

REGENERATION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Thursday 24 April 2008 at 6.00 p.m.

Panel Members present Councillor D. Pitt (Chair)
 Councillor D. Anson
 Councillor G. Clarke

Officers present Michael Tichford – Assistant Director – Regeneration
 Joanne Lowndes - Partnership and Performance Manager
 Mike Smith - Regeneration Team Leader - Planning Policy
 Jody Latham – Performance and Scrutiny Officer
 Craig Goodall – Acting Principal Scrutiny Officer

94/07 APOLOGIES

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillor S. Coughlan and Councillor G. Wilkes

95/07 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of this meeting

96/07 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or party whip identified at this meeting.

97/07 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2008, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

(annexed)

98/07 FORWARD PLAN

The forward plan as at 7 April 2008 was submitted.

(annexed)

99/07 TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The panel noted the training opportunities as previously circulated.

(annexed)

100/07 WORKING NEIGHBOURHOODS FUND

The Panel felt that the subject of Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF) was too important to be discussed with only 3 Members present. Members agreed that WNF should be carried forward for consideration in the next municipal year to allow the remaining Members of the Panel to participate in the discussions.

The Chairman requested a brief overview of the project and its current status.

Jo Lowndes provided the Panel with a summary of information regarding WNF, including a brief background, the funding available and how it is being spent, the commissioning process, details on target action plans and how spending of WNF is being monitored.

She highlighted that WNF was part of the wider Area Based Grant (ABG) which took a more longer term focus than previous funding regimes. It was no longer a requirement that 95% of a particular grant had to be spent within the year it was granted. The money could be spent at any time providing it supported the priorities identified in the Sustainable Community Strategy or Local Area Agreement.

The Panel were informed that Appendix 3 to the report contained details of 23 programs that were being supported by WNF that had previously been funded by Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF). Jo Lowndes confirmed that all continuing past NRF projects satisfied the rules for funding through WNF.

In response to a question Jo Lowndes informed the Panel that the timetable for agreeing targeted action plans had slipped due to issues surrounding the Local Area Agreement (LAA).

RESOLVED:

That the Working Neighbourhood Fund be considered as part of the work programme for the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel during 2008/09.

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Councillor D. Anson left the Panel meeting at 6.10pm.

The Panel now had insufficient Members present to meet its quorum.

Craig Goodall advised the remaining Members that the meeting could continue in an advisory capacity, however, formal resolutions could not be made. Any recommendations formulated could only be suggestions that would be subject to the approval of the full Panel at its next meeting.

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101/07 **BLACK COUNTRY JOINT CORE STRATEGY**

The Panel were informed on the progress of developing the Black Country Joint Core Strategy (Joint Core Strategy) Development Plan document and the key outcomes of the consultations undertaken to date and the next steps that would be taken to complete the document.

A map of the area within scope of the Joint Core Strategy, a printed version of Powerpoint slides used in a previous presentation, a handout of the new Local Development Framework was circulated to Members on the evening. A Preferred Options report was made available to any Members who had not already received a copy.

Mike Smith informed the Panel that the consultation period for the Preferred Options report was due to conclude on 28 April 2008. This had to be completed by this date due to Government deadlines and the Purdah period before local government elections.

The Panel was directed to the Joint Core Strategy Context handout outlining the new Local Development Framework that has replaced the Unitary Development Plan (UDP).

The framework comprises of various documents that feed into the LDF some of which are required and some which were optional. An example was given of the work currently being carried out towards an Area Action Plan for Willenhall and the surrounding areas and how community involvement is being encouraged.

An Annual Monitoring Report is required alongside the Joint Core Strategy, Statement of Community Involvement, Adopted Proposals Map and Site Specific Allocations. Other explanatory reports such as the Supplementary Planning Documents are not compulsory but can be provided to compliment the overarching LDF.

The Joint Core Strategy for the Black Country outlines the infrastructure plans and the corridors in scope between strategic development areas. It has 4 main stages:

- Stage 1: Issue the report and consult on its content
- Stage 2: Compile a preferred options document for consultation.
Consultation currently taking place and due to conclude 28 April 2008.
- Stage 3: Submission document hoped to be completed for October 2008 however it is expected that debate on stage 2 may lead to Government insistence on further housing allocations, further delaying the report.
- Stage 4: Final Submission document to be examined in front of an independent inspector. The results of the inspection will be binding for the authority and expected to be reflected in the final document ready for 2009.

In response to a question regarding the St Matthews Quarter development and now it fitted in with the LDF and Joint Core Strategy the Panel were informed that the plans were multi-layered and that national policy supported town centre developments. The St. Matthews Quarter development was contained within the UDP and would be carried forward into the LDF.

When asked about time constraints the Panel were informed that all plans developed before March 2005 had a 3 year time limit as part of the UDP. Any plans developed after March 2005 had a time limit of 3 years from adoption.

However the Council had made arrangements with the Government on a range of UDP policies that it wished to 'save'. A review of the UDP revealed that all but one plan regarding the 'Brownhills Resource Centre', which had been fully completed, were wanted to carry forward. The Government accepted all but three plans which were dismissed, namely policies concerning Gypsies and Travellers, Pollution Control and Habitat and Species Protection. The remaining policies from the UDP were carried forward into the LDF and now had no expiry dates.

The Panel asked for the report to be submitted to the next meeting.

SUGGESTED RESOLUTION:

That the Black Country Joint Core Strategy be considered as part of the work programme for the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel during 2008/09.

102/07 CARRY OVER ITEMS

The Chairman suggested the carry forward items for the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel programme for 2008/09:

1. Markets Working Group
2. Area Based Grant including Working Neighbourhoods Fund
3. City Strategy
4. Regional Strategy
5. Joint Core Strategy
6. St. Matthew's Quarter Working Group (on conclusion of Markets Working Group)
7. New Deal for Communities

The Panel expressed concern over the lack of an exit strategy for the New Deal for Communities due to end in two years time.

SUGGESTED RESOLUTIONS:

That the following items be suggested for consideration as part of the work programme for the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel during 2008/09:

- a) Markets Working Group
- b) Area Based Grant including Working Neighbourhoods Fund
- c) City Strategy
- d) Regional Strategy
- e) Joint Core Strategy
- f) St. Matthew's Quarter Working Group (on conclusion of Markets Working Group)
- g) New Deal for Communities

In closing the meeting the Chairman expressed his thanks for all the work that Members, Officers, Stakeholders and outside witnesses had contributed to the Panel and its respective working groups throughout the last year.

The meeting terminated at 6.40 p.m.

Chair:

Date: