



West of England Partnership

**Bath & North East
Somerset Council**



**North
Somerset
COUNCIL**

**South Gloucestershire
Council**

Minutes of meeting of the

West of England Partnership Board

Thursday 25 March 2010, 2pm, The Campus, Weston-super-Mare

Present

Bath & North East Somerset Council

Cllr John Bull
Cllr Paul Crossley
Cllr Francine Haeberling

Bristol City Council

Cllr Helen Holland
Cllr Peter Abraham (substitute for Cllr
Richard Eddy)
Cllr Barbara Janke

North Somerset Council

Cllr Nigel Ashton
Cllr Elfan Ap Rees
Cllr Nan Kirsan

South Gloucestershire Council

Cllr John Calway (Chair)
Cllr Ruth Davis
Cllr Roger Hutchinson

Social, Economic & Environmental Partners

Stephen Harrison, Price Waterhouse Cooper, Chair Employment & Skills Board (Vice Chair)

In attendance

John Everitt, Bath & North East Somerset Council
Jan Ormondroyd, Bristol City Council
Graham Turner, North Somerset Council
Amanda Deeks, South Gloucestershire Council
Peter Jackson, South Gloucestershire Council
Hilary Neal, Government Office for the South West
Tony Bray, South West Regional Development Agency
Terry Wagstaff, West of England Partnership
Laura Grady, West of England Partnership
Sally Gregory, West of England Partnership

1. Apologies for absence

Cllr Richard Eddy, Bristol City Council
David Clarke, University of Bristol
Steve Grainger, Avon Biodiversity Partnership
Rachel Robinson, Change Up Consortia
John Savage, GWE Business West
David Warburton, Homes and Communities Agency

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Member and Public Forum - Statements

A referral from the Joint Scrutiny Committee seeking a Partnership Board lead for 'tackling disadvantage' was noted.

4. Minutes of meeting held on 25 February 2010

- i) Cllr Nana Kirsan had given her apologies and her name should be added to the Apologies list.
- ii) Cllr Roger Hutchinson requested that his comments in Item 6 be strengthened to reflect his request for progress on Quality Partnerships and Quality Contracts.
- iii) Cllr Ruth Davis requested that the agreed recommendation to Item 8 be amended to reflect the qualification agreed, ie that an environmental impact assessment would be required if appropriate, and not for all reports.

With these amendments the minutes were agreed as a true record.

5. Matters arising from the minutes

Item 6: Local Transport Powers

Terry Wagstaff said that he had drafted a clearer explanation comparing existing transport powers and priorities with the government's provision for a new transport authority.

Item 7: Major Transport Schemes

Terry Wagstaff had written to members of the Strategic Leaders Board. The 2010/11 Priorities for the Partnership included further work on promoting the sub-region's policies and actions.

Item 8: Climate change

Terry Wagstaff reported that Jonathan Porritt had offered to provide the Partnership with workshops on climate change at no cost.

6. Joint Core Waste Strategy: Final Submission Document

Laura Grady drew members' attention to a Supplementary Report of the representations received as a result of the recent public consultation, which had been circulated. The consultation and report focused on the 'soundness' of the Strategy, which was a planning requirement. A letter of conformity had been received from SW Councils and the Government Office had confirmed broad support, although they did require clarification in some areas. The main issues that arose from the other representations received were outlined, along with the response of the Planning, Housing and Communities Board on 18 March.

Laura Grady drew members' attention to the representations concerning landfill. The Planning, Housing and Communities Board had authorised the Chief Executive and Heads of Planning, in conjunction with the Directors, to reach conclusions based on the most appropriate responses and decide any further action. The Partnership Office had sought further advice, which suggested that there might need to be further consultation

relating to landfill. Peter Jackson said that if this led to more than minor changes the matter would need to be further considered by the councils.

Cllr Ruth Davis referred to paragraph 33, which refers to the capacity required to meet sub-regional needs and the possibility of multiple applications for residual waste facilities. She expressed concern about the implications of the current lack of a Strategy, given that the authorities were receiving planning applications. She felt that there was a need to tighten this up.

Laura Grady acknowledged the urgency. She explained that there was support for the approach which the Partnership had taken to plan to meet the sub-region's portion of the requirement in the Regional Spatial Strategy and distribute it across the sub-region without an upper limit. An upper limit is inappropriate because of the commitment to waste minimisation, waste recovery and residual treatment in order to divert waste away from landfill in accordance with the waste hierarchy. Although an upper limit would be inappropriate the draft Strategy sought to meet the sub-region's needs.

