

Minutes of a Meeting of the Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 19 December 2006

Present: Councillor Mick Jones
" Ken Browne
" Michael Doody
" Ann Forwood (Vice Chair)
" Eithne Goode
" Pat Henry
" Richard Hyde
" Philip Morris-Jones
" John Ross
" Ian Smith

Officers: Robert Godfrey, Bayton Road Business Resource Centre Manager, Environment and Economy Directorate
Jean Hardwick, Principal Committee Administrator, Performance and Development Directorate.
Jane Pollard, Scrutiny Manager, Performance and Development Directorate.
John Scouller, Head of Skills, Tourism and Economy, Environment and Economy Directorate.
Roy Shearing, Principle Business Support Officer, Environment and Economy Directorate.
Paul Williams, Scrutiny Officer, Performance and Development Directorate.

Also Present: Councillor Chris Saint, Portfolio Holder for Environment.
Ceri Pilowski, Newcastle under Lyme Borough Council

1. General

Welcome: The Chair welcomed Ceri Pilowski, who was attending the Committee as an observer, accompanied by Jane Pollard, Scrutiny Manager.

(1) Apologies.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Peter Barnes

(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 councillors as follows –

Warwick District Council – Councillors Michael Doody

Nuneaton and Bedworth District Council – Councillors Ann Forwood, Pat Henry and John Ross

Rugby Borough Council – Councillor Philip Morris-Jones

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

(3) Minutes

(a) Minutes

Resolved that the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2006 be agreed as a correct record and be signed by the Chair subject to –

- (1) the figure “£5m” being amended to read £1.5m in paragraph (3) of minute 4, Environment and Economy-Half Year Performance Report.
- (2) Councillor Chris Saint being added to the list of those present.

(b) Matters Arising

- (i) Minute 4, Environment and Economy Directorate – Half-Year Performance Report.

In reply to a question from Councillor Philip Morris-Jones, John Scouller undertook circulate details of the categories and numbers of people of working age not in employment.

- (ii) Peugeot Update

John Scouller reported that he had attended a meeting three weeks previously with Peugeot representatives where he had been told that the Ryton site would be vacated sooner than had been originally indicated and that this would take place within the next three months. Additionally, he had been told that Peugeot was also no longer interested in partnership working on the future of the site. It was the County Council’s intention, however, to work with Rugby Borough Council on a planning framework for the future development of the site for employment use.

The Chair registered his disappointment at Peugeot’s decision and asked for a further update on the Ryton site at the March 2007 meeting, or earlier if any other major changes came to light.

John Scouller undertook to report to future meetings of the Committee as requested and to include details of any development on Peugeot’s Humber Road site, Coventry.

2. Public Question Time

None

3. The HUB – Bayton Road Industrial Estate Focus (BRIEF) (Bedworth).

Robert Godfrey presented the report of the Strategic Director for Environment and Economy, which summarised the successes of the BRIEF programme and plans for the future.

In reply to questions Robert Godfrey and Roy Shearing explained that –

- (1) funding of business support extended into the Coventry and North Warwickshire Regeneration Zone and was not restricted to the Bayton Road Industrial Estate.
- (2) incubation support focussed on enabling people into self-employment and start-up, in order to gain experience running their own business before entering into commitment with larger premises such as Eliot Park Innovation Centre and managed workspace.
- (3) the North Warwickshire and Hinckley College would work with the HUB in developing a Technology Centre of Excellence on Bayton Road, serving a wider area.

The Committee –

- (1) noted the positive End of Project Evaluation report for the Bayton Road Industrial Estate Focus (BRIEF) Programme and plans for continued support on the Estate.
- (2) thanked Robert Godfrey for his presentation.

4. Warwickshire Rural Strategy – Nomination of Members to Working Group

The Committee considered the report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development. Members were asked to nominate a representative from each of the three party groups to the joint Working Group that was being set up with the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee to steer development of the County Council's Rural Strategy.

Discussion focussed on whether substitutes should be allowed, in the event that the nominated Members were unable to attend the Working Group. Members expressed the view that the substitutes could be briefed by the nominated representative in the event that they were unable to attend. Other Members expressed the view that if substitutes were allowed this would have a detrimental impact on the continuity and effectiveness of the Working Group.

The Committee–

- (1) agreed to appoint Councillors Peter Barnes, Ann Forwood and Philip Morris-Jones to the Warwickshire Rural Strategy Working Group.
- (2) noted that, in the event of a Member becoming incapacitated, then a replacement could be nominated.
- (3) noted that the Economic Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 18 January 2007 would be asked to appoint three Members to the Working Group.

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

(a) Provisional Items for Future Meeting

Members considered the provisional items for future meetings. Councillor Richard Hyde suggested that the Committee should consider the AWM's Regional Economic Strategy consultation document, which he considered should be an item that was high on the Committee's agenda. Roy Shearing explained that the consultation currently being carried out by AWM was aimed at shaping policy and had a response date of 28 February 2007. The draft Regional Economic Strategy would then go out for consultation between May-July 2007 with agreement of a final Strategy anticipated for September 2007.

Following discussion the Committee agreed the revisions to the future work programme as listed below:

- (1) The future of the Marconi Site (date to be determined).
- (2) Peugeot Update – 27 March 2007 meeting (earlier if circumstances change).
- (3) AWM "policy shaping" consultation on Regional Economic Strategy - 30 January 3007.

(b) Forward Plan

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

6. Any other Business

None

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The Committee rose at 3:30 p.m.

Chair of the Committee