

West of England Partnership

9th March 2007

The Council House, Bristol

Present:

Bath and North-East Somerset

Cllr Paul Crossley, Leader (Chair)
Cllr Sir Elgar Jenkins

Bristol City Council

Cllr Dennis Brown (for Cllr Barbara Janke)
Cllr Helen Holland
Cllr Richard Eddy

North Somerset Council

Cllr Alan Hockridge
Cllr Peter Burden (for Cllr Nigel Ashton)

South Gloucestershire Council

Cllr John Calway
Cllr Ruth Davis
Cllr Roger Hutchinson

Social, Economic & Environmental Partners

John Savage, Executive Chairman, Business West
Sonia Mills, Chief Executive, North Bristol NHS Trust
Faith Davey, The Care Forum
Ian Ducat, SW TUC
Professor David Clarke, Pro Vice Chancellor, Bristol University

Observers

Hilary Neal, Government Office for the South West (GOSW)
Colin Molton, SWRDA

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Peter Brown, SWRA
Cllr Muriel Kraft, North Somerset Council
Cllr Nigel Ashton, North Somerset Council
Cllr Christopher Cray, Bath & North East Somerset Council
Cllr Barbara Janke, Bristol City Council
Steve Grainger, Avon Wildlife Trust
David Rapley, Wiltshire County Council
Sarah Hamilton-Foyn, Gloucestershire County Council

2. MINUTES OF MEETING ON 8TH DECEMBER 2006

RESOLVED:

That the minutes be approved

3. UPDATE ON PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITY

The Chief Executive introduced his regular report providing an overview of Partnership activity. He drew particular attention to:

- A diagram illustrating the structure of the Partnership
- New Growth Points – approval was still awaited from GOSW for the three pilot projects – one of these was the sub regional delivery plan. Hilary Neal (GOSW) stated that this was likely to be forthcoming in the next few weeks.
- Regional Spatial Strategy – starting on April 17th in Exeter, with West of England being considered from May 15th to May 17th.
- Transport Planning. Full business case for the Greater Bristol Bus Network due to be submitted shortly to DfT
- PTEG – initial consideration of environmental issues at recent meeting followed by successful “rail summit”.
- Reports from Economy & Skills, Housing and Culture & Skills Groups elsewhere on the Partnership agenda.
- Work had started on a “refresh” of the rural strategy.
- The Partnership Office was now fully staffed (structure diagram tabled) and budget data had been circulated to the local authorities.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

4. HOUSING WORKING GROUP – WORK PROGRAMME

Cllr Isobel Cummings (North Somerset Council) introduced the work programme as Chair of the Working Group. This was a very comprehensive programme covering all key aspects of housing.

Queries were raised about publicity for choice based lettings; a common approach to section 106 agreements; representation on regional bodies; and working relationships with the PCTs on complex needs.

The Group raised the issue of “studentification” which was of increasing influence in certain areas. The Working Group was asked to add consideration of this issue to its work programme.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be approved subject to the addition of “studentification” as an issue.

5. CULTURE & LEISURE WORKING GROUP – DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

The Chief Executive introduced the draft work programme from the Group. Concerns were raised regarding the availability of funding for libraries and regarding the linkages between this Group and others operating within the Partnership.

RESOLVED:

That the draft work programme of the Culture & Leisure Working Group be finalised & submitted to a future meeting of the Partnership.

That a paper demonstrating the linkages between groups and other partnerships be submitted to the June meeting of the Partnership.

6. WEST OF ENGLAND – TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLAN

John Hallett (Destination Bristol) introduced this Plan on behalf of a working group comprising all four local authorities together with SW Tourism. The Plan had been produced by consultants and funded by SWRDA. It was set within the context of the Regional Plan “Towards 2015” and contained a number of key priorities which were set out in the paper.

The Partnership identified the need to work closely with transport plans and with adjacent local authorities. Iconic projects should be treated with caution due to financial risks. It was noted that a regional study on conference centres was being produced. The importance of skills was also noted and the need to link the Tourism Development Plan to the Sub Regional Economic Strategy and to the Joint Local Transport Plan.

RESOLVED:

That the Partnership endorses the West of England Tourism Development Plan as the basis for tourism planning in the sub region.

7. WEST OF ENGLAND – ECONOMIC STRATEGY

James Durie, Chairman of the Economy & Skills Working Group, introduced the Strategy which had been the subject of a very inclusive production process and of extensive consultation. The Strategy was a 3 year document with an annual delivery plan. The delivery plan required further work and this would be taken forward by “task and finish” groups.

The Partnership considered that the Strategy itself required further work in the following areas:

- More emphasis on green technologies, renewables and relevant “green” skills.
- Specific reference to the role of the “third sector” as an integral component of the Strategy and not just a “bolt on”.
- Focus on health and social care as a separate heading in paragraphs 4.4 and 4.7 – the sector needed greater recognition.
- The future of the airport and port generated wide debate about whether the emphasis should be on growth or development. It was considered that the section should be re-visited and a better definition sought.

Colin Molton informed the Partnership that the SWRDA Board would have a particular focus on Bristol at its June meeting. This would form part of a systematic consideration of major growth areas including Plymouth and Swindon. There was uncertainty whether or not the Board would be considering the West of England or Bristol and Colin Molton was asked to write to the Partnership with a clear agenda for the Board meeting.

RESOLVED:

That consideration of the Economic Strategy be deferred and that the Economy & Skills Working Group be requested to amend the draft in the light of the above concerns.

8. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Future meetings of the Partnership to be held at 10am in the Council House, Bristol:

- Friday 8th June 2007
- Friday 14th September 2007
- Friday 7th December 2007
- Friday 7th March 2008