

## **All-Party Parliamentary Group for Responsible Business Minutes for Roundtable on Place-Based Work**

**Monday 8 July 2025, 3:00pm-4:30pm**

**Location:** Jubilee Room, Houses of Parliament

**Present:**

**APPG members:** Lord Aberdare (Co-Chair)

**Business in the Community (Secretariat):** Laura Dunn (Head of Media and Public Affairs), Polly Dacam (Press Officer), Sue Husband (Community Impact Director), Amanda Anderson (Director of Place, Operations and Strategy), Evie Park (Place Manager), Matilda Macleod (Place Team Coordinator)

**Speakers:** David Schofield (Sustainability Director, Aviva), Julie Schofield (Associate Director of Business Partnerships, University of East Anglia), Chris Webb MP (MP, Blackpool South), Michelle Walker (Place Manager – Blackpool, Business in the Community), Lord Bassam (Co-Director of Place, Business in the Community), Baroness Valentine (Co-Director of Place, Business in the Community)

**Attendees:** Approximately 20 additional senior business leaders and representatives from industry.

### **1. Welcome from Lord Aberdare, Co-Chair of the APPG for Responsible Business**

- Lord Aberdare welcomed attendees and speakers to the meeting and stressed the importance of the topic, posing the questions *Why does Place matter?*, *What can government do to support places?* and *What can business leaders in the room do to support their local communities?*

### **2. David Schofield, Sustainability Director, Aviva**

- Outlined how Aviva looks at sustainability and the belief that they are in a symbiotic relationship with their community. Spoke about Aviva's Place partnership with Business in the Community and how business has a unique opportunity to invest in Place.
- Emphasised that place-based work brings everyone together to work collaboratively and agree the key challenges and opportunities in a Place, whilst

also being a personable opportunity for work as everyone cares about the place they live and work in.

- Highlighted how Place work has increased Aviva's impact through initiatives such as See it Be it in Sheffield, which encourages employers to offer employee encounters with children to ensure that they get the best start in life and a good pathway to a real job. Place has also seen employee engagement rise, and volunteering at Aviva has risen 159%.
- Emphasised that place-based work is also good for brand reputation, ensuring that employers are better at understanding what investments can be made to help create long-term impact which will benefit everyone.
- Recommended place-based work to everyone.

### **3. Julie Schofield, Associate Director of Business Partnerships, University of East Anglia**

- Introduced the importance of community engagement for the University of East Anglia, with many staff and students involved in volunteering in their community.
- Outlined the work of Business in the Community's Norwich Pride of Place Board, working in partnership with private, public and third sector organisations to bring expertise.
- Outlined the challenges faced by the people in Norwich, including the need for skills for the future, lots of hidden deprivation, a disconnect between communities that have and those that don't and stressed that there are opportunities in Norwich that are not being engaged with.
- Explained the work that UEA does with organisations in Norwich to provide opportunities around skills development, such as careers and job fairs, work experience and sessions with primary and secondary school children, as well as how sectors can work together to really make a change with strategic, co-created programmes that will make a real difference.

### **4. Michelle Walker, Place Manager – Blackpool, Business in the Community**

- Introduced Business in the Community's Blackpool Pride of Place Partnership and outlined its focus – to develop a long-term vision for Blackpool, as laid out in the [Blackpool Town Prospectus](#).
- Outlined the work being undertaken by Business in the Community in Blackpool, including raising aspirations for young people through workplace encounter

projects and careers fairs, creating job opportunities to reduce unemployment and working to improve mental health.

- Emphasised the importance of the support, time and knowledge offered by the local business community in making real impact in communities.
- Summarised the next steps for Business in the Community's work in Blackpool – continuing to have further impact and grow business network to engage new members, making it clear how businesses can support their local community and ensuring businesses understand what difference they can make in a community.

