Centre. **Gareth Davies** (of VoodooSMS, not the Gareth Davies of KSDL who is a BV member) spoke briefly about the Town Centre Partnership's plans for a Business Improvement District. Others asked about how any of the proposals could be taken forward.

In summary, **John Harman** said that a more powerful advocacy for Huddersfield was needed, and that the Council could not be expected to do this alone, given its wider geography and reduced resources. He envisaged a private-public body which would focus on a few key issues and create a positive identity as the basis for the branding and marketing work that others had been keen to support. The opportunity is there this year, given that there are a number of policy decisions - rail, local plan, Town Centre, public investment - that are pending.

He also gave information about the planned evening event on Town Centre, to be held on 19th April at the University, and said that formal invitations would appear in the coming week. This was a good opportunity for BV members to contribute to Council thinking but members would have to take account of the fact that the discussion would be confidential, under so-called "Chatham House" conditions. For this reason attendance would be limited to BV members and their selected guests.