

## **REGENERATION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

Thursday 8 January 2009 at 6.00 p.m.

**Panel Members present**            Councillor D. Pitt (Chair)  
   Councillor S. Coughlan (Vice-Chair)  
   Councillor T. Ansell  
   Councillor D. Anson  
   Councillor B. Douglas-Maul  
   Councillor B. Tweddle  
   Councillor I. Shires  
   Councillor K. Sears

**Portfolio holders present**        Councillor A. Andrew – Regeneration

**Officers present**                    Tim Johnson – Executive Director - Regeneration  
   Mike Tichford – Assistant Director – Regeneration  
   Paul Rowlands – Chief Executive – New Deal  
   Jo Lowndes – Partnership & Performance Manager  
   Louise Biffin – New Deal – Finance & Administration  
   Manager  
   Nick Alamanos – Partnership & Performance Officer  
   Craig Goodall – Acting Principal Scrutiny Officer

### **53/08 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillors T. Ansell, D. Anson, B. Douglas-Maul and K. Sears.

### **54/08 SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

### **55/08 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

Councillor I. Shires declared a personal interest in respect of Item 7 'Walsall Regeneration Company' and Item 8 'Collaboration Agreement with Walsall Housing Group'.

### **56/08 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS**

(annexed)

Members queried the timescale for receiving the update report from Councillor Harris on progress to date with decision 95/08 'A34 South Park and Ride'. Craig Goodall agreed to investigate this matter.

Following a question from a Member of the Panel Mike Tichford reported that the Panel's feedback on the Regional Spatial Strategy had been submitted but no formal response had been received.

The Panel discussed their recommendation for Walsall Market to continue to be managed by Walsall Council. Mike Tichford advised the Panel that discussions were ongoing with traders including the possibility of a joint venture agreement. It was currently scheduled for Cabinet to make a decision on the issue during March and not February as advised in the Forward Plan. Members expressed concern that the decision was being delayed and that the possibility of a joint venture was still being discussed when the Panel had dismissed it as an option.

Councillor Andrew reported to Members that the delay had been necessary due to problems meeting with Threadneedle. He reminded Members that he had been scheduled to meet with Threadneedle on 18 December 2008 but this meeting had been cancelled by Threadneedle and was now taking place in late January 2009. It was not possible to move the market without addressing the threat of judicial review.

Following a question from a Member of the Panel, Mike Tichford agreed to investigate the requirements of the markets charter.

**Resolved:**

**That**

- 1. the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2008, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record;**
  - 2. Craig Goodall to investigate the previous request for further information regarding decision 95/08 'A34 South Park and Ride';**
- and;**
- 3. Mike Tichford to investigate the requirements of Walsall's Market Charter.**

**57/08 DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Craig Goodall outlined the 'Better Governance and Accountability in Partnerships 2009' conference to Members.

**58/08 FORWARD PLAN**

A copy of the Forward Plan published on 6 January 2009 was tabled at the meeting.

(annexed)

*98/08 St Matthews Quarter redevelopment: market management*

As previously discussed it was noted that this decision was now likely to be taken in March 2009 and not February as advised in the published Forward Plan.

*01/09 Strategic regeneration programme in Brownhills, Moxley and Goscote Lane corridor*

Councillor Andrew suggested that the Panel may want to consider this issue and an update on the single regeneration framework at a future meeting.

#### **59/08 NEW DEAL FOR COMMUNITIES – EXIT STRATEGY & SUSTAINABILITY**

Members considered the development of an exit strategy to ensure the long term sustainability of those areas in receipt of new deal funding.

Paul Rowlands, New Deal for Communities (NDC) Chief Executive, gave a presentation on the development of a succession strategy and the requirements that the Government are asking to be fulfilled before the funding stream ended on 31 March 2011. The NDC already satisfied the initial Government requirements of being a company limited by guarantee.

By the close of the funding stream it was anticipated that the New Deal scheme would have £11m of capital assets and an income of £300,000 a year. This income would form the budget to continue work in the NDC priority areas beyond 2011.

The following are the principal points from the ensuing discussion:

- The £300,000 a year income would be made up of current and future assets.
- This income was mainly secured from rental incomes on NDC properties. NDC's largest client was NHS Walsall which had a 21 year lease on its offices. Walsall Council and a local housing trust had 10 year leases.
- NDC was responsible for staff redundancy payments up to the statutory minimum.
- NDC currently subsidised a healthy eating restaurant in Blakenall. This contract was ending in 2010. NDC was hoping to continue the service without subsidy.
- NDC would have the potential to sell services to others and this possibility was being investigated.
- It was felt that NDC had come some way towards achieving the aims that were set out to it on its creation but there was still some way to go. Successful work had taken place around worklessness although current economic problems were starting to have an adverse affect on performance. Educational achievement had improved along with the health of local people although this could only really be measured in the long term. Crime had also reduced and help increase pride in the local area.
- In terms of what elements of NDC could be used to successfully replicate the scheme in other areas Paul Rowlands explained that a range of factors were required but the principal issues were:
  - Community involvement
  - Local and flexible staff
  - Stable directors
  - Good relationship with Walsall Council and other partners
- Paul Rowlands agreed to advise on the level of subsidy provided to the Young Persons Information Centre.

