

At a meeting of the PROSPERITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on WEDNESDAY 14TH JULY, 2010 at 5.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor Mordey in the Chair

Councillors Bell, I. Cuthbert, Howe, Old, Snowdon and T. Wright.

Also Present:-

Councillor Maddison representing the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors D. Forbes, P. Gibson, J.B. Scott, A. Wright and also on behalf of Councillors M. Dixon, Errington, Kay, McClennan, S. Watson and A. Wilson.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Committee held on 16th June, 2010

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 16th June, 2010 be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to the inclusion of Councillor Howe in the list of attendees and his deletion from the list of apologies.

An Economic Masterplan for Sunderland

The Head of Strategic Economic Development submitted a report (copy circulated) which introduced a presentation from James Garland, Senior Programmes and Projects Officer, on the development of Sunderland's Economic Masterplan.

(For copy report and presentation – see original minutes).

Members were informed of:-

- i) The purpose of the Economic Masterplan, i.e.
- to help set the direction for the City's economy over the next 15 years;
 - to establish how Sunderland would earn its living and what it would look like on the ground;
 - to identify key actions that public, private and voluntary sector partners need to take to ensure a prosperous and sustainable future.
- ii) What the completed Economic Masterplan would look like, including the Economic Vision (what should Sunderland's economy become?), Strategic Aims (what do we need to do to deliver the Economic Vision?) and the Delivery Plan (what actions would need to be taken, who would deliver them and how would they be measured?).
- iii) The key challenges to be addressed:-
- the City Centre was underpowered as an economic driver;
 - too narrow range of industries, career opportunities or well paid jobs;
 - the City was better at attracting international companies than local growth;
 - Sunderland was a City within a University but not a University City;
 - the City had a prevalence of low skills and aspirations;
 - there was a limited housing choice.

As a consequence the City was asset rich but was not making the most of what it had got. The City Centre did not serve its purpose, it was losing its younger population and many sectors were under long term threat.

- iv) The Changing Policy Context, ie:-
- the slow economic recovery;
 - higher taxes and reduction in public spending to eliminate the deficit;
 - the promotion of the 'Big Society' concept and localism;
 - the low carbon economy, enterprise, jobs and welfare.

- v) The economic vision and strategy together with its five aims:-

'An entrepreneurial University City at the heart of a low-carbon regional economy'. Sunderland will be:-

- Aim 1 - a new kind of University City;
- Aim 2 - a national hub of the low-carbon economy;
- Aim 3 - a prosperous and well-connected waterfront City Centre;
- Aim 4 - an inclusive City economy for all ages;
- Aim 5 - a one City approach to economic leadership.

Discussion ensued with Members highlighting the following points:-

- the masterplan was aspirational and needed a 'wow-factor' in order to retain young people in the City;
- outward migration had been an issue for many years and was an ongoing problem;
- the difficulties of attracting investment to the City in times of recession;
- the problems of the benefits culture and high levels of unemployment;
- the need to create a civic identity for Sunderland;
- the need to ensure students felt safe in the City;
- the benefits of improving the public transport system in Sunderland such as the re-introduction of a train network or the provision of electric buses;
- the problems associated with the slow pace of development of both the Holmeside and Vaux sites;
- City Centre development should not be to the detriment of outlying retail centres in Washington, Houghton and Hetton;
- development may be hindered given the reluctance of the banks to make finance available;
- the lack of top quality hotel accommodation was a factor in delaying the development of the City as a visitor attraction.

Janet Johnson, Deputy Chief Executive, and Deborah Jameson, Senior Solicitor, having briefed Members on the current position with regard to the development of the Vaux, Holmeside and Stadium Village sites, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the report and presentation be received and noted.

Request to Attend Conference – Future of Overview and Scrutiny

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) requesting the Committee to consider nominating delegates to attend an LGC Conference on the Future of Overview and Scrutiny to be held at the America Square Conference Centre, London on 5th October, 2010.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

3. RESOLVED that:-

- i) approval be given to the attendance of the Chairman and Councillor T. Wright at the Future of Overview and Scrutiny Conference to be held at the America Square Conference Centre, London on 5th October, 2010;
- ii) any further expressions of interest to be made to Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer, as soon as possible;
- iii) the costs of attendance at the Conference to be borne from the Prosperity and Economic Development Scrutiny Committee budget.

Centre for Public Scrutiny 8th Annual Conference Feedback

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which provided the Committee with background to the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) 8th Annual Conference that was held on 30th June and 1st July, 2010.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Snowdon provided Members with her feedback on the Conference which attracted over 300 delegates. She believed that given the huge variety of seminars and workshops it was beneficial to have three Members in attendance from Sunderland in order to cover as wide an area as possible. Highlights had included discussions on the need for strong and local accountability, Total Place and a Seminar led by Matthew Taylor on the Big Society. She was left with the feeling that having attended the conference, Sunderland was doing a lot right.

Councillor T. Wright concurred regarding the benefits of the Conference and the quality of the work and services provided by the CfPS. He believed that every member should have the opportunity to attend the Conference and hoped that some mechanism, such as a rota would be put in place to ensure fair access for all.

4. RESOLVED that the report and verbal feedback be received and noted.

Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1st July – 31st October, 2010

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Forward Plan for the period

1st July – 31st October, 2010 which related to the Sustainable Communities Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillor Cuthbert referred to item 01379 ('to approve a capital equipment grant to Company B to support economic development and job creation') and contended that the description of the decision did not provide Members of the Committee with enough information to consider whether they would like to request that it appeared on the Scrutiny agenda. The Chairman advised that in such instances, Members should seek further information from the contact officer detailed in the report and, if necessary, speak to himself or Mr. Diamond to schedule the matter on the next available agenda.

Councillor Cuthbert referred to the following items and requested that they be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee:-

01431 – to consider and approve the draft Seaburn Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document for the purposes of consultation.

01428 – to consider the review of Job Linkage, including the options for the ongoing provision of a Council-led Employability Service.

5. RESOLVED that the Forward Plan be received and noted.

Work Programme 2010-11

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which attached for Members' information, the current Work Programme for the Committee's work during the 2010-11 Council year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Cuthbert, the Chairman advised that representatives from the ARC would be invited to attend the Committee's September meeting.

6. RESOLVED that the Committee's Work Programme for 2010-11 be received and noted.

Low Carbon Economy – Policy Review 2010/11: Draft Scoping Report

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) which outlined proposals to deliver the forthcoming policy review into the Low Carbon Economy and which sought nominations to sit on a task and finish group to progress the study.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members having agreed that a core working group be established rather than an ad hoc body, it was:-

7. RESOLVED that:-

- i) the report be received and noted; and
- ii) Councillors A. Wright, P. Gibson, Snowdon, Cuthbert, Mordey and Bell be nominated to serve on the Low Carbon Economy Working Group.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked Members and Officers for their attendance.

(Signed) M. MORDEY,
Chairman.