

Minutes of a Meeting of the Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11 July 2006

Present: Councillor Mick Jones (Chair)

- " Ken Browne
- " Leslie Caborn
- " Richard Chattaway
- " Michael Doody
- " Eithne Goode
- " Pat Henry
- " Richard Hyde
- " John Ross
- " Ian Smith

Also Present: Councillor Chris Saint (Portfolio holder for Economic Development), Councillor Alan Farnell (Portfolio holder for Policy and Governance) and Councillor Martin Heatley (Portfolio holder of Environment).

Officers: John Deegan, Strategic Director for Environment and Economy.
Jean Hardwick, Principal Committee Administrator, Performance and Development Directorate.
Jeff Marlow, Regeneration Strategy and Europe, Economy and Environment Directorate.
Jane Pollard, Overview and Scrutiny Manager, Performance and Development Directorate.
John Scouller, Head of Skills, Tourism and Economy, Environment and Economy Directorate.
David S Williams, County Economic Development Officer, Environment and Economy Directorate.
Paul Williams, Scrutiny Officer, Performance and Development Directorate.
Maureen Oakes, Strategy Support, Environment and Economy Directorate.

1. General

(1) Apologies.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Peter Barnes and Bernard Kirton.

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

(1) Declarations of personal, non prejudicial interests, were received from Members by virtue of them serving as district/borough councillor as follows –

Warwick District Council – Councillors Michael Doody, Leslie Caborn and Eithne Goode

Nuneaton and Bedworth District Council – Councillors Pat Henry and John Ross

Rugby Borough Council – Councillor Gordon Collett

(2) Councillor Richard Hyde declared a personal interest as a Member of the Board of Advantage West Midlands and West Midlands Regional Observatory.

(3) Minutes

(a) Minutes

Resolved that the accuracy of the minutes of the meetings held on 16 May and 6 June 2006 be agreed as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

(b) Matters Arising

(i) Outcome of the meeting on 16 May 2006 - The Emerging Skills Agenda

David S. Williams circulated a draft report on the Seminar held on 16 May 2006, which he had distributed to partner organisations and other County Council Directorates for comment to ensure that the conclusions from the Seminar were complete. Once the draft document had been agreed the conclusions would help form the Employment and Skills Strategy.

Councillor Pat Henry reported an invite from Jane Malbasa, Job Centre Plus, for Members to visit a Job Centre. Members also noted an invitation to visit Employment Training Warwickshire.

The Chair asked Members to notify him if they wished to take part in the visits to Job Centre Plus or Employment Training Warwickshire.

(ii) Meeting held 6 June 2006 – Peugeot Assembly Plant Closure

The Chair reminded Members that another meeting would be held shortly on the above issues.

2. Public Question Time

None.

3. City Regions, Regional Comparisons and Knowledge Economies

Jeff Marlow presented the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy, which identified the implications of –

- (i) Ongoing work to establish a Birmingham and Stoke-on-Trent 'City Region';
- (ii) The review of the West Midlands Regional Economic Strategy; and
- (iii) An understanding of how 'knowledge economies' work.

The report also outlined the Department's work to date on these issues and proposed future activities.

John Deegan highlighted –

- The joint working of the Shire Counties to establish the advantages and disadvantages of 'City Regions'.
- That if Warwickshire wished to stretch its targets it should aspire to compete with the South East and Europe rather than Birmingham or the Black Country.
- That the proposal was tied up with the Government's aim to give freedom/flexibility for the development of City Regions and that was tied up with elected Mayors (The Government was impressed by the strong leadership given by the Lord Mayor of London). This way forward was not popular, however, with the seven metropolitan boroughs.

During discussion Members expressed uncertainty about the benefits that would be derived by the Shire Counties from the 'City Region' initiative. Concern was also expressed about the possible divergence of funding and support for economic development away from the deprived areas in the north of the county.

Members welcomed the joint working by the Shire Counties and considered it important to continue participating in, and contributing to the current City Region debate.

