

BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Thursday, 24th May, 2012

Present:- Councillors Robin Moss (Chair), Ben Stevens (Vice-Chair), Patrick Anketell-Jones, Brian Simmons, Michael Evans, Lisa Brett and Manda Rigby

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Chairman drew attention to the emergency evacuation procedure.

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

There were none.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST UNDER THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

There were none.

5 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There was none. The Chairman informed the meeting that agenda item 9 (River Corridor Group Report) will be discussed straight after the minutes of the last meeting.

6 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC OR COUNCILLORS - TO RECEIVE DEPUTATIONS, STATEMENTS, PETITIONS OR QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OF THIS MEETING

The Chairman informed the meeting that members of the public who wish to address the Panel will have the opportunity to do so before the relevant agenda item.

7 MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 22ND MARCH 2012

The Panel confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting as a true record and they were duly signed by the Chairman subject to the following amendment:

- Minute 67, page 11 – In the debate there was a lot of ‘neighbouring’ reference. Instead it should say ‘**neighbourhood**’.

The Panel also asked if the Cabinet responded to the specific request of the Panel on page 12, recommendation 3 (*‘Ask the Cabinet to consider updating the Economic Development Strategy according to the powers that the Localism Act gives to Local Authorities, in particular to lower business rates when considering investment in regeneration areas (e.g. London Road)*). The Chairman responded that he was not aware that the Cabinet responded so the Chairman asked the Democratic Services Officer to follow up on that request and update the Panel accordingly.

The Chairman informed the Panel on the latest around consultation on Justice Bench Mergers. The Chairman reminded everyone that the Panel was concerned that they didn't have enough time to consider the proposal and also that invited representatives from Justices Issues Group could not make it for the last meeting. The Panel therefore concluded that Bath and North East Somerset, as Local Authority, could respond to the letter from Justices Issues Group (JIG). The Chairman informed the meeting that the Council received a letter back from the JIG in which they answered a number of questions although the Panel, or the Council, did make any questions. The last sentence in the letter says 'We are due to make our decision on merger on the 11 May and it would help me (Jeremy Williams JP - Justices Issues Group Chairman) if you were able to indicate before that date if this letter addresses in the main your concerns.' The Chairman said that even though that we passed that date the answer is 'no'. It wasn't consultation process that gave the opportunity to the Panel to take part in it. The Chairman suggested that this message be communicated with Chief Executive, John Everitt, to respond.

The Panel agreed with Chairman's suggestion and made the following recommendation:

- The Panel is not necessarily against the merger in principle but they are not able to support it due to inadequate information.

8 RIVER CORRIDOR GROUP REPORT (30 MINUTES)

The Chairman said that the Panel received the report on this issue and number of submissions from other interested parties and individuals were submitted. The Panel felt that, considering the amount of detail, information and work outlined in the report, it wouldn't be in position to do the report justice within allocated 30 or 60 minutes for this item. Therefore the Panel deferred this particular report for a special meeting of the Panel (date to be confirmed).

The Panel requested that the report be broken down in 'bite-sized chunks' (economic development, river safety, housing, major projects, environmental, etc.) so the Panel could give the adequate scrutiny to it. The Panel will set the date of the special meeting.

Councillor Cherry Beath (Cabinet Member for Sustainable Development) said that the report was around for a few months now and that she would appreciate if the Panel have this report on the agenda as soon as possible. Councillor Beath said that this report is quite big with a very wide remit. The Panel needs to look what is manageable, what is the future and listen to the River Corridor Group, whose

members are quite enthusiastic about this subject, rather than drill into the huge amount of detail.

David Langman () echoed on what Councillor Beath said and added that the report was prepared by non-Council group and not by Major Projects officers, therefore it was difficult to guide an external report. David Langman suggested that the officers meet with the Panel's representatives and hold informal briefing to help shape the format of the special meeting. David Langman also suggested that the chair of the River Corridor Group be present at that briefing.

The Chairman thanked David Langman for this suggestion by saying that it would be helpful getting together with Major Projects officers and move forward this matter.

