

LOCAL ECONOMY SCRUTINY PANEL

24 October 2005

Attendance:

Councillors:

Stallard (Chairman) (P)

Anthony (P)
Bennetts (P)
Berry (P)
Cook (P)
Godfrey (P)

Goodall (P)
Love (P)
Pines (P)
Sutton (P)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Evans (Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Sport)
Councillor Knasel (Portfolio Holder for Economy and Transport)

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillors Davies

462. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no questions asked or statements made.

463. **LOCAL ECONOMY PRESENTATION**
(Oral Report)

The Winchester 4 Business Officer distributed to Members a paper entitled "Winchester District and Economic Development." In summary, this set out that whilst Winchester had high salaries, house prices and low unemployment there were a number of issues that should be addressed by economic development. These included the high numbers of commuters into and out of Winchester, areas of rural deprivation and competition from neighbouring cities.

The Winchester 4 Business Officer was a recently created post that sought to improve consultation with local businesses and key stakeholders and develop an outcome-focused action plan and strategy. The recommendations of this strategy would, once finalised, feed into the Local Strategic Partnership. The post also contributed to the development of the West of Waterlooville MDA Employment Project Group and the Silver Hill development.

During debate, the Winchester 4 Business Officer explained that she worked with a number of business representative groups, including those located in rural areas and Whiteley. Members also highlighted the importance of social inclusion issues in relation to the responsibilities of the post.

At the conclusion of debate, Members thanked the officer for her presentation and requested an update at a future meeting to monitor the performance of the role and in particular, how it could assist the development of businesses in Winchester town centre, the evening economy and the economic regeneration of rural areas.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted and that a performance monitoring report setting out the specific targets and achievements of the Winchester 4 Business post against Corporate objectives/key issues be presented to a future meeting.

464. **SECOND QUARTER PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2005/06 – ECONOMY AND TRANSPORT PORTFOLIO**

(Report LE6 refers)

The Portfolio Holder for Economy and Transport introduced the Report and answered questions thereon.

During debate, Members noted that a new five-year contract for the Park and Ride Service had been awarded to the current operators, Stagecoach. Although the new buses met Euro 4 emission standards, the contract was sufficiently flexible to accommodate a change to even more environmentally friendly engine systems at a minimal cost to the Council, as soon as the technology was practical. Details of cost and implementation date were not yet available.

The Portfolio Holder also commented that a new Park and Ride site had been included in the County Council's Local Transport Plan, and that subject to Government approval, he anticipated that the new site could be completed within the lifetime of the Plan.

Following debate, the Panel agreed that Fair Trade issues should be included within the future performance monitoring reports of Economic Prosperity and that it should be considered further as part of the Corporate Strategy Review.

In response to questions regarding the Winnall Study (that sought to identify the needs and diversity of businesses at Winnall Industrial Estate with a view to encouraging appropriate development) the Portfolio Holder agreed to involve Ward Members to improve the needs of the local residents and businesses.

Members were also concerned at the lack of information regarding a number of Council initiatives (such as the Vision for Winchester document, the Winnall Study and the Evening Economy) which they considered diminished their ability to scrutinise the performance of the Portfolio Holder. Following debate, it was agreed that a draft Vision document be sent to all Members for comment. The Chairman agreed to raise Members' concerns about the need for a comprehensive list of Council initiatives at a meeting of the Scrutiny Chairmen.

The Panel also agreed that in future reports, significant financial variances should be accompanied by explanatory text.

In response to a Member's comment that a number of issues had not been included in the Report, the Portfolio Holder explained that an analysis of the temporary Parchment Street traffic management order would be considered by Cabinet in December 2005. The Panel also noted that measures had been taken to minimise

disruption likely to stem from the closure of Southgate Street in January 2006 for major gasworks. Members were advised that a Southern Gas Networks compensation scheme was available for small business owners to claim compensation where significant financial losses have occurred due to street works. The Chair agreed to invite a representative from Hampshire County Council to address the Local Economy Scrutiny Panel on the closure of Southgate Street.

The Panel also discussed the poor quality of resurfacing works on Winchester High Street and requested further information at a future meeting.

The Panel noted the lack of progress regarding the development of a vision for the evening economy and following discussion, the Portfolio Holder anticipated that the Vision would be considered by this Panel at its meeting on 26 January 2006.

The Director of Development advised the Panel that the review of hotel and conference provision in Winchester town had been completed and that the performance indicators within the report should be changed to "smiley faces".

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Panel was assured that much of the work was progressing satisfactorily so that targets agreed by Council and Cabinet required to deliver the Council's strategic priorities could be achieved by the deadlines set and within the approved budget. However, the Panel were concerned that there were a number of items which lacked sufficient information on which to base a judgement and asked to receive more details at future meetings.

465. SECOND QUARTER PERFORMANCE MONITORING 2005/06 – CULTURE, HERITAGE AND SPORT PORTFOLIO
(Report LE7 refers)

The Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Sport introduced the Report and answered questions thereon.

The Panel congratulated the Portfolio Holder on her election to the board of Tourism South East. They also congratulated the Tourism Information Centre and its manager, Alison Woods, for the recent award of Tourist Information Centre of the Year in a regional competition organised by Tourism South East. It was noted that in the same competition, Museums Visitor Assistant Signe Higgins had received a "highly commended" award in the customer service category.

Members noted that whilst there was no Service Level Agreement (SLA) within the Council's contract with River Park Leisure Centre, the Centre had made efforts to broaden its client base primarily through working with local schools. With regard to the Theatre Royal's SLA, the Director of Development agreed to forward this to Members and the Panel agreed to receive a presentation from representatives of the Theatre at a future meeting of the Panel.

With regard to the cultural and leisure opportunities detailed in the Report, Members noted that it still intended that a major festival of sculpture would be held in Winchester in 2006 including a Damien Hirst exhibition in the Great Hall and an exhibition featuring work by Rachel Whiteread in the Cathedral.

During debate, it was noted that the Cultural Strategy would be reviewed at a future meeting, and Members also discussed the visitwinchester tourism website, financial performance at the Guildhall, play areas and the proposed Whiteley skateboard park.

The Panel also highlighted the need for the services within the Portfolio to embrace the policies of Social Inclusion and for evidence of this to be drawn out in future reports.

Members discussed the Bapsy Bequest and noted that a report would be put to Cabinet in February 2006 where it would be proposed to merge the Bapsy project with the new City Offices project. It was noted that Principal Scrutiny would be scrutinising the possible re-location of the City Offices, the Panel requested plans relating to the Bapsy Bequest should continue to involve Members.

RESOLVED:

That the Panel agrees that work is progressing satisfactorily so that targets agreed by Council and Cabinet required to deliver the Council's strategic priorities can be achieved by the deadlines set and within approved budgets.

466. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME – REQUEST FOR ITEMS**
 467. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**
 (Reports LE6 and PS195 refer)

The Panel agreed to consider the above items together.

Following debate, the Panel agreed to delegate to the Chairman the authority to agree the Scrutiny Work Programme for future meetings which Members suggested, drawing from the above discussion, should include the performance monitoring of:

- A review of cross cutting policies, such as the social inclusion strategy
- The Bapsy Bequest
- Sport and Recreation Strategy
- Work Travel Plans
- Engineering Maintenance Works
- Corporate Strategy
- The 2006/07 Budget
- Winchester 4 Business
- Fair Trade
- The quality of street/pavement repairs (particularly in relation to Winchester High Street)
- The Evening Economy
- The Theatre Royal's Service Level Agreement
- Review Cultural Strategy
- Arts Strategy
- Economic Strategy for Winchester Town Centre

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 9.30pm.

Chairman