

REGENERATION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

MONDAY 6 DECEMBER 2010 AT 6.00 P.M.

Panel Members Present: Councillor D. Pitt (Chair)
Councillor Anson (Vice-Chair)
Councillor I. Azam
Councillor M. Ahmed
Councillor D. Coughlan
Councillor S. Coughlan
Councillor L. Harrison
Councillor I. Shires

Portfolio Holders Present: Councillor Bird – Leader of the Council
Councillor A. Andrew – Regeneration
Councillor C. Towe – Finance and Personnel

Officers Present

Mike Titchford –	Assistant Director (Regeneration)
David Elsworthy –	Head of Planning and Building Control
Mike Smith -	Regeneration Manager (Planning Policy)
Dan Mortiboys -	Service Accounting & Financial Reporting Manager
Neville Ball -	Principal Regeneration Officer
Neil Picken –	Senior Constitutional Services Officer

39/10 APOLOGIES

An apology was received on behalf of Councillor B. Twedde.

40/10 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

41/10 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

Councillor I. Shires declared a personal interest in item 7 – Adoption of Black Country Core Strategy, as he was a member of Walsall Housing Group Board.

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

42/10 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2010, copies having been previously circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

43/10 Change in the Order of Business

Pursuant to Part 4.1 (14) of the Councils Constitution, the Chair advised that item 7 – Draft Revenue Budget Proposals for 2010/11 would be considered prior to items 5 & 6.

44/10 Draft Revenue Budget Proposals 2011/12

Members considered the predicted revenue and capital outturn position for 2010/11, based on the performance for quarter 2 (July to September 2010), for services within the remit of the Regeneration Scrutiny & Performance Panel.

As part of the report it was acknowledged that Regeneration had a draft net budget of £10.327 million. As part of the budget process operational savings of £672,767 were proposed. This would be in addition to a further £32,500 of Executive savings which would, if approved, result in the closure of Darlaston Market and the introduction of a charging policy for pre-application advice within the planning service.

Having considered the report it was:-

RESOLVED:

That the proposed 2011/12 budget for services within the remit of the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel be noted.

45/10 Adoption of a Black Country Core Strategy

The Regeneration Manager (Planning Policy) introduced the report which sought to explain the importance of the adoption of the Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS) for future decisions on planning applications, infrastructure and the Council's capital programme.

There then followed a presentation during which key messages from the Inspectors report were expanded upon. This included issues (amongst others) relating to:-

- Housing;

- Economy & Employment;
- Centres;
- Transportation;
- Environmental Infrastructure;
- Waste and Minerals;
- Delivery, Implication and Monitoring;
- Challenges.

Arising from the presentation, it was asked why there was a shortfall in good quality employment land given that a number of sites had previously been identified in the Unitary Development Plan. Officers reported that a large amount of good quality employment land had already been used. There were still sites available however these were not being taken up. This could be for a number of reasons such as ground stability/contamination issues or poor access arrangements. It was anticipated that a new plan would be produced seeking alternate uses for various sites. The new strategy would allow sites to be used for different purposes, which were more suited to ground conditions.

In response to a question regarding works undertaken by the recently closed Walsall Regeneration Company it was stated that opportunities now existed to get site allocations right. Using robust engagement with both the public and politicians it was anticipated that a new employment quarter would be created. The Gigaport and office corridor would still be pursued and the Authority was committed to its delivery.

With regard to the provision of affordable housing it was noted that the BCCS proposed the level of provision across all Black County Authorities to be set at 25%. The introduction of the New Homes Bonus would see Councils being rewarded for bringing housing schemes forward.

Further discussion took place around the Tempus 10 development at Junction 10 and also partnership working with registered social landlords.

In relation to the Tempus 10 development, Members noted that the developer had revisited the planning permission in place. The new permission allowed a change to the style of office in a bid to improve its commercial viability. Permission was also in place to provide a distribution centre.

With regard to partnership working it was stated that Walsall Council had done very well in delivering social housing with both private developers and registered social landlords. In the future it was suggested that, due to limited grants, working with commercial developers would become more and more frequent. Concern was expressed that the quality of affordable home provision would suffer as a result of making sites commercially viable. In response, it was stated

that technology was constantly evolving in the building industry, making it more efficient, sustainable and cheaper to build homes. This would offset the impact of commercial viability with regard to providing affordable housing.

At this point Councillor Shires declared a Personal Interest as he was a board member at Walsall Housing Group.

At the close of discussion, members welcomed the Black Country Core Strategy but expressed a certain reticence as to whether it would deliver. Concern was also expressed that a lot of work had been undertaken in District Centres already and sought assurances that this would not have been for nothing. Members were assured that all of the work previously undertaken would be utilised and that the new framework would enable the Authority to re assess its current provision and change it for the better if and where required.

Resolved

- 1) That the regeneration scrutiny performance panel endorse the following recommendations to be considered by Cabinet on 15 December, 2010:-
 - That Cabinet support the adoption of the JCS in accordance with the recommendations of the Inspectors' Report;
 - That Cabinet refer the JCS to Council with a recommendation that it resolves to adopt the JCS at the same time as other authorities on 3 February 2011 in accordance with Section 23(5) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
 - That, in the event that Council resolve to adopt the JCS, the Executive Director of Regeneration is authorised to:
 - (i) approve any minor additional changes to the JCS document to prepare it for printing and publication as specified in the Inspectors' Report;
 - (ii) arrange statutory publicity, printing and publication of the documents specified in the legislation.
 - That Cabinet note the very significant achievement of achieving a Core Strategy across four metropolitan borough areas.
- 2) That a further report be bought to the Panel in respect of the programme for the preparation of other Development Plan Documents, prior to this being considered by Cabinet.

46/10 **Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring Position for 2010/11**

The Panel received a report summarising the predicted revenue and capital outturn position for 2010/11, based on the performance for quarter 2 (July to September 2010), for services within the remit of the Regeneration Scrutiny & Performance Panel.

Resolved

- 1) That it be noted that the 2010/11 forecasted year end financial position for services under the remit of the Regeneration Scrutiny Panel is net revenue under spend of **£0.084m**, after the use of approved reserves and carry forwards and action planning.
- 2) That it be noted that the capital forecast is an under spend of **£0.467m**.

47/10 **Work Programme 2010/11 and Forward Plan**

The Panel considered their work programme and the latest version of Cabinets forward plan of key decisions which had been circulated at the meeting.

Resolved

That the work programme and forward plan be noted.

48/10 **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting was noted as 11 January, 2011.

Signed:

Date: