

REGENERATION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Wednesday, 27 April 2011 at 6.00 p.m. at the Council House

In a Conference Room at the Council House, Walsall

Panel Members Present:

- Councillor D. Pitt (Chair)
- Councillor D. Anson (Vice-Chair)
- Councillor I. Azam
- Councillor L. Harrison
- Councillor L. Jeavons
- Councillor B. Thomas

Officers Present:

- Tim Johnson - Executive Director (Regeneration)
- Mark Lavender - Head of Strategic Regeneration
- Andrea Potts - Head of Housing
- David Lockwood - Housing Standards and Improvement Manager
- Kirsten Moon - Child Poverty Reduction Programme Manager
- Liz Connolly - Strategic Regeneration Officer
- Stephen Rowley - Energy Efficiency Officer
- Mandy Findlay - Energy Efficiency Officer
- Craig Goodall - Scrutiny Officer

75/10 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Coughlan, S. Coughlan and B. Twedde.

76/10 SUBSTITUTIONS

Councillor L. Jeavons substituted for Councillor S. Coughlan. Councillor B. Thomas substituted for Councillor D. Coughlan.

77/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or party whip for the duration of the meeting.

78/10 MINUTES

The Scrutiny Officer reported that there had been a minor editorial change to the minutes printed in the agenda.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting, as amended, held on 17 March 2011, a copy having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

79/10 LOCAL ECONOMIC ASSESSMENT

The Panel received the latest information and developments with regard to development of the Local Economic Assessment (LEA) as required by the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

The Head of Strategic Regeneration presented the Panel with a summary of the LEA (tabled) and highlighted the key points from the following areas:

- Economic geography;
- People and communities;
- Business and enterprise;
- Sustainable economic enterprise;
- Economic competitiveness.

The Panel were provided with an overview of the Council's child poverty strategy entitled "Creating economic prosperity for families, children and young people in Walsall". The Child Poverty Reduction Programme Manager highlighted how child poverty was assessed, the long term impact of child poverty on individuals and the four priorities identified to tackle the issue moving forward.

The following are the principle points from the ensuing discussion:

- Members recognised the picture of Walsall that the LEA painted and the chair encouraged them to read the LEA in full, which was an excellent piece of work
- Members felt it was extremely important to retain the borough's existing large employers. It was reported that the LEA had identified 100 important local businesses and the intention was to work to retain them within the borough. The Executive Director (Regeneration) had recently met with Homeserve to encourage the company to stay and further expand their operations in Walsall;
- Members questioned and were informed, that if the option was pursued, it would take around two years from the granting of planning permission to complete open cast mining to extract any coal present within the Darlaston Strategic Development Area. Once this was complete, the site could be remediated and developed as employment land;
- Members agreed that an holistic approach with all partners was required to tackle child poverty and worklessness, asking officers to report back.

RESOLVED:

THAT:

- 1. progress to date with completing the local economic assessment be noted;**
- 2. the five draft economic priorities in the economic framework be noted;**
- 3. the child poverty strategy be noted;**
- 4. the business enterprise consultation be noted;**

5. **the Panel receive a report at a future meeting on the feedback received on the Local Economic Assessment / Child Poverty Strategy and the Worklessness agenda, from the planned multi-agency consultative groups;**

and;
6. **local Ward Councillors be kept fully informed of developments regarding ongoing developments at the Darlaston strategic development area;**

80/10 CREATING BUSINESS IN WALSALL

The Panel received the following report and recommendations of the Business Start Up Working Group creating business in Walsall (annexed). The Chair presented the report to the Panel highlighting the principle conclusions and recommendations.

With regard to the Working Group recommendation to create incubator units for new businesses, it was suggested that newly vacated Council offices could be used to kickstart the recommendation.

RESOLVED:

THAT:

1. **the final report and recommendations of the Business Start Up Working Group be approved and submitted to Cabinet;**

and;
2. **the Panel review the outcome of Cabinet's response and review progress with the implementation of the Working Group's recommendations in October 2011.**

81/10 BLACK COUNTRY LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

The Panel were informed of the latest developments with the establishment of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The Executive Director (Regeneration) tabled information on the development of the LEP so far (annexed). He also explained the context of the LEP, how it was developed, the Board, initial priorities and its current focus.

In response to a question, it was explained that detailed investigation work was taking place before deciding on the location of the Enterprise Zone for the Black Country.

RESOLVED:

That the latest position with the development of the Black Country Enterprise Partnership be noted.

82/10 LOW CARBON RETROFIT FOR HOUSING

The Panel considered low carbon retrofit for housing.

Members received a presentation from the Energy Efficiency Officers (annexed) covering the emerging agenda, the technologies, their current application in Walsall, the current funding options and future opportunities and challenges in rolling out retrofit on a wider scale. The following were the principle points from the ensuing discussion:-

- Help with retrofitting could be provided to vulnerable homeowners by placing a “land charge” on a property when improvements were made. This way, the homeowner would not have to pay for modifications but the Local Authority would reclaim the cash for the improvements when the property was next sold;
- The Panel recognised benefits of their Health Through Warmth Programme for the vulnerable residents and requested further information be provided to all Members to assist with ward work;
- It was noted that there were opportunities for local residents to acquire the skills required to retrofit energy efficiency modifications to housing. Walsall College was also bidding to become a national training centre for retrofit techniques.

RESOLVED:

That all Members be provided with information on the Health Through Warmth Programme, including eligibility criteria.

83/10 FORWARD PLAN AND WORK PROGRAMME 2010/11

The Panel considered the latest version of Cabinets Forward Plan of key decisions and their work programme.

RESOLVED:

That the Forward Plan and Work Programme 2010/11 be noted.

84/10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date of the next meeting would be set by Annual Council on 25 May, 2011.

The meeting closed at 8.05 p.m.

Signed:

Date: