

**LOCAL ECONOMY SCRUTINY PANEL****17 March 2009****Attendance:**

Councillors:

Anthony (Chairman) (P)

Bell (P)

Cook (P)

Humby (P)

Huxstep (P)

Love (P)

Pearce

Sanders (P)

Spender (P)

Stephens (P)

Verney (P)

**Others in attendance who addressed the meeting:**

Councillor Beckett (Leader)

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

**Others in Attendance who addressed the meeting**

Councillor Tait

**1. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

Councillors Beckett and Stallard both declared personal and prejudicial interests due to their involvement as Cabinet Members in actions taken or proposed in the Reports outlined below.

However, the Panel asked the Cabinet Members, as Portfolio Holders, to remain in the meeting, under the provisions of Sections 21(13)(a) of the Local Government Act 2000, in order that they could provide additional information to the Panel and/or answer questions.

**2. MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held 5 February 2009 be approved and adopted.

**3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no questions asked or statements made.

4. **BID UPDATES AND FUTURE PLANS**  
(Oral Report)

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Mr Keith Wilson, Business Improvement District (BID) Contracts and Compliance Manager.

Mr Wilson outlined the key achievements of the BID, which was now entering its second year. These included:

- £10,000 allocated to enhance floral displays;
- 450,000 pieces of chewing gum removed from the City's streets;
- The recruitment of two Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) who had been shown to have a positive effect on reducing crime, and fear of crime, in the area;
- 200 "tags" of graffiti removed;
- A successful ShopWatch scheme which linked 50 members via secure radio to each other, the Police, CCTV companies and PCSOs. This scheme resulted in around 15 arrests per month;
- The PubWatch Scheme, with 30 members, imposed bans on those who caused significant problems in establishments. Bans could be from six months, to an indefinite period, and could be for one, or all, venues;
- The expansion of the "Diverted Giving" Scheme, with 20 additional boxes placed in shops and pubs across the city. The contributions received were distributed between the Winchester Churches' Nightshelter, Trinity Centre and the Salvation Army.

Mr Wilson also summarised aims for the coming year including £70,000 in funding, which would be allocated to marketing Winchester as a destination for commerce. The advertising campaign would be supported by the publication of a new shops and services guide for the City Centre. A budget of £27,000 had also been assigned for issues which required addressing on an ad-hoc basis.

In response to questions from the Panel, Mr Wilson confirmed that a BID officer would soon be meeting the Chairman of WinACC, to discuss environmental measures that could be employed to reduce the carbon footprint of businesses in the District.

Mr Wilson also clarified that the cost of chewing gum removal in the City was £62,000. Members queried whether chewing gum protective surfaces could be installed and Mr Wilson confirmed this would be possible in particularly problematic areas, such as bus shelters, but was a very expensive technique. He would be meeting with the Head of Environment to discuss this problem in due course. Mr Wilson also confirmed that consideration could be given to engaging Neighbourhood Wardens and PCSOs to educate young people on the time-consuming and costly removal methods that discarded chewing gum required.

On behalf of the organisation, Mr Wilson thanked Winchester City Council for their support over the past year in assisting BID in the delivery of their objectives.

## RESOLVED:

That the BID's impressive achievements be noted and Mr Wilson be thanked for his informative presentation.

5. **ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL SERVICES BUSINESS PLAN 2009/10 ONWARDS**  
(Report [LE69](#) refers)

The Head of Economic and Cultural Services introduced the 2009/10 Plan and highlighted how the Division had been re-titled to reflect the support for the business community. It was emphasised that the Council's Culture and Heritage focus had not been displaced.

Due to its high relevance to the Panel, the Leader reported on a Cabinet paper concerning the Local Authority Business Growth Incentive (LAGBI) (Report [CAB1815](#) refers) due to be discussed on 18 March 2009. Cabinet would be asked to approve a sum of £400,000 from the Council's LABGI receipts, to ensure a variety of initiatives could be undertaken within the District to assist in the current recession. These proposals included training courses for businesses, business start up grants and back to work training, which would be advertised to ensure stakeholder awareness.

The Head of Economic and Cultural Services responded to questions from Members regarding the Business Plan. She explained that it had been necessary to postpone the refurbishment of the Westgate Museum roof due to concerns over the conservation and protection of the Tudor ceiling, and due to the County Council also conducting building works within the same area. The delay meant lower quotes had now been received, due to the economic climate, and this ensured that there was adequate funding within the project budget for the appropriate preservation of the ceiling.

Members asked how the Business Plan reflected the Council's 2012 Framework. The Head of Economic and Cultural Services explained that 2012 was a catalyst for existing programmes of work and did not generate a work programme or set of actions in its own right. Service plans featured linked activities designed to boost participation, such as the inter-parish games, Winchester Festival of Sport in May and the introduction of free swimming for Under 17s and over 60s from 1 April 2009. The Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture and Sport explained that a Sports Facilities Strategy was also being drafted, to ensure that new provision was in line with projected community needs and use of existing venues was maximised through partnership working. It was noted that the current management contract for River Park Leisure Centre would end in March 2011, and the Head of Economic and Cultural Services explained that a paper considering future options for the Centre would be presented to Cabinet in April. In view of the length of time that DC Leisure had held the contract at River Park, the Panel agreed to invite the Manager of the Centre to the next Panel meeting to outline DC Leisure's achievements and Centre developments over this period.

In addition to this, Members asked for an update on the LEADER funding to be arranged, and a full presentation on the wider work of the economic development service, including an update on the recession measures outlined by the Leader.

Questions were raised regarding the scope and reach of the targets shown within Appendix 3 of the Plan. The Head of Economic and Cultural Services explained that the Division had endeavoured to set more realistic and achievable targets for the coming year, in accordance with the resources available. Focus was moving from attracting visitors to central cultural attractions (eg City Museums) to reaching customers in other parts of the District.

A Member queried the tourism enquiries targets filtered through the Tourist Information Centre and the tourism website. It was confirmed that interest in the City had certainly not declined but that, as more information was available via the tourism website, the public were frequently using this method to find the information they needed.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Manager of River Park Leisure Centre be invited to update the Panel on the development for the Leisure Centre during DC Leisure's management.
2. That the LEADER Programme Manager be invited to update the Panel on the latest progress of the LEADER project
3. That the Economic Development Manager be invited to provide an overview of the work of the economic development service, including an update on the recession measures outlined by the Leader .
4. That the Panel raises no specific comment on the Business Plan extract, attached as Appendices to Report LE69.

6. **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

(Report [PS354](#) refers)

The Panel agreed to convene the Culture and Economy Informal Scrutiny Group later in the year.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Scrutiny Work Programme, as set out on the reverse of the agenda, and as extracted from Report PS354, be noted.

7. **VOTE OF THANKS**

The Chairman thanked Members and Officers for their hard work and support during the Municipal Year. The Panel reciprocated appropriately.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8.00pm

Chairman