#### **5. Chris Webb MP, Blackpool South**

- Explained his work in Blackpool, including sessions in schools and colleges to raise aspirations and awareness of what jobs are available in different sectors. Shared about the job fair held earlier this year – the biggest job fair ever in Blackpool, with both employers and community organisations in attendance.
- Stressed the need for further financial backing from government in Blackpool to solve the challenges facing its residents.
- Highlighted the importance of creating jobs locally so young people can stay local and still do the jobs they want to do, since many students believe that they will have to move out of Blackpool to get the job they want.

#### **6. Baroness Valentine, Co-Director of Place, Business in the Community**

- Shared some statistics about the Business in the Community Pride of Place programme so far, including:
  - Work in Blackpool has facilitated about a £1bn worth of investment since the Blackpool Place programme was set up.
  - In Newport, over 17,000 meals have been delivered to those experiencing food insecurity.
  - The See it Be it programme in Sheffield has already reached 16,000 students in its first year, giving them invaluable employee encounters to open their eyes to the world of work.
- Highlighted that a successful place-based approach is about getting all the businesses, local authority and third sector to support communities and tackle the challenges that they face, with the overarching mission of achieving long-term, transformational change in communities.

- Outlined Business in the Community's inaugural Place Summit, bringing people who care about Place together to share learnings and insights, which led to a Place Network being created, where business representatives can discuss best practice (see Business in the Community's [Pride of Place Learning Hub](#)).
- Encouraged involvement in place-based work, stressing that through this type of work, we can impact thousands or millions of people in a very positive way.

### **7. Lord Bassam, Co-Director of Place, Business in the Community**

- Emphasised the importance of regeneration of communities, in terms of raising aspirations and encouraging people into work, addressing poor housing conditions and homelessness and addressing food insecurity, and the need to be in this work for the long term.
- Called for a stronger partnership between business and government.
- Introduced Business in the Community's Place Taskforce – the thinking engine behind what Business in the Community is trying to achieve in its Place work.
- Outlined his experience attending Business in the Community's King's Seeing is Believing visit to Norwich, bringing business leaders into communities to see first-hand the challenges facing these communities and come up with meaningful, long-term solutions to these challenges through cross-sector collaboration; emphasising the need for business support in communities and the impact that businesses can make in these communities.

### **8. Questions from stakeholders**

#### **Shona King – Drax**

Posed the question: *What are the key characteristics of taking a successful place-based approach and the key aspects of making that work?*

- **David Schofield:** Emphasised that every place is different and businesses looking to take a place-based approach need to collaborate with the public sector to take a strategic approach.
- **Julie Schofield:** Stressed that a successful approach needs to be feel coherent and tangible. Signposted Business in the Community's Pride of Place programme as a good way to understand the challenges in a place but reiterated that all places are different and we need to remember this when taking learnings from other places.

- **Michelle Walker:** Highlighted the need to account for the amount of time it takes to build relationships and talk to the public and voluntary sectors, as this is usually underestimated. Stressed the need for a shared vision.
- **David Schofield:** Explained that a shared vision should be made through collaboration between sectors, rather than duplicating this work.
- **Baroness Valentine:** Emphasised that preconceived government programmes don't bring about the optimal solution.

### **David Saer – Portman Group**

Posed a question about the consumption of alcohol and nighttime economy and safer socialising to create vibrant communities.

- **Baroness Valentine:** Explained that hospitality plays an important role in many places in terms of things like tourism and therefore, many hospitality businesses are engaged in Business in the Community's Pride of Place Boards.
- **Chris Webb MP:** Acknowledged that it is difficult to accommodate all types of tourism, from families to stag and hen parties, and the need to break up the town to contain these types in different areas. Recognised that there is a huge nighttime economy in Blackpool but that we need to ensure that people are socialising safely.
- **Michelle Walker:** Recognised that jobs in hospitality give customer service skills and skills that will be useful in later life, and hospitality businesses have the opportunity to share these skills. Suggested working with young people to teach them important skills such as customer service.
- **Lord Aberdare:** Acknowledged that customer service skills give huge opportunities to young people and other jobseekers.