The Panel acknowledged that Walsall's New Deal scheme was one of the most successful in the country and urged that everything was done to ensure that this good work continued beyond 2011. For this reason they requested to consider all plans in the development of the succession plan and invited Paul Rowlands back to a future meeting of the Panel.

## **Resolved**

### **That:**

**1. the succession planning for the New Deal for Communities scheme be considered by the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel during 2009/10;**

**and;**

**2. Paul Rowlands to advise the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel of the level of subsidy provided to the Young Persons Information Centre from the New Deal for Communities.**

### **60/08 WALSALL REGENERATION COMPANY**

The Panel considered the activity undertaken during the last six months and the future projects and priorities planned by Walsall Regeneration Company.

Peter Cromar, Chief Executive of Walsall Regeneration Company, gave a presentation to the Panel. The following are principal points from the presentation:

- The new Walsall College would open in September 2009.
- The new Manor Hospital was to open soon.
- It was anticipated that work would start on the many planned developments during 2009, namely:
  - Tesco – to be open by late 2010
  - Hotel on the Waterfront Urban Splash site
  - Waterfront Jessup Developments – optimistic that this residential development could commence during 2009.
- Waterfront Lex – 132 international design entries had been received for this iconic building.
- Planning permission for the Gigaport had been received and detailed plans were being developed for the site including the potential to develop an internet exchange on the site and a green data centre for Serco. A development prospectus for the site was being produced ready for the European Property Convention in Cannes. A bid to Advantage West Midlands for £25m was being prepared to kick start the development.

(annexed)

Members were pleased with the progress undertaken to regenerate Walsall and were excited for the future. It was suggested

### **61/08 COLLABORATION AGREEMENT WITH WALSALL HOUSING GROUP**

The Panel considered the draft collaboration agreement between Walsall Council and Walsall Housing Group (WHG) to assist in delivering the strategic regeneration framework programme in Brownhills, Moxley and Goscote Lane corridor. The agreement would establish the principles of how land owned by the Council and WHG would be made available to a developer partner in return for new affordable housing and other community benefits.

Mike Tichford reported that this agreement was going to be considered by Cabinet during February. He highlighted the current areas of negotiation around the agreement as featured in the report.

Following a question from Members Mike Tichford explained that the WHG wanted 50% of all the housing delivered through this scheme to be affordable. Whilst this point was still up for negotiation it was the intention for the scheme to deliver a higher percentage of affordable housing than that suggested through the affordable housing supplementary planning document.

Members expressed concern about developers negotiating a reduction in the level of affordable housing provided in developments due to building difficulties after the Development and Control Committee had granted planning permission.

Members suggested that the affordable housing delivered as part of this project should be green homes and meet 'Homes for Life' standards. Affordable and social housing should also be pepper potted through out developments.

Members requested that this issue should feed into the Affordable Housing Working Group.

## **Resolved**

### **That:**

- 1. Housing development secured through the collaboration agreement with Walsall Housing Group should:**
  - a. Be of mixed tenure**
  - b. Meet 'Homes for Life' criteria**
  - c. Deliver sustainable and green homes**

**and;**

- 2. the collaboration agreement with Walsall Housing Group should be considered by the Affordable Housing Working Group.**

## **62/08 WALSALL PARTNERSHIP – LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT MONITORING**

The Panel were informed on a range of issues led by Walsall Partnership all of which arose from the Local Area Agreement (LAA).

Nick Alamanos informed Members of estimates for the performance reward grant (PRG) from the previous LAA. He explained that the minimum level of PRG that could be received was £3.15m. However, PRG could be as high as £4.92m pending the results of two performance indicators.

In terms of current performance for the new LAA, National Indicator (NI) 154 'Number of Additional Homes' was highlighted as currently being off target. The reason for this was that WHG was currently undertaking a planned demolition programme.

With regards to the development of targeted action plans (TAP's) for delivery of LAA targets a number of workshop sessions had been held during 2008 and a further set were anticipated in 2009 to plan and commission activity to support the delivery of LAA targets.

With regard to NI 8 'Percentage of adult population who participate in sport' – Members noted that it was important to keep LAA targets in mind when considering reductions in services. As reduced leisure centre opening hours were expected to have an adverse impact on the achievement of this target.

### **63/08 AUDIT OF REGENERATION – WORKLESSNESS & SKILLS**

Members were informed of an audit during 2009 of the Councils regeneration activity by the Audit Commission.

Mike Tichford reported that the Audit Commission would be assessing the performance of Black Country Councils and Birmingham City Council on the regions response individually and collectively to tackling worklessness. This assessment would provide valuable feedback on current work being undertaken and identify areas for improvements. It was not an assessment of the Working Neighbourhoods Fund. There would be formal grading given to the Council following the assessment.

As part of the assessment the Chairman would be interviewed along with other stakeholders. The Council would also be required to complete a self-assessment.

Members requested that Members from all political parties were interviewed and suggested two Members of the Panel to be interviewed along with the Chairman.

#### **Resolved:**

**That Members from all political parties are interviewed as part of the Audit of Regeneration including Councillors S. Coughlan and I. Shires from the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel.**

### **64/08 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was noted as 19 January 2009.

The meeting terminated at 8.00 p.m.

Chair:

Date: