

## **Minutes of a Meeting of the Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 30 January 2007**

Present: Councillor Mick Jones  
" Ken Browne  
" Anne Forwood (Vice Chair)  
" Eithne Goode  
" Pat Henry  
" Marion Haywood  
" Philip Morris-Jones  
" John Ross  
" Ian Smith

Also Present: Councillor Chris Saint, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development.

Officers: Andy Cowan, Chief Planner, Environment and Economy Directorate  
Janet Fortune, Regional Strategy and Europe Skills, Tourism and Economy, Environment and Economy Directorate.  
Jean Hardwick, Principal Committee Administrator, Performance and Development Directorate.  
David Hill, Economic Strategy Advisor, Regeneration Strategy and Europe, Environment and Economy Directorate.  
John Scouller, Head of Skills, Tourism and Economy, Environment and Economy Directorate.  
Mandy Walker, Regeneration Projects and Skills, Tourism and Economy, Environment and Economy Directorate.  
Paul Williams, Scrutiny Officer, Performance and Development Directorate.

Invitees: Louise Alton, Coventry Solihull and Warwickshire Partnership (item 4)  
Dorothy Barratt, Forward Planning Manager, North Warwickshire BC (item 3)  
Councillor Margaret Begg, Portfolio Holder (Planning) and John Archer (Officer), Warwick DC (item 3)  
John Ware, Rugby BC (item 3)  
Councillor Stuart Beese, Portfolio Holder (Planning), Colin Staves, Head of Policy and Pat Reid, District Planning Officer, Stratford DC (item 3)  
Nick Blamire-Brown, Nuneaton and Bedworth BC (item 3)

### **1. General**

#### **(1) Apologies.**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Peter Barnes and Richard Hyde.

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

Declarations of personal, non prejudicial interests, were received from Members by virtue of them serving as district/borough councillors as follows

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Warwick District Council – Councillor Eithne Goode

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

## **(3) Minutes**

### **(a) Minutes**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2007 be agreed as a correct record and be signed by the Chair subject to –

- (1) The reference to Councillor Chris Saint in the list of those present be amended to read "Councillor Chris Saint, Portfolio holder for Economic Development.
- (2) The deletion of the names of - Councillors Philip Morris-Jones and Anne Forward from the declarations of interest relating to members serving as district/borough councils.

### **(b) Matters Arising**

#### **(i) Peugeot Update**

John Scouller reported that the Partnership Land Use Theme group was meeting on an ad hoc basis and he would report further on the future of the site to the Committee's next meeting.

## **2. Public Question Time**

None

## **3. Regional Spatial Strategy Phase 2 Review – Consultation on Proposed Options by West Midlands Regional Assembly.**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy. The report outlined the consultation being undertaken by the West Midlands Regional Assembly (WMRA) on its proposed option for Phase 2 of the Review of the Regional Spatial Strategy, covering district level housing growth figures, employment land, waste and some aspects of transport. The eight-week consultation period was from 8<sup>th</sup> January – 5<sup>th</sup> March 2007. A report was being made to Cabinet on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2007 recommending a response to

the consultation. Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee was requested to take an overview of the proposed options and advise Cabinet on its conclusions.

The Chair welcomed the district and borough councillors and officers to the meeting and invited them to participate in the debate.

During discussion John Ware (Rugby BC) highlighted his concerns relating to –

- The engagement of stakeholders and the public in this consultation document and the need to consider how to address this when it became public.
- Option 3 because this proposal would double the size of Rugby without consideration of the support services/facilities that would be needed to accommodate this increase.
- The need to assess what level of increase might be acceptable and would be welcomed in terms of the increased benefits that would be generated.

He added that officers would be looking at this issue through the CSWF to give a sub-regional response.

Members considered that option 2 should be supported as the most suitable option but added their concerns relating to the impact that any increase in housing development would have on the road infrastructure, sewer systems, drainage, flood levels, and school and hospital provision.

In reply to questions and concerns Andy Cowan explained that more growth generated many gains and benefits. He referred to a past example of the Black Country rejecting growth and, as a consequence, had lost out economically over the last 10 years.

John Archer reported that Warwick District Council had not yet established its position but supported Rugby BC's concerns about capacity and supported the process outlined by Andy Cowan in his report.

Nick Blamire-Brown reported that Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council O & S Committee would be considering the consultation document on 19 February 2007 and Cabinet on 28 February 2007. It was recognised that growth was needed but the key issues of concern were the supporting infrastructure and the release of greenfield sites. The Nuneaton and Bedworth BC O & S Committee and Cabinet would need to consider the level of growth that could be accommodated without changing the character of the towns and taking account the level of unemployment in the area.

Councillor Stuart Beese said that most of the points he wished to raise had been covered but said that Stratford-on-Avon had seen a rapid growth in housing and had brought on a huge risk in terms of changing the appearance of

a town where tourism was key to the economy of the area. He supported option 2 and some of option 3 but his concerns related to the seasonal and low paid nature of employment in Stratford and building houses where there were many migrant workers. Some small villages, however, did need more housing and affordable housing.

Dorothy Barratt reported that North Warwickshire Borough Council would be considering the consultation document on 22 February 2007. She highlighted the need to achieve the right balance of housing development in relation to the level of employment and not to raise expectations about new development (there was pressure for housing in Tamworth).

The Committee agreed that option 2 should be supported, with reservations, and that –

(1) Cabinet should be asked to endorse the comments set out in the Strategic Director's report and, in particular, the overview set out in the conclusions.

(2) In adopting this overview, it should be emphasised that:

- (i) 'infrastructure' includes the support facilities needed by communities, especially health and education services, as well as transport and drainage facilities, and
- (ii) the West Midlands Regional Assembly needs to scrutinise even more closely the capacity of the major urban area (MUAs) to take further housing growth within their boundaries to ensure that the Regional Spatial Strategy's 'step-change' is delivered as intended.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting and participating in the debate, which he considered had been extremely useful.

#### **4. Review of the Regional Economic Strategy 2006/7**

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy.

Advantage West Midlands had published a consultation document on policy choices about which they, their partners and other stakeholders were using to make decisions to help determine the shape and direction of the next Regional Economic Strategy. The consultation phase was the third in a planned five-stage review process and closed on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2007. This paper reviewed the document and proposed an appropriate response.

David Hill highlighted that the West Midlands' regional economy was underperforming significantly, creating a £10 billion output gap and said that, if the regional economy were to perform to levels similar to the UK average, it would be £10 billion richer. Without new interventions, this underperformance was predicted to continue and increase over the next 10 years. He added that

Coventry, Warwickshire and Solihull were the most productive in relation to the West Midlands but was less productive than the rest of the UK.

Following discussion Members highlighted their concerns about the underperformance of West Midlands and the need for retraining opportunities for skilled workers.

The Committee–

1. Noted the progress to date in the review of the West Midlands Economic Strategy undertaken by Advantage West Midlands, specifically relating to the current phase of consultation on policy choices and to include more emphasis on “Training for Skilled Workers”.
2. Asked for the 1<sup>st</sup> draft of the response to be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee.

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

**(a) Provisional Items for Future Meeting**

The Committee noted the provisional items for future meetings.

**(b) Forward Plan items Relevant to the Work of this Committee**

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

**6. Any other Business**

None

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Chair of the Committee

The Committee rose at 4:15 p.m.