Cllr Elfin Ap Rees confirmed that the Planning, Housing and Communities Board had endorsed the document. Terry Wagstaff explained that during the presentation of the Strategy members had asked officers to ensure that the criteria in the Landfill Policy 8 were explicit. Representations received questioned whether it would be possible to identify sufficient locations for landfill based on these criteria. Work was continuing, with external advice, to review the criteria in the light of the representations. Authorities considered it inappropriate to include a 'catch all' phrase, since it would make the policy too broad. He thought the new criteria on landfill could be agreed in April, with consultation after the election and the results of the consultation brought back to the Board.

Laura Grady said that the reduction in the earlier assessment of the availability of sites for landfill meant that there was now capacity for 2.4 million tonnes and in future there would be a need for 5.9 – 6.5m tonnes. It was difficult to give an idea of what this volume looked like, but the Partnership Office would investigate how best to do this.

Cllr Paul Crossley said that the whole policy was flawed because it was based on waste as a problem, rather than as a resource. He thought that, with recycling and waste reduction, there was no place for incineration in waste management. He drew attention to the need to improve recycling targets and to be more aspirational. Laura Grady acknowledged that the sub-region in line with the Sustainable Community Strategies of the unitary authorities had been seeking an 85% recycling target and that the sub-region would continue to build on progress that had already been made in this area.

Agreed:

- **Members noted the basis of the outcomes of the consultation, and endorsed the actions that officers described for clarifying the supportive text in the document. They also noted that further consideration was being given to the landfill section which had been challenged by the representations;**
- **This was on the understanding that a further officer meeting be organised to finalise the necessary drafting amendments to the Joint Waste Core Strategy and any clarification of Landfill Policy 8;**
- **Should any changes extend beyond minor drafting amendments that could be recommended by the Chief Executives and Planning Directors of the four authorities, a further report would be made to the Planning, Housing and Communities Board, as a matter of urgency, to authorise the further action**

necessary;

- **It was recognised that further consultation on part of the Strategy may be necessary;**
- **Subsequently any revised landfill policy proposals be taken for consideration to the Planning, Housing and Communities Board, Partnership Board and Councils, as appropriate.**

7. Delivery & Infrastructure Investment Plan

Laura Grady introduced the report and said that it sought endorsement for actions being taken to ensure that the Delivery & Infrastructure Investment Plan was a 'material consideration' in the planning system. To achieve this a Supplementary Planning Document was being prepared. This needed to be underpinned by robust evidence. There was also an opportunity to draw in other important considerations, such as green infrastructure. She drew Board members' attention to the outcomes of the very recent Planning, Housing and Communities Board, set out in paragraph 2 of the Supplementary Report.

Peter Jackson confirmed that this was a critical piece of work which required a good evidence base, focusing on sites which should come forward and were deliverable.

During discussion the following points were made:

- The authorities knew where the local resources were, not the government, and there needed to be more robust relations with the new government about future plans.
- Appropriateness and levels of development were important; it was also important to get the right balance between what was important to the councils individually and what was jointly important.
- Bath & NE Somerset Council strongly supported the principle of the SPD, but its Housing Land Availability Assessment would not be available until November.
- Hilary Neal confirmed that Communities and Local Government was open to this approach, despite there being no Regional Spatial Strategy in place, and civil servants had understood that this was central to progressing the delivery of the Multi-Area Agreement.
- There was a risk that it was not seen to carry sufficiently weight, and therefore the scope of the SPD and the more evidence that underpinned it, the better. The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments needed to be completed before there could be consultation or submission of the SPD; the earlier these were, the quicker the work could proceed.
- Laura Grady advised that it would take at least 6 months to prepare the SPD which would include a public consultation of at least 6 weeks.
- This was a huge priority for the Partnership and if there were problems with the process, updates should be brought to the Board.
- It was suggested that the focus should be on the 5 year land supply issue, rather than other workstreams.

A more detailed programme and scope for the work would be taken to the Planning, Housing & Communities Board, together with the financial and legal implications, and further reports would be made to the Partnership Board as work progressed.

Agreed:

- **Members endorsed the action proposed to prepare a Supplementary Planning Document.**

8. Multi-Area Agreement Progress against the Development Plan

Terry Wagstaff outlined the progress achieved and underway in delivering the Multi-Area Agreement (MAA).

Page 8: Work on the Pilot with the Department for Transport Pilot was continuing. This was based on the Programme Entry Bid for the Hengrove to North Fringe Rapid Transit scheme which would be submitted to the Department for Transport by the end of the month.

Page 9: Memorandum of Understanding with the Rail Industry - There was a need to understand the planning cycles of the rail industry and the importance of having an input at an early stage, which was at least a year ahead. Cllr Elfin Ap Rees said that the meeting with Network Rail had been very useful; however, the process to secure investment was complicated. The Joint Transport Executive Committee had been disappointed that they could not sign the Memorandum of Understanding with Network Rail yet, although they would get there.

