



Place Marketing

Economic Development Officers Annual Meeting

Discussion Summary

The following points were raised during the meeting:

Thinking rural

- About the Rural Services Network (RSN) e.g. seminar programme, conference, economic development service.
- Ensuring rural has a voice in Government programmes designed to boost local economies (e.g. Growth Deals, City Regions, devolution, broadband investment) and in the Industrial Strategy.
- New ideas for working with MPs and central Government (e.g. holding a 'day in parliament').
- How Local Authorities think about rural e.g. area, population size and density.
- The importance of championing the needs and aspirations of our rural communities.

Business in rural places

- Business Improvement Districts (BIDs): the amount of levy collected and how it is calculated, including capping the maximum payment.
- How the natural environment provides local economies with goods and services – and how these can be invested in at a landscape scale.
- If you consult with businesses and provide what they want they won't then necessarily use it – finding out what they really need.
- It's about knowing what the businesses want, keeping them updated, measuring changes in the local economy and celebrating success.
- How to be an attractive place that businesses want to invest in and locate to.
- The lack of careers guidance in schools – schools are expected to develop their own approach to careers advice and find the money to provide it; the fragmented system we have doesn't address the trend affecting rural communities who lose young people who tend not to return until they are older (if at all).

Rural communities

- How do you identify rural priorities with communities (e.g. using data, consultation, setting up a working group)?
- How can you prevent one or two individuals/local groups with a few pet projects driving engagement with Local Authorities?
- How can you build the capacity of local groups to be able to bid to deliver services?
- The importance of volunteers – and how in rural places they address multiple issues that manifest themselves in that place.
- You need to place people at the heart of your vision and place marketing. You also want to use place marketing to (re)connect local people to place.

The changing role of Local Authorities

- A need for Local Authorities to measure impact, manage community and business expectations, achieve value for money and think about what can be replicated/scaled up in programmes and services.

- Moving away from the idea that the Council will 'do things for' communities, to 'doing with' residents – in response to austerity (budget pressures in the short term) and a cultural shift in thinking about how you deliver services differently in the longer term.
- A desire amongst Members, Officers and residents for services to be commissioned that meet local needs and are delivered by local providers who invest in people and place.
- The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 – not just measuring Local Authority contracts by targets and outputs, but also by their impact and the outcomes being delivered.
- Letting tenders based on higher quality and social value not price and cheapness.
- How to spend discretionary funding i.e., on prevention, early action community initiatives?
- The importance of leadership in local government.
- The need to leverage in external funding to finance economic development programmes.
- How can Local Authorities use their assets and advocates/champions to encourage new investment?