

## **BRIEFING NOTE**

**TO: REGENERATION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**  
**DATE: 6 March 2008**

**RE: SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT**

### **Purpose**

To agree the themes for the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel's section of Walsall Councils Scrutiny Annual Report for 2007/08.

### **Background**

Each year each Scrutiny and Performance Panel at Walsall Council produces a summary on the success or otherwise of its work which is presented to Council.

Attached at Appendix 1 to this briefing note is a draft of the content for the annual report from the panel based on the minutes of the work that has been completed during 2007/08.

The Panel are invited to review the areas and content in appendix 1 that they would like in their section of the annual report and approve it for publication.

Once the content has been agreed by all Scrutiny and Performance Panels the Scrutiny Annual Report for 2007/08 will be presented to Council on 21 April 2008.

### **Recommendations**

**That the content from the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel to the Scrutiny Annual Report 2007/08 be agreed.**

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## **Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel – Annual Report**

The Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel has considered a range of issues during the last year, including:

### **Walsall Market (budgets analysis)**

Following on from its work in previous years the panel has considered a range of issues concerning the relocation of Walsall market at panel and working group level throughout the year.

Members first considered the principle of relocating the market including the identification of a preferred new location. Evidence was received from an independent consultant, Walsall Market Traders Association and Walsall Small Business Alliance. After much debate and stakeholder engagement a range of recommendations were submitted to Cabinet for consideration.

After this Members moved to consider the future financial and management options for the new market.

### **Strategic Transportation**

The panel continued its valuable work on strategic transportation issues by establishing a working group to assist in the development of a transport strategy for the next 15 years.

The working group undertook a wide ranging questionnaire style consultation exercise with a variety of partners, stakeholders and local interest groups asking for their views on draft aims and priorities that had been developed. This led to a productive focus group meeting of a selection of the consultees which fed into the working groups conclusions which were approved by the panel and forwarded to Cabinet for consideration.

### **Past and Present Use of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund**

At its meeting on 27 September 2007 Council resolved for the panel to consider a report from Cabinet on the past and present use of Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF).

Members considered the matter at a special meeting in late December and in addition to the Cabinet report heard evidence from the Director and Chairman of Walsall Borough Strategic Partnership and the former Head of Programmes.

After a long debate the panel resolved that although there had been problems with the administration of NRF in its early years these problems had been addressed and that the money had been clearly spent and accounted for.

## **New Deal for Communities**

The panel considered the New Deal for Communities (NDC) scheme that was delivering a community regeneration programme within an area that covered Bloxwich, Bloxwich East and Leamore Wards.

Members considered the scheme to be a success upon hearing of the many initiatives that the NDC was working on. The important issue was that this work was sustained once NDC funding ended in 2011. The panel was assured that long term succession planning was already being considered.

The long term sustainability of the NDC's priorities will be considered by the panel in the next municipal year.

## **Regeneration Projects**

During the last year the panel have considered the various regeneration schemes that are taking place in Walsall town centre and across the borough as well as the Single Regeneration Framework.

This has included regeneration work in St. Matthews Quarter, Darlaston SDA, Walsall Gigaport and Office Corridor, Waterfront North and South and Walsall First.

## **Managing and Monitoring Section 106 Planning Obligations**

The panel learnt how the council was using section 106 of the town and country planning act 1990 for certain works or contributions in accordance from developers for issues related to the unitary development plan.

The number of agreements has increased in recent years which has led to the employment of a monitoring officer to oversee and ensure compliance with the agreements made.

The panel expressed concern about the perceived lack of understanding that surrounded section 106 agreements particularly concerning the restrictions that existed on how monies raised could be spent.

## **Regeneration Performance Monitoring and Finance Update**

The panel have monitored the performance of the Regeneration Directorate over the course of the last year.

Members were pleased to hear that overall performance in the directorate was high and that all identified problem areas were being addressed.

Budget wise the only area of concern was with markets which was failing to meet its income generation target. This issue was considered as part of the budget setting process.

## **Urban Design Guide/Conserving Walsall's Natural Environment**

Two supplementary planning documents have been considered by the panel during the last year.

Members learnt that the Urban Design Guide had been developed to support policies in the unitary development plan that related to:

Urban Design  
Landscape Design  
Public Art

Members were supportive of the document and expressed their concerns about the high level of apartments that were being constructed.