Page 10: In the first sentence 'November 2010' should be 'November 2009'. Cllr Ap Rees said that real progress had been made with the Highways Agency.

Page 11: Delivery & Infrastructure Investment Plan - This was currently being considered by the Councils' Cabinets, with the last one on 12 April. At the request of the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) the Plan would be put on the Partnership's website by 31 March; it would state 'subject to the decision on 12 April' and investments planned would be summarised. Work was continuing with the HCA and Regional Development Agency (RDA), the latter particularly in relation to employment land and premises.

Page 12: It was requested that the term 'city-region' was not used on internal Partnership documents, although it was recognised that it was sometimes helpful with external funding bodies.

Page 13 (C4): The programme of work by the universities and businesses through Science City would support the innovation, enterprise and knowledge transfer objective, and included a plan to form a company.

Page 13 (C5): Digital Infrastructure - Jan Ormondroyd said that Bristol was part of the DC10 network, which was keen to expand.

Page 14: Adult Skills Statutory Planning Powers - The application for what was now section 24 powers was progressing. Interviews of employers for membership of the Skills & Competitiveness Board were taking place in the next week. David Draycott was working closely with the Economic Development Officers. Stephen Harrison said that the work had been gathering pace over the last few months and there had been an excellent response to the advertisements for Board members.

Cllr Nan Kirsan said that it was not just Level 2 skills which were important, but also basic skills such as reading, which were required. Terry Wagstaff said that it would be important to engage with the colleges, which were best able to meet this kind of need, since it needed a very local response.

A quarterly higher level meeting between the Council Chief Executives, the Regional Director of GOSW, the RDA and the HCA monitors progress against the MAA outcomes. Initially progress on the skills agenda had been slow, but they had recently made up ground. The inaugural meeting of the Skills & Competitiveness Board would take place in April. The transport elements of the MAA were progressing well and all the planning commitments were being met. The work of members and officers in the councils and partner organisations remained critical to the delivery of the MAA.

A further column was requested in the table to provide a clear indication of whether progress was being achieved.

Agreed:

- **The report was noted.**

9. Partnership Office Budget 2009/10 – 2012/13

Terry Wagstaff introduced the budget, drawing attention to key issues in the budget report and table. He said that the Partnership was drawing on resources from a number of sources and that the proposed contributions by councils remained the same as 2009/10 over the next two years, despite the increased activity. In 2012/13 an increase was shown because of the impact of meeting office accommodation and support service costs when first the Skills & Competitiveness and then Growth Points funding streams end. In view of this, it had been agreed with Chief Executives that the position would be reviewed in at the end of this year, when the post election position on any government plans for regional/sub-regional arrangements were clearer. The staff employed using temporary funding were being engaged on fixed term contracts. The report stated that no provision had been made for any redundancy costs that may arise.

Concern was expressed about the potential for costs arising from these posts, eg in relation to redundancy. It was agreed that it would be important that the future review considered reserves to cover any such costs.

At the request of Cllr Nigel Ashton, the layout of the budget would be revised to make clear that the Chief Executive, Finance and Performance's Section's costs were allocated and apportioned to the other teams; the whole of the existing table could not be totalled across the page.

Agreed:

- **The proposed budget for 2010/11 be approved.**

10. Skills and Competitiveness Board

Terry Wagstaff reported that Cllr John Calway, Stephen Harrison and himself would be interviewing later in the day and in the following week for employers to sit on the Board. He requested that the Board agreed a process for affirming the appointments recommended following the interviews, as part of complying as closely as appropriate with Nolan guidance.

Agreed:

- **That affirmation of the appointments be delegated to the three Council Leaders not involved in the interviews and one SEEP.**
- **The list would then be circulated to all.**

11. 2010/11 Draft Partnership Priorities

Terry Wagstaff said that the actions, outcomes and timetable for the issues listed would be included when the priorities were brought back to the Board in June. He drew attention to the prominence the Partnership was currently giving to making the case for sub-regional working to the incoming government.

The following points were made during the discussion:

- Cllr Roger Hutchinson said that he thought that the Partnership should make a stronger statement to promote its work on transport.
- Cllr John Bull wanted the Partnership to have more teeth and suggested that bus quality contracts should be explored.
- Cllr Helen Holland wanted work on disadvantage to be added as part of the overall work of the Partnership, and building on the proposal from the Joint Scrutiny Committee.
- The Supplementary Planning Document priority needed to be revised to reflect the discussion earlier in the meeting.

Agreed:

That the report be noted.

12. Partnership Forward Plan for June

It was noted that a Forward Plan for the rest of the year would be based on the Priorities list and brought to the June meeting as part of the Annual Business.

13. Next Meeting

Monday 14 June 2010, 2pm at BAWA, Filton

The meeting closed at 3.40pm.

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