

The West of England Partnership

Board Meeting

25 June 2009
BAWA, Filton

Present:

Bath and North-East Somerset

Cllr Paul Crossley
Cllr David Speirs

Bristol City Council

Cllr Barbara Janke
Cllr Helen Holland (part of Agenda Item
1 only)
Cllr Barbara Lewis

North Somerset Council

Cllr Nigel Ashton
Cllr Elfan Ap Rees

South Gloucestershire Council

Cllr John Calway
Cllr Ruth Davis
Cllr Roger Hutchinson

Social, Economic & Environmental Partners

John Savage, GWE Business West (part of Agenda Item 1 only)
Ian Ducat, SWTUC (part of Agenda Item 1 only)
Rachel Robinson, ChangeUp Consortia (part of Agenda Item 1 only)

Observers

Hilary Neal, Government Office for the South West (GOSW)
Ian Knight, South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA)
David Warburton, Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)

In attendance

John Everitt, Bath and North East Somerset Council
Diane Hodges, Bath and North East Somerset Council
Jan Ormondroyd, Bristol City Council
Graham Turner, North Somerset Council
Amanda Deeks, South Gloucestershire Council
Peter Jackson, South Gloucestershire Council
Steve Harman, South Gloucestershire Council
Terry Wagstaff, West of England Partnership
Sally Gregory, West of England Partnership
Laura Grady, West of England Partnership

Other attendees

Chris Head, Community Action

1. ANNUAL BUSINESS

Election of Chair:

Resolved that:

Cllr John Calway (South Gloucestershire) be elected as Chair for 2009/10.

Election of Vice Chair:

After discussion there was agreement that this should be a SEEP. However, there was disagreement about the ability of the Vice Chair to publicly express views which were inconsistent with an agreed position of the Partnership.

The meeting went into recess.

When the meeting reconvened Ian Ducat made a statement on behalf of the SEEPs saying that they would withdraw from the rest of the meeting. He thought that there should be a period of reflection for the local authority members. There was a question of principle at stake and he hoped that agreement could be reached and that the SEEPs would be back in the future.

Cllr Helen Holland thought it was extremely regrettable that it had come to this position and that for some there was no Partnership without the SEEPs. She hoped that there would be an early meeting to thrash out principles which allowed the SEEPs a full and active role, possibly based on the Regional Assembly. She was not prepared to be part of the Partnership without the SEEPs.

There was general agreement that it was important that the SEEPs played a more active role in the Partnership and that their role was valuable.

Cllr Ruth Davis suggested that the Partnership drew on best practice from other Partnerships.

It was agreed that Cllr John Calway and Terry Wagstaff negotiated between the parties and Cllr John Calway invited other Board members to join these discussions.

Resolved that:

The position of Vice Chair would be held open for a SEEP, to be nominated by the SEEPs group.

Diary of proposed meetings and venues:

It was pointed out that there was no forward work programme for the Culture and Leisure Group. Terry Wagstaff explained that the group had not developed a forward plan and largely focused on issues that they can do together to add value; the Partnership supported them by convening and supporting for meetings. After a brief discussion the Members of the Board expressed the view that Culture and Leisure matters were not a West of England priority. It was intended to develop the role of the SEEPs in relation to all the Partnership meetings, although they could not be members of the Joint Committees.

Resolved that:

The meetings and venues of the Partnership Board be approved and of the other Committees and Boards be noted and considered at their annual meetings.

Budget

Diana Hodges introduced the Outturn for 2008/09 and explained the difference between the forecast outturn and the final outturn, which was mainly due to staff vacancies, recharges from the Waste budget and an RDA grant, neither of which had been included in the base budget. In relation to the Budget for 2009/10, she said that 2% had been allowed for inflation, but that this could be adjusted. She had established that there was sufficient funding through Growth Point funds for the proposed additional posts.

Terry Wagstaff explained that the Economy and Skills growth which, included transfer of West at Work to the Partnership, was covered by funds from the Learning and Skills Council, the RDA and the European Social Fund. Bristol City Council had contracted with the Learning and Skills Council on behalf of the Partnership.

Terry Wagstaff said that there would be support for the Scrutiny process from the new Partnership Secretary and from officers in the authorities. There were no resources for a distinct scrutiny officer. This year the Joint Scrutiny work programme would aim to achieve a balance between considering development and performance issues, and be proportionate to the capacity of the Partnership Office and officers in the authorities and partner organisations. Cllr Ruth Davis and Cllr Barbara Lewis expressed disappointment at the absence of distinct scrutiny support because of the need for scrutiny to be member led, with independent support.

In relation to the Waste Budget, Terry Wagstaff said that it had been assumed that everything had remained as it had been on Phase 3, but it was expected that by September a Joint Waste Budget could be presented which showed how it would be moved forward.

Resolved that:

The Budget be agreed.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Francine Haeberling, Bath and North East Somerset Council
Cllr Richard Eddy, Bristol City Council
Sonia Mills, North Bristol NHS Trust
David Clarke, Bristol University
Peter Brown/Stuart Todd, SW Councils
Stephen Harrison, Price Waterhouse Cooper

3. PUBLIC STATEMENTS

There were none.

4. BRISTOL'S BID TO BE A HOST CITY: FA BID TO STAGE THE FIFA WORLD CUP

This item was deferred.

5. MINUTES OF MEETING ON 16 APRIL

**Resolved that:
The minutes be noted.**

6. RURAL STRATEGY GROUP

Sally Gregory introduced the report and said that the Group had been having difficulty in finding a role which added value and had decided that it was time to disband, but had wanted to ensure that the rural aspect to the Partnership's work was not ignored. Chris Head confirmed that the Group had struggled to find a way forward. Although the Group ceased to exist, rural checking would go on and he said his organisation was committed to a greater role in this.

Cllr Ruth Davis expressed sorrow that the group had broken up, particularly because of the current threat to the rural economy. She suggested that one person in the office signed off reports to confirm that rural aspects had been included.

Resolved that:

- **The Group be wound up**
- **The Partnership confirmed its commitment to ensuring rural interests were taken account of in its work**
- **A rural strand be added to each of the West of England work plans, in particular:**
 - **affordable housing**
 - **rural economy**
 - **access to skills and training**
 - **rural transport.**

7. 2009/10 DRAFT PARTNERSHIP WORK PROGRAMME

Cllr Paul Crossley requested papers a week before the meeting (even if in draft form) so that he could share them with members of his party.

Cllr David Speirs noted that digital infrastructure in particular needed to be accessible in rural areas.

Terry Wagstaff stressed the introduction of improved project management and risk management arrangements within the Partnership Office.

The objectives of the conference were: to consult on the preparation of Local Transport Plan 3; to show that the Partnership was delivering; to help integrate the different aspects of the Partnership agenda; and to show how people could contribute to Partnership work. It was agreed that an agenda would be provided shortly for the Conference.

Resolved that:

- **The Programme be revised and produced in a tabular form with dates of committees**
- **The Area Boards referred to in the final list be deleted.**

8. SINGLE CONVERSATION WITH THE HOMES & COMMUNITIES AGENCY

Terry Wagstaff introduced his report saying that the 'Single Conversation' involved five workstreams. The programme would be stepped up and there would now be a Project Board meeting on 14 July.

Cllr Ruth Davis drew attention to the need to timetable in the engagement of members and asked that they saw a draft programme and the draft Plan as soon as possible. Terry Wagstaff agreed to circulate a more detailed programme after the meeting.

Cllr Paul Crossley asked that the Plan included a section setting the context in relation to housing numbers. He was informed that the focus of the report was on issues relating to sites which were stuck, due to s106 or viability, with the immediate challenge being to produce a Business Plan aimed at unblocking the sites, and therefore housing numbers was not an issue in this.

Ian Knight said that delivering even the lowest numbers of housing would be very challenging and so the infrastructure programme and phasing was very important. There was an acceptance that at the moment there were no fixed housing numbers. He said that great strides had been made and they had to take this work forward.

Cllr Ruth Davis thought it useful to include a caveat that it was not based on the RSS figures.

Resolved that:

The Partnership endorsed the action taken and proposed.

9. JOINT WASTE CORE STRATEGY

Laura Grady introduced her report, reminding members of the process and setting out the stages leading up to submission of the Strategy to the Secretary of State in April 2010.

Cllr Ruth Davis stressed the need to look at the process from the public's point of view. They may not look at the Partnership's website and they were concerned about how sites for hazardous waste would be identified. It would be important to publicise the Progress Update. Cllr David Speirs thought this would be useful when the proposals were firmer, as that was when the public would want an input. Terry Wagstaff drew attention to the timetable and the need to try and get input.

Cllr Davis hoped that the officers would redouble their efforts in areas where sites were shown over the summer.

Terry Wagstaff said that that an advertisement could be placed which identified the sites; however, there had previously been a low return on such adverts. He wanted to reserve a stay on this for the present. Briefings were included in the Partnership work programme and he also planned to brief the Joint Scrutiny Committee.

**Resolved that:
The report was noted.**

10. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Thursday 30 July, 2 – 4pm at Fry's Social Club, Keynsham (reserve - cancelled)
Friday 11 September, 2 – 4pm at the Council House in Bristol