



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Held: THURSDAY, 7 DECEMBER 2006 at 5.00pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Farmer - Chair
Councillor Kitterick – Labour Spokesperson
Councillor Renold – Liberal Democrat Spokesperson
Councillor Porter – Conservative Spokesperson

Councillor Clair Councillor Saleh
Councillor Willmott (for Cllr. Bhatti)

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70. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have in the business on the agenda, and/or indicate that Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 applied to them.

There were no declarations.

71. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

72. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

Councillor Porter commented that his views weren't represented correctly in the minutes with regard to Minute 67, Old Town Development Partnership - Progress Update and Acquisitions of Long Leaseholds. The Committee Administrator undertook to agree a suitable set of words which adequately reflected Councillor Porter's comments.

RESOLVED:

that the minutes of the Economic Development and Planning Scrutiny Committee held on 23 November 2006 having been circulated to the Committee be confirmed as a correct record subject to the above amendment.

73. PETITIONS

The Town Clerk reported that there were no petitions.

74. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS, STATEMENTS OF CASE

The Town Clerk reported that there were no questions / representations or statements of case.

75. THE 3 CITIES AND 3 COUNTIES COLLABORATION

The Service Director, Regeneration, Highways and Transportation submitted a report summarising the three cities collaborative work to date and lists some of the benefits to Leicester.

Councillor Roger Blackmore, Leader of the Council was in attendance at the meeting. He outlined some of what he saw were the benefits of working together with the three cities and three counties. The initiative came about as a result of government plans to develop Milton Keynes and South Midlands and ways in which the three cities could demonstrate the benefits of the government investing in their areas. He noted that joint working was proving useful in matters such as the proposed growth points bid, joint lobbying to improve railway stations and public sector relocations. Overall he felt that the three areas could achieve more than one on their own.

A member of the Committee queried the issue regarding accountability of the decisions that were being taken at the three cities collaborative meetings. The Leader of the Council agreed that a way of reporting back the work being undertaken by the three cities needed reporting to a Scrutiny Committee and a regular basis. He was open to ideas as to how this could be achieved.

A Committee member queried whether the growth point bid referred to at 4.5 of the report would have succeeded without the joint collaborative working arrangement and what percentage the land values in the Waterside / Abbey Meadows area would rise as a result of the improvement work paid for by the bid. The Leader of the Council said that he didn't know what percentage land values would rise in these areas. He was unable to confirm whether Leicester would have got such a good result if it was bidding on its own. However in his opinion Leicester on its own wouldn't have done so well, he noted that nationally the three cities managed to get a high share of what was available.

It was queried by a Committee Member whether the software to be used for the Congestion Transport Innovation Fund research into road pricing would be working and sufficient for the job. The Leader of the Council commented that there could be different more radical ways of addressing congestion such as school starting times being changed. Officers commented that they were confident that the software would be suitable for the task it was needed for but it would be using the Department for Transport model.

A further query was raised with regard to potential joint lobbying by the collaborative group towards the regional agencies such as the Government Office for the East Midlands and the East Midlands Development Agency. The

Leader of the Council said that the collaborative group was considering what influence it could have. It recently to lobbying action with regard to cuts to the single farm payment and the effect this would have on the waterways.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the Chair and Spokespersons work with the Leader of the Council to address the concerns of the Committee with regard to the accountability of the Collaborative Group; and
- (2) that the Committee recommends that the 3 Cities and 3 Counties Collaborative Group considers how its leadership of the relationship with the East Midlands Development Agency / Government Office of the East Midlands and the Regional Assembly.

76. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT 2005/06

The Corporate Director of Regeneration and Culture submitted a report on the preparation of the Council's second Local Development Framework Annual Monitoring report.

Members of the Committee welcomed the report.

A Committee Member asked questions regarding the schedule for outstanding Supplementary Planning Documents, action being taken to increase the amount of industrial development on brownfield land and the location of the development which provided less than 30 houses per hectare, the Government minimum standard. Officers in response stated that it was due to the lack of staff resources that the timetable for the production of two Supplementary Planning Documents had slipped from January to April. Officers expected that more employment development would be taking place on brownfield land in future and less employment development would take up greenfield land. The site built at less than 30 houses per hectare was at Gilmorton Avenue, Aylestone.

Members of the Committee expressed further concerns about the delay in the production of the Supplementary Planning Documents for regeneration areas. Officers commented that they had re-negotiated the current timetable with the Government Office for the East Midlands but didn't expect that this could be done in future.

RESOLVED:

- that the report be noted.

77. DRAFT EAST MIDLANDS REGIONAL PLAN

The Service Director Planning and Policy submitted a report informing the

Committee of the formal public consultation period on the draft review of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS8) for the East Midlands. The report also summarised the key policy issues and to provide comments, that would form the basis of the City Council's response to the consultation draft Regional Plan.

Members of the Committee raised concerns with the wording at 2.27 of the report relating to car parking standards in new buildings. It was felt that the report indicated that different cities and towns could have different car parking standards as part of new developments. This could become a tool with which to attract businesses and therefore become an unfair advantage. Officers explained that this would not be the case but agreed to reconsider the wording of the report at this point.

A Member of the Committee queried the purpose of this new Regional Development Plan when a Regional Spatial Strategy had been produced about a year previously. Officers commented that elements of the spatial strategy needed updating and the government requested that it be revised to include Sub Regional Strategies. The Three Cities Sub Regional Strategy is incorporated in the Draft Plan and showed how the three cities work closely together. This strategy also focused more heavily on housing than the current spatial strategy did.

A Member of the Committee queried whether the recent Government Barker review on the planning system was taken into account in the production of this document. Officers commented that the matters raised as part of the Barker review would be more in line with the revised spatial strategy than the current strategy.

A query was raised regarding the provision of gypsy and traveller sites in the city and whether it would be possible to meet the targets in the report. Officers commented that an assessment was currently underway which would indicate the exact figure of pitches that would be needed in the city. The current strategy indicated that 7 were required. Delivery of these pitches would depend on political decisions being taken.

A further comment was raised by members of the committee about strengthening the wording in the report at 2.25 to indicate greater support for public transport, cycling and walking rather than the promotion of additional highway capacity. This was agreed.

RESOLVED:

that officers be requested to change the wording in the report on the points relating to parking standards in new developments and indicating greater support for the development of public transport, cycling and walking.

78. LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: REVISED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

The Service Director Planning and Policy submitted a report outlining revisions

to the Council's Local Development Scheme and proposing a date for adoption of the Revised Local Development Scheme.

Members of the Committee noted that the report at page 19 indicated that the Supplementary Planning Documents relating to Abbey Meadows and Tall Buildings would be adopted later than the document indicated. It was queried whether the fact that these documents would be adopted later would hinder the regeneration of the city as they would indicate to the development community what forms of development were suitable for the city. The Service Director, Planning and Policy commented that the detail of the guidance could be used to guide development prior to its adoption.

A member of the committee suggested that the Residential Design Guide could be delayed to enable the Abbey Meadows and Tall Buildings documents to be brought forward. Officers commented that the Residential Design Guide would enable efficiencies and faster decision making to take place in Development Control.

A Committee member queried whether it would assist the cities regeneration if **regeneration** was made a corporate priority. The Service Director, Planning and Policy stated that regeneration was part of the overall priority of making the city more attractive. He did however note that there were different areas competing for resources but it would make a difference if more resources were available for regeneration.

A Committee Member raised a further point that the production of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) should reflect the priorities of the residents of the city and Councillors. In particular it was felt disappointing that an SPD had not been brought forward on community safety. Officers agreed to look into this particular issue.

Members then considered issues relating to the production of the planning documents and the frequency with which they needed to be reviewed. It was felt that the work that needed to be achieved would be challenging. It was queried what resources it would require for the performance in this area to be amongst the best in the country. The Service Director, Planning and Policy commented that managing performance was important and he would look into what would be required to improve performance and report back to the Committee.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that the Committee receive a report which considers resources that would be required to improve performance in the production of Supplementary Planning Documents;
- (2) that the Cabinet be requested to consider providing more resources to enable performance to improve in the production of Supplementary Planning Documents;
- (3) that the Cabinet and each political party be requested to

consider making regeneration a corporate priority;

- (4) that the Committee recommends that Supplementary Planning Documents in future, reflect the priorities of the citizens of Leicester and Councillors.
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79. ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Service Director Regeneration, Highways and Transportation submitted a report providing an update on performance of the city economy against priorities of the Strategy for Leicester and the Local Area Agreement.

A member of the Committee raised a number of queries about the data which supports the management of performance and its availability. Officers explained that they were expecting a joint data system to be in operation by the end of January which would be accessible by the Council and its partner agencies. It was also noted that performance would be reported to the Committee quarterly. Officers also undertook to see if Councillors could access this data on an up to date basis online.

A Committee Member queried what the Council's progress was with regard to meeting the aims of the Job Service Partnership. He also commented that there was a lack of joint up working between the aims of the physical regeneration agencies and those in the labour market regeneration. The Service Director, Regeneration, Highways and Transportation commented he that he felt the Council was now making good progress with delivering the Job Interview Guarantee Scheme part of the Job Service Partnership. He also felt that there were examples of the physical and labour market regeneration working together such as the protocol agreed with Hammersons and John Lewis to develop local labour in the new Highcross Quarter development. The Head of Regeneration Programmes also commented that national 'seedcorn' funding was available to for agencies such as Connexions and the Department for Work and Pensions to build closer links with private sector employers.

A further query was raised about the possibility of developing a WiFi system for the whole of the city to develop knowledge working capacity within the city. The Service Director, Regeneration, Highways and Transportation said that he would report back to the Committee on the possibility of this.

Committee Members also expressed concern about the performance of the Council's partner agencies and whether the Committee could scrutinise this

performance. They felt that they would want to invite partner agencies whose performance was poor to future meetings.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that partner agencies whose performance is poor be invited to future meetings to discuss how performance could be improved; and
- (2) that officers consider ways of allowing Councillors access to up to date performance information.

80. CITY CENTRE STRATEGY SURVEY RESULTS

The Service Director, Regeneration, Highways and Transportation submitted a report informing the Committee of the results of a recent city centre survey.

One Member of the Committee expressed particular concerns that there was no area committee covering the city centre. He noted from his experience of organising meetings in the city centre that there was certainly a demand for such a meeting. Officers commented that the advice they had received from the Cabinet Lead on this matter was to not have a city centre area committee at the current time. Officers agreed to obtain more details with regard to the decision to follow this course.

A Committee Member also noted that the result showed that residents felt the priority areas for action were Belgrave Gate, Humberstone Gate, St Matthews and Highfields. Yet he felt that there was no strategy to improve these areas. He felt that there was a particular need to link the city to St Matthews and to improve the relationship of the railway station to the city and to Highfields. Officers noted that priority areas were discussed at the previous meeting on the City Centre Improvements report where the Committee requested to develop investment to Belgrave Gate. The difficulties with developing links to St Matthews were also noted at that meeting. There where plan to develop each of these areas when the finances were available. Another member of the Committee commented further of the importance of improving Granby Street.

One committee member made comments regarding the improving levels of footfall in the city centre, which were up 17% in the past year. It was also noted that Nottingham had faced similar problems to Leicester with regard to the improvements of their Market Square.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that proposals to establish links between the city centre and St Matthews / Highfields be developed;
- (2) that Officers seek further details from the administration with regard to the development of a city centre area committee / city centre forum;
- (3) that consideration be given to improving the area around

the railway station.

81. SRB PROGRAMME - ANNUAL REVIEW

The Service Director, Regeneration, Highways and Transportation submitted a report informing the Committee about the progress of Leicester's SRB programme, for consideration prior to the preparation of the 2007/08 SRB Delivery Plan.

Members of the Committee enquired whether the underspend detailed in the report would be spent by the end of the programme. Officers commented that this would be the case.

RESOLVED:

that the report be noted.

82. LOCAL GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER - STRONG AND PROSPEROUS COMMUNITIES

The Service Director, Regeneration, Highways and Transportation submitted a report providing the Committee with an overview of the main proposals contained within the Local Government White Paper that related to the business of the committee and identifying implications for Leicester.

A member of the Committee queried whether the White Paper would actually deliver benefits for the city. Officers commented that the key issue to delivering regeneration was the level of governance at which it was delivered. Certain issues made sense on a neighbourhood basis, other issues needed a county-wide approach.

Members of the Committee felt that it was disappointing that the White Paper didn't consider the issue of changing the boundaries of governance of local authorities. It was also felt disappointing that the White Paper didn't go into detail about the level at which particular services should be delivered. Officers commented that the White Paper wasn't detailed in this area. It was however noted that there was the 'call to co-operate' aspect which called on relevant partner agencies to work together to address a particular issue. It was noted that there was no definition of 'partners' which meant that a wide interpretation of this aspect of the White Paper could be considered. It was also noted by one Member of the Committee that discussions they had with Ministers prior to the White Papers publication had indicated that it was never likely to consider this area. Members of the Committee felt that ways in which local authorities in the county could work together in a closer way.

RESOLVED:

that the Cabinet be requested to look into ways in which a greater Leicester partnership could be delivered to improve closer working with neighbouring authorities.

83. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME FOR MUNICIPAL YEAR 2006/07

The Chief Executive submitted a report seeking comments from the Committee on the ongoing municipal year work programme.

The Chair commented that consideration should be given to removing items from the work programme. Other members of the Committee felt that it was unlikely that all the reports in the work programme would come forward and therefore the committee could wait and see what happened.

RESOLVED:

that the report be noted.

84. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting closed at 7.15pm.

