

LOCAL ECONOMY SCRUTINY PANEL

18 October 2006

Attendance:

Councillors:

Cooper (Chairman) (P)

Anthony (P)
Goodall (P)
Godfrey (P)
Love (P)
Macmillan (P)
Maynard (P)

Pearce (P)
Rees (P)
Spender
Stephens (P)
Verney (P)

Deputy Members:

Councillor Cook (Standing Deputy for Councillor Spender)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Beckett (Leader and Portfolio Holder for Economy and Tourism)
Councillor Stallard (Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Sport)

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillor Tait

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Spender.

2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 July 2006 be approved and adopted.

3. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no questions asked or statements made.

4. **ECONOMY AND TOURISM PORTFOLIO – SECOND QUARTER 2006/07
PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

(Report LE31 refers)

The Director of Development, together with Councillor Beckett, responded to detailed questions regarding the information contained in the Report.

The Director highlighted the achievement of Winchester Tourism's recent work on short-break packaging, which had been recognised as an example of good practice by the national Tourism Management Institute. Members were advised that the Council currently received a commission on all hotel and bed and breakfast accommodation bookings made through the Tourist Information Centre and was investigating the possibility of extending this to self-catering accommodation. The Director of Development commented on progress being made towards the introduction of on-line bookings and agreed to circulate a timetable for this to Members of the Panel.

With regard to the recent Motorcross event, Councillor Beckett advised that the Council were still considering the possibility of legal action, so it was not possible at this stage to give too much detail about the difficulties that occurred during the event. However, further information would be provided to Members in due course.

The Director confirmed that although progress on the 'Business Hub' had been delayed, it was still on course to open in January 2007 as was originally intended.

In response to questions about improvements to Parchment Street, the Leader advised that Cabinet had agreed LABGI funding for a package of retail recovery measures which would benefit the Parchment Street traders and others in the City. He was closely involved in discussions with the traders.

The Leader reported that progress was being made towards both the Segensworth and the Whiteley Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), but the process had been complicated on the Segensworth initiative because it crossed the boundary of two Districts.

With regard to the Winchester BID process, the Director advised that a business briefing would be held on 26 October 2006 with the aim of encouraging businesses to participate. The Leader confirmed that useful contacts had also been made at the recent business seminar at the Guildhall.

With regard to a concern raised about the closure of the Guildhall Art Gallery, Councillor Stallard advised that following consultation with Winchester Art Club an alternative room at the Guildhall had been agreed for an exhibition in 2007.

RESOLVED:

1. That the monitoring information contained in the Report be noted.
2. **That Cabinet's attention be drawn to the strong performance of the tourism service, in particular, the recognition given to its work on short-break packaging.**

5. **CULTURE, HERITAGE AND SPORT PORTFOLIO – SECOND QUARTER 2006/07 PERFORMANCE MONITORING**
(Report LE32 refers)

The Directors of Development and of Communities, together with Councillor Stallard responded to detailed questions regarding the information contained in the Report.

Councillor Stallard commended the Cultural Services Division for their work in raising funds over recent months. She also congratulated the Museums staff for their

involvement in the recent animations workshops which had proved to be very successful.

The Panel also noted the achievements of the Winchester Athletics Club in raising funds of approximately £20,000 so far towards the new facility at Bar End.

The Director of Communities confirmed that usage of the community facilities at Swanmore College was increasing. The Council was assisting the College in improving its marketing to attract customers from a wider area. Members requested further performance information on the community facilities at the College and the Director agreed to supply this to Panel Members after the meeting.

With regard to the Meadowside Centre, the Director of Communities advised that the facility was performing well and that a report considering a range of future proposals would be submitted to Cabinet in January 2007.

Some Members expressed concern that adequate provision should be made for transfer and storage of collections at Hyde Historic Resources Centre. The Director of Communities outlined the current plans and agreed that an update on progress could be provided for a future meeting. It was noted that an Informal Scrutiny Group had been established to consider the Museums Forward Plan and further detail was provided under Report LE33 below.

RESOLVED:

1. That the monitoring information contained in the Report be noted.
2. That further information be requested on the following:
 - progress towards provision of Athletics Track at Bar End, including plans for securing alternative funding;
 - more detailed information about the performance of the Meadowside Leisure Centre;
 - ongoing monitoring of plans for transfer and storage of collections from the Historic Resources Centre.

6. **INFORMAL SCRUTINY GROUP PROGRESS REPORT: MUSEUMS FORWARD PLAN**
(Report LE33 refers)

The Chairman suggested that the Museums Service could improve marketing to visitors to the local area who might not necessarily stay in Winchester, for example people staying in Southampton or Portsmouth.