It was **RESOLVED** to defer the agenda item 'River Corridor Group Report' for a special meeting of the Panel (date of the meeting to be confirmed).

9 CABINET MEMBER UPDATE (15 MINUTES)

The Chairman invited Councillor Cherry Beath to address the Panel with her Cabinet Member update.

Councillor Beath highlighted the following points in her update:

- Economic Development
 - Officially approved the Guildhall Hub - £500k provisionally allocated
 - Record number of business start-ups in March (95%) and there are around 155 start-ups in BANES as a whole. 2% more than the previous year. Higher than London.
 - Demand registration for the BDUK continues. Over 21,000 people are taking part and we are lining up 2 suppliers but due commercial sensitivity we can't discuss in more detail.
 - There had been some funding given out via the Community Empowerment fund performance and we were able to give out £15k for training to over 600 people in low carbon technology.
 - £84-85k goes towards funding to develop low carbon skills academy in BANES.
 - The Government put forward criteria for small cities for broadband fund. We are arguing the case but under the criteria Bath does not qualify as you have to have 45,000 residencies/dwellings whilst Bath has 38,000. The Leader of the Council has written to put forward our case.

The Chairman asked about the BDUK broadband investment and potential conflict with European law where state aid investment superseding private sector investment could cause an issue and whether that was resolved.

Councillor Beath responded that she was not sure if that was resolved. The process is still on and it has been a hold up. It is a national issue.

John Wilkinson (Economic Enterprise & Business Development Manager) added that the issue has not been resolved yet.

Councillor Beath welcomed the outcome of the Graduates Retention Scrutiny Inquiry Day and said that if the Panel resolve to put recommendations to the Cabinet then they, the Panel, have to suggest where the funding will come from - whether it is from existing funding or from additional one.

Councillor Evans said that at one of the partnership meetings there was a presentation about creating business hub in Radstock in the same way as the one in Guildhall and asked what happened to that idea.

Councillor Beath said that the straight answer is that she doesn't know. Councillor Beath heard that the idea of hubs floated around and the Cabinet listened and looked the evidence. There was a clear demand for something in the city centre. It would be useful to see how this model is doing and then consider other areas, as long as future hubs will prove to be sustainable.

Councillor Anketell-Jones asked about Bath Western Riverside problem with the gas infrastructure on that site and possibility of further delay. Councillor Anketell-Jones asked if there was an optimistic forecast on this matter.

Councillor Beath replied that the Bath Western Riverside matter is within Housing and Major Projects Scrutiny Panel and that she couldn't comment on that but that she couldn't say any more due to commercial sensitivity.

- Tourism -
 - Nationally there is a confused position on how many beds are booked and where is the spend coming from. We do not have all the figures due to commercial sensitivity. But we do have generally good picture that people are going for cheaper options.
 - Torch relay that happened on Wednesday 23rd May had approximately 65,000 people on the streets.
 - Quite a number of events and festivals are happening in Bath.
 - In 2011 we had highest numbers of visitors in Roman Bath.
 - Roman Bath Kitchen opening for public on Friday 25th May with official opening in June.
 - Lot of films are filming in Bath.

The chairman thanked Councillor Beath for her update.

It was **RESOLVED** to note verbal update from Councillor Beath.

10 COMMUNITY SAFETY PLAN: POLICE PERFORMANCE UPDATE AND BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID) - NIGHT TIME ECONOMY (30 MINUTES)

The Chairman invited Andrew Cooper (Bath City Centre Manager) to give a presentation about Business Improvement District - Nightwatch.

Andrew Copper highlighted the following points in his presentation:

- What Nightwatch are?
- Who is participating?
- How the scheme is working?

- Going forward

A copy of the presentation from Andrew Cooper is available on the minute book in Democratic Services.

Andrew Cooper said that the scheme is a similar scheme to the scheme that shops have to combat daytime shoplifting. Nightwatch scheme is bringing pubs and clubs together to combat the Anti-Social Behaviour in night time. It is happening now due to enthusiasm of few who are paying for additional marshals on the streets and also as a result of the involvement of technology. Night marshals are working together with the Police. Pubs and clubs are also meeting and sharing information.

