

LOCAL ECONOMY SCRUTINY PANEL

28 November 2006

Attendance:

Councillors:

Cooper (Chairman) (P)

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

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

Deputy Members:

Councillor Cook (Standing Deputy for Councillor Pearce)
Councillor Huxstep (Standing Deputy for Councillor Anthony)

Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:

Councillor Stallard (Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Sport)

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillor Learney

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Anthony, Maynard and Pearce.

2. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 October 2006 be approved and adopted.

3. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no questions asked or statements made.

4. **REVIEW OF THE TOURISM STRATEGY**

(Report LE36 refers)

The Director of Development explained that the review sought to strengthen the current strategy and highlight emerging issues, as well as celebrate the successes that Winchester Tourism enjoyed. Seven of the strategic targets in the Strategy were being achieved or exceeded and, although there had been problems delivering on the remaining two targets relating to overnight stays, this reflected a national trend. The

war on terror had significantly impacted on tourism nationally and it was taking longer than originally estimated for the tourist economy to recover.

The Director of Development responded to questions regarding the information contained in the Report, specifically highlighting the possibilities which the 2012 Olympics presented to the Winchester District. He confirmed that the Tourism Section was working closely with the Sports Development Division on three bids for training camps and that it was hoped the Olympics would see increased visits to the area.

RESOLVED:

That the positive progress being made towards the delivery of the nine strategic objectives in the Tourism Strategy be noted.

5. **CONFERENCE WINCHESTER**
(Oral Report)

Ms Hannah Lane (Chairman of Conference Winchester) gave a presentation outlining the history and current work of the Group within Winchester. Its aim was to increase business tourism to the District and provided a complete venue finding service through partnership working. Membership fees were introduced in 2004, which allowed Conference Winchester to improve their marketing and to hire freelance administrative support, which previously they did not have. Ms Lane summarised that although Conference Winchester had the capacity for up to 30 full members in the scheme, there were currently only 11, but with business tourism accounting for 17% of visits to Winchester, she was confident that this number would increase.

The Directors of Development and Communities responded to questions regarding the information given in the presentation. Winchester was marketed on its unique heritage and facilities and therefore was not in direct competition with other towns in the local area, but it was reported that it could not accommodate the larger conferences due to a lack of suitable venues.

RESOLVED:

That the work of Conference Winchester be noted.

6. **DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS 2007 ONWARDS**
(Report LE37 refers)

The Director of Development introduced the Report and highlighted the financial constraints the Council faced in the preparation of the 2006/07 Budget. With this in mind, he asked the Panel to consider the priorities set out in the Appendix of the Report and requested that they recommend any further savings.

During debate, the Panel raised a number of questions relating to information in the Report. In response to these, the Director of Development confirmed that if the LABGI funding was not received, the proposals for the Economic Development Study should still be considered, but would be competing for resources with other priority growth bids. The Panel agreed this should be seen as a high priority, regardless of the availability of LABGI funding.

In response to other questions, the Panel noted the bid for additional resources to reinstate Historic Buildings Grants. The Director also explained that Members would

decide which types of buildings should receive this funding, if it was agreed to reinstate the Grants Scheme. Councillor Stallard reiterated to the Panel that if the scheme was reintroduced, the criteria under which grants were made would have to be examined by Members.

In response to questions, the Director of Development confirmed that the urgent remedial work required to the Meadowside Leisure Centre was a top priority, in order to meet health and safety requirements. With improvements made in the future, the Centre would be able to increase its facilities and therefore income on a year by year basis, although these were currently just proposals. The Director concluded that these works were essential for the continued running of the centre.

RESOLVED:

- 1. That Cabinet be recommended that the relative priorities for the budget as set out in the Report be agreed.**
- 2. That Cabinet be recommended to continue to give high priority to the Economic Development Study, should LABGI funding not be received.**
- 3. That Cabinet be informed that the Panel was unable to identify any further savings.**

7. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

RESOLVED:

That the Scrutiny Work Programme, as set out on the reverse of the agenda (as extracted from Report PS259), be noted.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8.50pm

Chairman