The Panel noted the hard work and enthusiasm of the Museums Service staff in organising recent successful events, including more family orientated themes, despite recent reductions in their levels of staffing.

Members discussed the Report in detail and, in particular, the suggestion that further investigation be made into the establishment of some form of Trust, in order that the service could obtain additional external funding. The Chairman requested that any further suggestions or comments be made directly to Members of the Informal Scrutiny Group.

On a general point of information, Councillor Stallard advised that a City Museum Gala Evening would take place on 30 October 2006 and all Members were invited.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the Report, including the change to the proposed timetable for completion of the Forward Plan, be noted.

7. **CONSULTATION ON DRAFT COMMUNITY STRATEGY 2006 ONWARDS**
(Report LE34 refers)

The Chief Executive explained that Cabinet had considered the draft Community Strategy on 11 October 2006 (Report CAB1332 refers). The Panel were asked to focus on the outcomes listed under the 'Economic Prosperity' section of the Strategy and indicate whether it considered any should be accorded higher priority.

In response to questions, the Chief Executive clarified that Members should not just concentrate on issues over which the Council had direct influence, but also adopt a community leadership role with regard to the Strategy. However, in deciding which outcomes should be given greater priority, it should consider which required the most urgent attention.

During discussion, a number of Panel Members highlighted the importance of focusing on the rural economy, including rural transport links and post offices; the need for vibrant town and village centres, and the desire for people to have the opportunity to work nearer where they live. In addition, the benefits of improving the Council's links with the University was mentioned.

One Member commented that the links between the different outcomes listed could be stressed. For example, the relationships between economic prosperity and health and well-being.

Councillor Stallard suggested that any references to historic buildings should be amended to historic environment to reflect the wider context.

Following further discussion, the Panel agreed that it was difficult to prioritise the outcomes without further information about how each area was performing at the current time. It was suggested that this additional information could be grouped into areas of the District to make it more meaningful.

RESOLVED:

1. **That Cabinet be asked to take into account the above proposals when it finalises the Community Strategy for recommendation to the Council.**

2. That the Panel be kept informed about the progress of the Strategy, and in particular the Economic Prosperity outcome.

8. **CONSULTATION ON DRAFT CORPORATE STRATEGY 2007-2012**
(Report LE35 refers)

The Chief Executive explained that Cabinet had considered the draft Corporate Strategy 2007-2012 (Report CAB1334 refers) on 11 October 2006. In addition, Cabinet had approved a revised draft version of the Corporate Strategy for

consultation, copies of which had been circulated to Panel Members prior to the meeting (Addendum to CAB1334 refers).

The Director of Development commented that it might not be appropriate for the Strategy to specifically highlight “high value” jobs as workers were required in all levels of the employment market.

Councillor Stallard sought views on her suggestion that the wording “important historic buildings” should be amended to “important historic environment” to reflect the wider context. In addition, the wording of “built heritage” should be changed.

Councillor Stallard also suggested that the word “cultural” be added to the phrase “improving sport and leisure opportunities” under the “promote health and well-being” section. This was agreed by the Panel.

RESOLVED:

That Cabinet be recommended to consider the following changes to the draft Corporate Strategy, to ensure that the work of the Council is directed to meet the needs of the local community:

- a) **addition of word “cultural” so as to amend phrase to “improving sport, leisure *and cultural* opportunities.”**
- b) **amend phrases “important historic buildings” and “built heritage” to reflect the wide focus on historic environment.**

9. **SCRUTINY PANEL – FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME**

(Oral Report)

10. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

(Report PS246 refers)

The Chief Executive outlined the following proposals for the Panel’s future work programme (in addition to the regular monitoring reports):

28 November 2006 – focus on tourism and a key partnership supporting this work

29 January 2007 – focus on sport and recreation with the aim of inviting a speaker from the Sport and Physical Activity Alliance

14 March 2007 – focus on economic development with a review of the Economic Action Plan and a speaker to comment on progress with key projects in this area

One Member requested further information on the use of open space funds by the Council in contributing towards sports and recreation facilities and, in particular, in relation to the Bar End athletic track proposals. The Chairman agreed to discuss this request further with the Director of Development and the Portfolio Holder.

With regard to the Scrutiny Work Programme (Report PS246) it was noted that it should be amended to indicate that Councillor Spender was the lead Councillor on the Museum Service Review Informal Scrutiny Group. In addition, the date of the Cabinet decision on the Museums Service Forward Plan had been deferred until February 2007.

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Work Programme, as set out on the reverse of the agenda (as extracted from Report PS246) and amended above be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8.50pm

Chairman