There is a digital network across the city to enable multiple channels. One channel is dedicated to pubs and clubs which is also listened by the Police and Nightwatch. The technology is also linked to the CCTV. There are 620 businesses in the BID area of which about 40 licences signed up to this scheme. Marshals patrol in taxi ranks and also from pub to pub. What we try to do now is to provide uniform for staff of Nightwatch.

Street urinating is still a big issue. It is not issue only for Bath but for almost all cities. The aim now is to take on board all licensing premises in the BID area.

The Panel made the following points:

The Panel asked if some of the licensing premises have the obligation to sign up to the scheme.

Andrew Cooper confirmed that is the case.

Some Panel Members commented that the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in their Wards, which are in the city, is on the decrease, especially during the night time.

Some Panel Members said that it would be interesting to know BID's take on Police Reform and Social Responsibility, in particular in connections with night revenue on premises.

The Panel asked Geoff Spicer (Chief Superintendent) about the statistics on public's confidence in the Police.

Geoff Spicer replied that Avon and Somerset Police is one of the top performing in the country.

The Panel asked about the level of the CCTV coverage in the city.

Geoff Spicer replied that he is absolutely happy with it. Highly qualified CCTV operators are working together with Police officers and have access to Police records.

The Panel asked about the ASB statistics.

Geoff Spicer responded it depends what the request for statistics is- is it on victims or what satisfaction is about the ASB. There was definitely a reduction in ASB cases.

The Chairman thanked Geoff Spicer on the presentation and congratulated him on his promotion to Chief Superintendent.

Sue Dicks informed the Panel that she made contact with the Museums and also with some Council buildings (Guildhall), one-stop shop, other organisations and businesses (Police, Fire, Pump Room, Art Galleries, etc) about the display of yellow stickers (mark of the Community Safety Zone for people with learning disabilities). Sue Dicks will be looking to establish this scheme across the city and she will meet with Pippa Farrell (from 'Your Say' Advocacy Service) in June to discuss further actions with the deadline set to be August.

The Chairman thanked everyone who participated in this debate.

It was **RESOLVED** to note presentation from Andrew Cooper and updates from Geoff Spicer and Sue Dicks.

11 BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET'S TOURISM PERFORMANCE (25 MINUTES)

The Chairman invited David Lawrence (Divisional Director for Tourism, Leisure and Culture) to give the presentation.

David Lawrence circulated updated cover report before his presentation (attached as Appendix to these minutes).

David Lawrence gave a presentation where he highlighted the following points:

- 2012 tourism season
- Attractions
- Footfall
- Car Parks
- Retail and Night-time
- Property
- Hotels
- Currency Fluctuations; and
- B&NES Response

A full copy of the presentation from David Lawrence is available on the minute book in Democratic Services.

At this point of the meeting Councillor Ben Stevens took the Chair from Councillor Robin Moss who had to leave the meeting due to private matters.

The Panel made the following points:

The Panel asked if there is a decline of tourists from Europe (due to weak Euro) do we have to change our strategy in tourism to Asia, in particular to China. The Panel

also asked about the film festival dates and asked if those could be changed in the calendar considering that they are quite late in the year.

David Lawrence responded that we did look into generating interest between tourists from Asia but what tends to happen is that there are so many Asian families already based in Britain and we have strong Asian visitor block. In Russia we have raised some interest and Russian Olympic Athletic team will be coming in August and we will build marketing programme around that. In Brazil we also raised some interest in connection with Paralympics. Film festival is run by third party organisation and they have their own thoughts when they want to run. We can only influence it if we have some resources for that, which we unfortunately don't have.

Councillor Beath added that we struggle with budgets all the time and we would need firm arguments for allocating resources on this issue.

The Panel asked if the increase in footfall in Bath (6% up) indicates an economic uplift.

David Lawrence said that those two are not necessarily related - people not necessarily purchase goods whilst on visit here. What tends to happen is that people visit Bath, eat at coffee shops or restaurants and leave.

The Panel asked if there is any measurement to the night-time economy contribution to the overall economy.

David Lawrence responded that it would be for Economic Development to respond to that question.

The Panel agreed to look into night-time economy (post-midnight economy) contribution to overall economy.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the presentation and for the Panel to receive a report on the Post-Midnight Economy and its contribution to overall economy.

12 FUTURE BUSINESS SUPPORT (20 MINUTES)

Councillor Ben Stevens invited John Wilkinson to give the presentation.

John Wilkinson gave the presentation where he highlighted the following points:

- Context
- Impact of start up support
- Start-up data – some good news!
- The Council's Role?
- Future support
- National offer
- Local growth support
- Generic start up support
- Physical space
- Publicising the offer
- Conclusions

A full copy of the presentation is available on the minute book in Democratic Services.

The Panel made the following points:

Councillor Stevens said that under the Localism Act the Council will have control over bigger percentage of business rates and amount of start-ups is even more important and asked if the strategy changed in the light of that.

John Wilkinson responded said that from finance perspective we have to have start-ups because of that issue. There was a discussion in the Government about the Local Government Finance Review which indicates that Local Authorities will have to keep something like 50% business rates.

Councillor Beath said that clearly this needs to be discussed with Resources in terms of clarifying what start-ups are.

The Panel asked if there is a proper plan for the provision of physical space for businesses in the area.

John Wilkinson replied that we are trying to provide appropriate space for all stages of business growth. We try to provide for very early stage of the business. Some places in Bath and Business Centre in Midsomer Norton provide even bigger spaces. This is why we are desperate to bring forward Enterprise Areas to provide further space to grow if they are successful (provision of really good office model space).

Some Members of the Panel commented that Midsomer Norton area seem to lose a lot of employment space on regular basis.

John Wilkinson said that the team want to look at the demand in the area and what would be the best location to meet that demand. John Wilkinson also said that he was at very early stage on that matter.

The Panel asked if anyone looked at small business loans matched by the Council. John Wilkinson said that through the Local Strategic Partnership performance reward grant funding, which is recently announced, we felt that it was a bit of gap in low finance for start-ups and there isn't a deliverer of community development finance in BANES but there is in Bristol called Bristol Enterprise Fund. We spoke with them and there is a little bit of money which is been allocated from performance reward grant for the Bristol Enterprise Fund to start delivering small loans fund in BANES. It is small money but it is a start, small loans of around £2,000. The Economic Development Team would welcome pushing this agenda.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the presentation.

13 UPDATE ON THE SCRUTINY INQUIRY DAY: THE BENEFIT OF JOINT WORKING TO RETAIN GRADUATES IN BANES (10 MINUTES)

Councillor Ben Stevens said that it was successful day and thanked Donna Vercoe and Lauren Rushen (from Policy Development and Scrutiny Team) for their contribution to this event.

Councillor Stevens invited the Panel to go through each recommendation and comment on it.

The Panel was also informed that some of the recommendations in the report are already happening (such as recommendations 2.3 and 2.5).

The Panel **AGREED** with all recommendations as printed with the following amendments and additional recommendation:

- Recommendation 2.4 – To add in the final sentence - ‘This must include marketing **strategy developed to make sure that we advertise Bath to people who potentially want to settle here as a place to do business** beyond the West of England boundaries ...’
- Recommendation 2.6 – To re-iterate the urgency for that recommendation.
- Recommendation 2.9 – Cabinet to look into ways of facilitating better access to banking/finance forum locally.
- New recommendation 2.10 – Cabinet should look into whether it is possible to add entrepreneurs and small business start-up people into the key worker group so they are preferred to have access to affordable rent and housing.

14 WORKPLAN

It was **RESOLVED** to note the workplan with the following addition:

- Post-Midnight Economy and its contribution to overall economy (date to be confirmed).

The meeting ended at 3.55 pm

Chair(person)

Date Confirmed and Signed

Prepared by Democratic Services