

ARMAGH CITY AND BANN DISTRICT COUNCIL

THURSDAY 27 NOVEMBER, TOWNHALL PORTADOWN

1. What makes your area unique?

- Diversity – tourism, retailing
- Location – travel corridor, geography & history
- Armagh the ecclesiastical capital of all Ireland
- At the meeting point of the community divide
- Agriculture – e.g. apples
- Scale of land availability
- Accessibility - railway
- Newry-Portadown canal
- Lough Neagh & River Bann – Leisure
- Bronte country
- Apples – Orchard County
- Green space - parkland

2. How can this be developed to give a competitive edge to your area?

- Translate strengths & opportunities (listed) into jobs
- Need to think in terms of the bigger picture, not locally
- Improve road/rail infrastructure within the district
- Exploit potential of land-bank to bring jobs closer to local people
- Improve links to Further Education
- Improve image – positive marketing
- Tourism potential
- Re-opening of Ulster Canal
- Industrial niche – pharmaceutical/food industry
- Sectoral clustering

3. What skills underpin your area's businesses and how can these be improved to attract new business and encourage economic growth?

- Manufacturing hub (2nd largest manufacturing base)
- Direct private sector assistance to local benefit
- Improve links to Education sector
- Review QUB Outreach Centre withdrawal from Armagh
- Retain farming skills
- Work ethic – good critical mass
- Small Medium Enterprises – good skills base
- Need to develop tourism skills
- Engineering skills
- Innovation – new technology
- Construction
- Independent retail
- Ensure funding streams are available
- Tackle educational basics at Primary school level

4. What opportunities might exist to co-operate with nearby towns/areas to improve your area?

- Potential for collective working on arts development – good theatres; also on tourism
- Collaborative working on other themes – e.g. food production
- Niche market opportunities
- Opportunities are cross-border, west of NI, marketing in Belfast – co-operation in business and the arts
- Build new Armagh/Banbridge/Craigavon identity
- Develop clusters/conglomeration – creation of enterprise culture.
- Co-operation with the region as a whole to secure funding for an Olympic rowing facility
- R.P.A. – Think bigger/together
- Shared services
- Develop tourism links between nearby towns of Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon
- Re-open Portadown/Newry Canal
- Change in mindset for wider picture
- Identities within the council triangle of –Armagh/Banbridge/Craigavon
- Mindful not to isolate villages

5. Are there any particular equality or health issues in your area that need to be considered?

- Area Hospital
- Good leisure facilities – preventative care
- Problem of flags & emblems
- Growth of proportion of pensioners – protect their needs with adequate funding/facilities
- Physical barriers – religion & political opinion
- Suicides – young males
- Good health services but need to be more proactive