

REGENERATION SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Tuesday 16 June 2009 at 6.00 p.m.

Panel Members present

Councillor D. Pitt (Chair)
Councillor D. Anson
Councillor B. Douglas-Maul
Councillor L. Harrison
Councillor K. Phillips
Councillor I. Shires
Councillor B. Tweddle

Officers present

Tim Johnson	Executive Director – Regeneration
Jo Lowndes	Partnerships and Programmes Manager
Craig Goodall	Acting Principal Scrutiny Officer

01/09 APOLOGIES

Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillor K. Sears.

02/09 SUBSTITUTIONS

There were no substitutions for the duration of the meeting.

03/09 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interest or party whip in respect of items on the agenda.

04/09 MINUTES

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2009, copies having previously been circulated, be approved as a true and accurate record.

(annexed)

05/09 TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Resolved:

- 1. Craig Goodall to liaise with Human Resources and Development on the procedure to obtain a copy of any documents made available at the 'Promoting Local Democracy' Conference;**

and;

- 2. Craig Goodall to establish if the 'Promoting Local Democracy' Conference will be taking place on another date in the future.**

06/09 WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10

Members considered and agreed items for their work programme for 2009/10 by reviewing carry over items from 2008/09, suggestions from officers, through considering the Walsall Partnership Business Plan and Local Area Agreement and considering their own suggestions.

Walsall Partnership

Jo Lowdnes circulated a summary of the Walsall Partnership Business Plan (WPBP) and Local Area Agreement (LAA) (annexed). She highlighted the key areas in the WPBP relevant to the Panel:

- Economic Wellbeing targets in LAA
- Credit Crunch
- Review of Targeted Action Plans

The Panel were interested in receiving LAA updates when fresh data was available and noted that all of the above issues linked with a proposed item on economic wellbeing in the agenda papers.

- Review of WP executive arrangements
- Strategic Fundraising

The Panel requested that they be kept informed of these items when further information was available to allow suitable monitoring.

Members requested six month monitoring reports on Working Neighbourhoods Fund.

- Travel to work differently

The Panel noted the importance of this issue, in particular the provision of integrated public transport to encourage people to stop using cars, but the issue was viewed as an item more suitable to the Environment Scrutiny and Performance Panel, who had in fact already identified this issue as an agenda item.

With regard to public transport the Panel noted that Centro was currently undertaking a strategic review of public transport in Walsall which the Panel should gain some input to.

Carry Over and Suggested Items

- Economic Wellbeing

Tim Johnson explained that there was currently a #13m programme being commissioned in this area and that the Panels views should be sought on the direction of this programme. He emphasised the links to with this area to the LAA.

Members felt that this was an important issue and raised concerns about unemployment amongst 16-2 year olds.

- Building Schools for the Future

Members wished to have input on this scheme from a design and delivery perspective.

- New Deal for Communities Exit Strategy

The Panel noted that funding for the New Deal ended in March 2011 and wished to monitor the development of an exit strategy to ensure the long term benefits of the scheme continue once Government funding has ended.

- Property Matters, Corporate Asset Management and Adaptive Working

The Panel wished to consider the Council's property needs and the steps that could be taken to maximise the use of its assets including the possibility of introducing more flexible working arrangements for staff.

Members noted that if increased home working for staff was desirable then this may require a review of the Council information technology strategy. Members also noted the possibility of developing Council offices in district centres.

- St Matthews Quarter

Members wished to monitor the development of this regeneration scheme during the year ahead.

- Review of Walsall Regeneration Company (WRC)

Tim Johnson informed the Panel that a five-year review of the (WRC) was set to take place this year and that the outcome of this review would be feedback to the Panel for their influence.

In response to a question from a Member of the Panel it was explained that the Council owned a one-third share of the WRC along with Advantage West Midlands and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). All three partners contributed #250,000 a year to the WRC.

- Welfare Advice Provision

Craig Goodall explained that, following a referral from Council on Citizens Advice Bureau funding, the Corporate Scrutiny and Performance Panel had established a working group to consider welfare advice provision in the borough. As this was a cross-cutting issue the Panel were seeking a representative from the Panel due to the worklessness agenda that was in the Panel's remit.

The Chair was appointed as a Member of the working group.

- Joint Core Strategy (JCS)

A report outlining a potential item on the JCS was tabled to Members (annexed). It was explained that the JCS was being developed with the remaining Black Country local

authorities and would be the replacement to the unitary development plan and would set the councils land and planning policies for the next 15 years.

- Strategic Regeneration Framework

Members were informed that this was a housing led regeneration programme taking place in Brownhills, Goscote and Moxley with the HCA. Members were keen to consider this issue and wished to consider infrastructure needs of the regeneration.

Forward Plan

The Panel considered the Forward Plan for potential work programme items.

- 31/09 'Green Rivers Community Centre'

Following a question from the Panel Tim Johnson explained that he understood the New Deal for Communities were prepared to make an investment to the centre but that the centre was not dependant on this investment.

- 38/08 'Police Station'

Following questions from Members Time Johnson explained that the issue of developing a new Police Station linked with the Walsall Gigaport development as the proposed site (existing Challenge Building) neighboured the Gigaport and Office Corridor developments. He explained that discussions with West Midlands Police Authority were ongoing regarding the possibility of co-locating a new police station with another organisation. He emphasised the need to obtain a desirable development on the proposed site due its proximity with two key regeneration opportunities.

Housing Issues

The Panel noted that they were likely to be given the remit to consider strategic housing issues following the next meeting of Council. With this in mind the following items were identified:

- Relationships with private landlords
- 'Building a new regulatory framework'

Resolved:

That the following items be added to the work programme for the Regeneration Scrutiny and Performance Panel for 2009/10:

- 1. Building Schools for the Future;**
- 2. Building a new regulatory framework;**
- 3. Centro's Review of Public Transport in Walsall;**
- 4. Economic Wellbeing including outcome of review of targeted action plans;**
- 5. Joint Core Strategy;**
- 6. Local Area Agreement;**
- 7. New Deal for Communities – Exit Strategy**
- 8. Property Matters, Corporate Asset Management and Adaptive Working;**

- 9. Relationships with private landlords;**
- 10. Strategic Regeneration Framework;**
- 11. Walsall Partnership monitoring including review of executive arrangements and relevant strategic fundraising data;**
- 12. Walsall Regeneration Company Review;**
- 13. Working Neighbourhoods Fund six monthly updates;**

and;

- 14. Councillor D. Pitt be appointed to the Welfare Advice Provision Working Group.**

07/09 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted the date of the next meeting as 30 July 2009.

The meeting terminated at 7.05 p.m.