Resolved that the Committee considers that the benefits of developing the City Regions to be not proved, nevertheless it notes the contents of the report and endorses further work to: -

- a) Contribute to the City Region debate by trying to ensure it has an appropriate economic rationale that is relevant to areas outside the direct City Region boundaries.
- b) Contribute to the review of the Regional Economic Strategy by identifying and promoting the needs of the County and sub-region, by supporting the case that the 'City Region' is just one of several

economic drivers for the region and putting forward a parallel case for an analysis/impact assessment of the south east regional performance.

c) Analyse what is, and how to develop, a 'knowledge economy.

4. Full Year Performance Report 2005/06

John Scouller presented the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy, which detailed the full year performance outturn with respect to Planning, Transport and Economic Strategy (PTES) objectives. In addition it contained details of consultation activity, which had taken place and an analysis of complaints received during 2005/06. He highlighted –

- On page 11, targets not achieved and the remedial action taken to redress the situations;
- On page 15, the increase in compliments and improved recording systems, and a substantial reduction in complaints;
- On page 17 the total net overspend of £174,000 against a budget of £51,330,000, which was mainly the result of overspend on Eliot Park Innovation Centre.

During the discussion Members raised the following points –

- That it was unnecessary to present information in both table and pie chart form.
- Information relating to response to emails was incomplete for the year-end.
- Performance on responding to e-mails needed to be addressed.
- This was an annual report and should have been deferred until the year-end information was available.
- That there was value in exception reporting of performance to reduce the amount of information that Members needed to consider.

In response John Scouller and Maureen Oakes explained that performance reports were produced in accordance with the corporate format. Attempts to verify the outcome on the consultants' findings relating to response to e-mail had been unsuccessful.

Councillor Alan Farnell also expressed his concerns about performance reports, which he said he would raise at Cabinet. His concerns related to –

- the need to reduce the number of reports and for performance to be monitored more frequently than every six months;
- the difficulty faced by officers who were required to report on targets that were tied into the Corporate Business Plan;
- Officers putting too much effort into monitoring performance measures that were not relevant to Members.

The Committee –

- (1) noted the report and Councillor Farnell's comments;
- (2) asked that the concerns expressed about the format of the report be referred to the Performance and Development Directorate.

5. Review of Scrutiny

Jane Pollard presented the report of the Director of Performance and Development.

The report advised Members of the arrangements for the review of the overview and scrutiny function and sought views on the future role of overview and scrutiny and how its effectiveness could be improved.

During discussion the following points were raised –

- That there was no correct method of scrutiny.
- Effective scrutiny was whatever was appropriate for individual authorities and worked for Members;
- That effective scrutiny should be Member led and effectively resourced.
- Overview and scrutiny could do more to help develop policy.
- That overview and scrutiny had a role in challenging Cabinet and should not be used to help Cabinet make unpopular decisions.
- That the County Council's current overview and scrutiny function was working effectively.

Further discussion included suggestions –

- For joint scrutiny with district/borough councils. Some Members considered that this would not be appropriate for all issues.
- That the overview and scrutiny roles could be separated.

Resolved that Members comments on the future role of overview and scrutiny and, changes they would like, be noted.

6. Future Work Programme and Forward Plan Items Relevant to the Work of this Committee.

(a) Provisional Items for Future Meeting

The Committee agreed the table setting out the provisional items for future meetings.

(b) Forward Plan

Members noted the Forward Plan items relevant to the work of the Committee as follows -

Cabinet – 13 July 2006

Minerals & Waste Development Framework: Waste Core Strategy – Preferred Options (E&E)

Minerals & Waste Development Framework: Minerals Core Strategy – Issues & Options. (E&E)

Draft Regional Spatial Strategy Review – Phase One Revision – The Black Country (E&E)

World Class Stratford (E&E)

Cabinet – 7 September 2006

Stoneleigh Park – Centre of Rural Excellence Proposals Phase 1 Site Infrastructure. (E&E)

7. Any other Business

There were no items of urgent business.

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Chair of the Committee

The Committee rose at 3:50 p.m.