

## **Parish Plan Focus Group – Economic**

Notes on discussion held 17<sup>th</sup> February 2005. Present: Ian Brammer, Richard Brimelow, Gary Roebuck, Richard Leigh, Iain Townley, Judy Wilkinson

### **Purpose of the Focus Group Meeting**

To generate an initial set of issues which can be used as the basis of an Issues Questionnaire to be circulated to Rainow households.

### **Discussion Summary**

#### **1 Business Development**

The existence of businesses in the parish was reviewed and it was a surprise how many small businesses were based in the Old Chapel and throughout the village. It was agreed that Rainow was not in need of extra business units and that any such development would best be met by Macclesfield business organisations. Gary has had requests for more offices by individual entrepreneurs but this was mainly due to the attractive location and building he has and the slightly lower costs compared to Macclesfield centre. For young people, encouragement to seek backing from the Prince's Trust and similar existing organisation was seen as more practical than seeking new sources of help.

The introduction of the Single Farm Payment system this year means that farmers are more likely to seek to diversify and will have more freedom to adapt buildings for non-agricultural use. They are likely to need help in meeting this challenge as dual-income farming households become more the norm. Perhaps we will see developments similar to those at the old brickworks at Pott Shrigley (joinery etc.) or the ice-cream business run from farm buildings in Wildboardclough. Selling meat from existing livestock farms is already happening and one farm is setting up a log-delivery service. Could there be a small "farmer's market", perhaps on a pub car-park? The need to support and publicise farm-based activities is crucial to their development and we felt there would need to be a more widely available method of making people aware of what is happening on their doorsteps. This reinforced the view already developing in other focus groups that a community wide news letter/magazine is needed and that the web-site will need reinforcement to allow effective advertising of services and more flexibility. Doing this would facilitate the setting up of businesses and help them survive.

#### **2 Retail Services**

We talked round the desirability and practicality of having a shop in the village. The last shop was not successful but its demise coincided with the impact of supermarket growth in the area; perhaps attitudes and circumstances have changed. Could today's emphasis on locally produced goods and organic produce plus the need to cut down on pollution from unnecessary car travel help a new shop? Mobile shops were mentioned but only fish seems to be sold currently in the village although there may be others not known to this group. The location of any shop would present problems in such a strung-out village - could the United Utilities site present an opportunity? There would be a need for effective professional control of any shop to ensure it stocked and bought the right products; to be viable it would almost certainly have to be staffed by volunteers and it would be necessary to check whether there would be enough support. Market research on products needed would be essential (newspapers, fresh vegetables,?). Could there be some kind of coffee shop/meeting place included? Basing a shop in a pub was discussed but it was questioned whether publicans would have the right kind of expertise and whether a shop within a pub would be acceptable either to the brewery/landlord or to some village people.

### **3 Affordable Housing**

It was assumed the Services Focus Group would look at this.

### **4 Communications**

Poor mobile phone reception was seen as a problem for some businesses (but siting any extra mast would not be easy!) and the delivery of post late in the day was another difficulty. The need for a general village-wide information facility was again emphasised from the commercial standpoint and also to cater for school information. Links to/from the village website were seen as necessary for both these needs.

### **5 Parking/traffic**

This is covered by other groups but increased use of the school by people from outside the immediate area was mentioned as a potential problem. Similarly any retail development could be problematic without adjacent parking/delivery space.

### **6 Re-cycling**

Can plastic and cardboard collection be added to bottles/paper collection?

### **7 Questionnaire distribution**

More than one questionnaire per household in order to get an appreciation of different views within it and perhaps a specific section aimed at younger people was something to consider

## **Summary of Key Issues**

### **Business Development**

Support for farmers adapting to the new farm payment system and diversifying into new businesses

### **Communications**

More inclusive information services on paper and on a web-site

More facility for new and existing businesses to promote their services

Investigation of the possibility of improving telephone and postal services

### **Retail Development**

Investigation of the possibility/viability of setting up a shop including market research into demand for a retail outlet

Investigation of possible sites for any shop

Investigation of existing and potential mobile shop or retailer delivery services

Is there a demand for a coffee shop/meeting place?

Use of pubs as a base for a shop