### **Frances Clark – DS Smith**

Posed the question: *Foundational sectors are pivotal as they are where the jobs are in communities, but these are frequently left out of these discussions. Does the Industrial Strategy go far enough to provide jobs across the country?*

- **Chris Webb MP:** Acknowledged that these strategies do not go far enough and that tourism and hospitality are often left out. Emphasised that there are conversations ongoing with the Treasury and the Treasury is listening and engaging with the conversations, but more needs to be done to build on the

foundations being set. Stressed that growth needs to reach all parts of the UK, not just big cities like London.

- **David Schofield:** Recognised that there is big macro-investment in the UK but acknowledged that investment is needed on a place-by-place basis, as each individual place has its own needs. Stressed that as businesses, we should engage in our places and create evidence-based call to make impactful change.

### **Simon Lieberman – Orbit Group**

Interested in hearing more about housing in Blackpool.

- **Chris Webb MP:** Highlighted that Blackpool has some of the worst housing conditions in the UK. Outlined the work that the Council has done in developing houses of multiple occupation into council housing and council flats for those who are living in bad conditions or with rogue landlords. Emphasised that Blackpool is in desperate need of 1-to-2-bedroom homes, so this type of accommodation is ideal. Acknowledged that investment in housing hasn't been as much of a government priority as it should have been.
- **Julie Schofield:** Suggested that an annual calendar be created for Places, which all organisations can feed into – a good practice database so that businesses can keep on top of what is happening in each place and what is needed.

### **Elisha Mans – Centrica**

Posed the question: *How can community engagement work when you have employees everywhere but no one specific 'Place'?*

- **David Schofield:** Outlined the work of the National Place Taskforce and emphasised that if businesses are clear on what they are contributing in a place, it's possible to replicate a lot of this nationally. Highlighted that as a national business, enabling and empowering local organisations to take the ethos of a place approach to their local community, great impact can be made.

### **Carly Bilsbrough – Bettys and Taylors**

Posed the question: *How does the place-based approach that Business in the Community has adopted fit into the Business Improvement District (BID) approaches?*

- **Baroness Valentine:** Acknowledged that whenever a business goes into a place, there is already things going on there and people who are doing similar work and emphasised the need to understand what the different groups are doing so there is no duplication.
- **Julie Schofield:** Acknowledged that the two approaches work in a symbiotic way.
- **Michelle Walker:** Recognised that the approaches are separate, but they can draw from each other's learnings and help each other.
- **David Schofield:** Stressed the importance of having businesses that willing to step in and work together to shape their approaches and work out solutions together.

### **Additional questions**

The following question was posed: *What about the places that are less likely to be defined as 'Places'?*

- **Lord Bassam:** Acknowledged that it will always be a bit of a struggle to define these places and the place-based model will need to adapt to be able to work in those communities. Emphasised that Business in the Community want to work more in rural communities in the future.
- **Julie Schofield:** Recognised that the challenges that face different communities are very distinct.

### **9. Closing remarks from speakers and Lord Aberdare**

- **David Schofield:** Emphasised that there is much untapped business potential that this kind of conversation can help unlock.
- **Julie Schofield:** Acknowledged that this discussion highlighted that each place is very different but there are opportunities to engage nationally where these places align.
- **Lord Bassam:** Stressed that businesses need to work with government to define where and what the priorities should be.
- **Lord Aberdare:** Highlighted the need to think about whether we can extract any general principles and best practice that can be shared with and adopted by others, and whether there are things that government can and should be doing to support with place-based approaches. Thanked the speakers and attendees.



### **10. Next steps**

- Business in the Community to draft a letter from the Co-Chairs of the APPG for Responsible Business to Alex Norris MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, with a summary of the meeting and examples from this discussion to inform future policy.