

Minutes of a Meeting of the Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 29 November 2005

Present: Councillor Anne Forwood (Vice Chair in the Chair)

" Michael Doody
" Eithne Goode
" Pat Henry
" Richard Hyde
" Frank McCarney
" Philip Morris-Jones
" John Ross
" Ian Smith

Officers: Bill Basra, Corporate Review Team
Alan Bury, Chief Management Accountant, PTES
John Deegan, Director of Planning, Transport and Economic Strategy
Katherine Grasby, Senior Solicitor, Chief Executive's Dept.
Jean Hardwick, Principal Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Dept.
Sara-Louise Lee, Social and Economic Regeneration, PTES
Maureen Oakes, Performance Management, PTES.
David S Williams, Economic Development Officer, PTES.

1. General

(1) Apologies.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Peter Barnes (on other Council business), Mick Jones (Chair), Bernard Kirton and Chris Saint, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development.

(2) Members' Disclosure of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

Declarations of interest were received from –

- (1) Councillor Richard Hyde declared a personal interest in agenda item 3, as a Member of AWM and the CWS Forum;
- (2) Councillor Anne Forwood declared a personal interest in agenda item 3 because she had a relation working in a Council unit.

(3) (a) Minutes of the meeting of the Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 October 2005

Resolved that the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2005 be agreed as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

(b) Matters Arising

None

2. Public Question Time

None.

3. A Strategy for Industrial and Commercial Property Investment and Management.

The Committee considered the report of the Director of Planning Transport and Economic Strategy.

The Council's portfolio of properties helped deliver the Council's economic development and regeneration policies. The report drew together policies that defined the Council's role in the management and development of premises that support its economic activities.

Sara-Louise Lee highlighted that –

- the Strategy was aimed at providing industrial and commercial premises, where possible in partnership with others, and which the private sector might be reluctant to provide.
- Investment had been concentrated around North Warwickshire and Rugby, primarily, because of access to grant funding for those areas.
- In terms of future development there was a demand for premises for micro businesses and start-ups in all areas of the county.

In reply to questions Sara-Louise Lee and David S Williams –

- Confirmed that the density of employment achieved on mature business estates was around 48/hectare.
- Explained, in connection with the reference to the use of "Prudential borrowing (where this was self-financing)", page A15 of 15, that only the Frank Whittle Centre had prudential borrowing and that the occupancy rents were sufficient to service the cost of borrowing. *The officers undertook to delete the reference to "self-financing"*.
- Explained that an attractive package of start-up incentives was used to assist small business. Currently, there was a waiting list for accommodation for this type of business.
- Confirmed that there was demand in the south of the County for small business units and this was currently being looked at with Coventry University.

- Advised that the developments at Stoneleigh Park and Fen End would provide some opportunity for start-up units.

Resolved that the Committee –

- (1) Agrees the policies for investment and management of the Council's economic development property set out in the Strategy, endorses its conclusions, and recommends its adoption by Cabinet subject to revisions to Appendix A to reflect the County Council's modernisation changes.
- (2) Recommends that the policies defined in this Strategy for investment and management of industrial and commercial property are adopted as the basis for the Asset Management Plan for the economic development property portfolio.
- (3) Ask the Officers to –
 - (i) circulate to Members a map showing the locations of the properties listed in the report.
 - (ii) arrange for Members to visit the Frank Whittle Centre.

4. Planning Transport and Economic Strategy Performance Report Half-Year Update 2005/06

Members considered the report of the Director of Planning Transport and Economic Strategy.

The report presented the latest performance update with respect to promoting economic regeneration within Warwickshire. In addition, it contained details of consultation activity that had taken place and complaints received, during April to September 2005.

During discussion Members commended the Department's performance.

In reply to a question Maureen Oakes said that the Department's targets were set at a level that were achievable, realistic and "timed out".

Resolved that the Committee commends the Planning Transport and Economic Development (PTES) Department's performance for the half-year 2005/06;

5. 2005/06 Cost Effectiveness Savings – Department of Planning Strategy and Economic Strategy Department Progress Report.

Members considered the report of the Director of Planning Transport and Economic Strategy which outlined the progress the Planning Transport and Economic Strategy Department had made to date in delivering the required cost effectiveness savings in 2005/06.

Alan Bury asked Members to amend the figure identified for savings, in Table 1, and paragraph 3.5 to read £325,000 instead of £305,000 and, in paragraph 3.3. the figure of £12,000 be amended to read £120,000.

The Committee noted the progress made by the Department of Planning Transport and Economic Strategy in delivering 2005/06 cost effectiveness savings target.

6. Planning Transport and Economic Strategy Revenue and Capital Budget Proposals 2006/07 to 2008/09

Members considered the report of the Director of Planning Transport and Economic Strategy, which detailed the Revenue and Capital Budget proposals for the Department of Planning Transport and Economic Strategy.

John Deegan highlighted, in connection with Table 2 Capital Development Proposals, that the budget bid for the Town Centre Master Plan Delivery would be revised as a result of comments made by Members of the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held earlier that day.

Resolved that the Committee note the 2006/07 to 2008/09 revenue budget proposals and capital programme bids identified by the Department of Planning, Transport and Economic Strategy, together with supplementary bids for 2005/06 capital expenditure.

7. Provisional Items for Future Meetings and Forward Plan Items Relevant to the Work of this Committee

(a) Provisional Items for Future Meetings

Members noted the table setting out provisional items for future meetings and considered the proposal for an additional meeting on 14 February 2006 for the Business Support Event.

Resolved that the Officers be asked to consider whether the Business Support Event can be included in a scheduled meeting, and if not possible, to circulate Members with alternative dates for the additional meeting.

(b) Forward Plan

Members noted the Forward Plan items relevant to the work of this Committee.

Cabinet – 12 January 2006

Regeneration and Competitiveness Strategy 2006 to 2010

Voluntary Sector Consortium

Council – 13 December 2005

Bringing the Benefits of the London 2012 Olympics to Warwickshire

Council – 7 February 2006

Regeneration and Competitiveness Strategy 2006 to 2010-

Voluntary Sector Consortium

8. Any Other Items of Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

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Chair of the Committee

The Committee rose at 4:00 p.m.