

# The West of England Partnership

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## Board Meeting

14<sup>th</sup> September 2007  
BAWA, Filton

### Present:

#### **Bath and North-East Somerset**

Cllr Paul Crossley  
Cllr Adrian Inker

#### **Bristol City Council**

Cllr Helen Holland (Chair)  
Cllr Barbara Lewis (for Cllr Richard Eddy)  
Cllr Steve Comer

#### **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, Executive Chairman, Business West  
Prof. David Clark, University of Bristol  
Faith Davey, The Care Forum  
Steve Grainger, Avon Wildlife Trust

### **Observers**

Kevin Tinsley, Government Office for the South West (GOSW)

### **In attendance**

David Turner, Director of Development and Environment, North Somerset Council  
John Everitt, Chief Executive, Bath and North East Somerset Council  
Terry Wagstaff, Assistant Chief Executive, Bristol City Council  
Peter Jackson, Director of Planning, Transportation & Strategic Environment, South Gloucestershire Council  
Simon Birch, Chief Executive, West of England Partnership  
Tim Lansley, Principal Planning Officer, West of England Partnership  
Sally Gregory, Policy Officer, West of England Partnership  
Jon Clark, Forest of Avon

## **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllr Francine Haerberling, Bath and North East Somerset Council  
Cllr Richard Eddy, Bristol City Council  
Cllr Nan Kirsén, North Somerset Council  
Graham Turner, Chief Executive, North Somerset Council  
Amanda Deeks, South Gloucestershire Council  
Sarah Hamilton-Foyn, Gloucestershire County Council  
Hilary Neal, GOSW

## **2. MINUTES OF MEETING ON 14<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2007**

### **RESOLVED:**

**That the minutes be noted**

## **3. MATTERS ARISING**

Simon Birch said that he would be meeting shortly with the Rural Strategy Group and the Rural Renaissance Board and would report back in December on the possibility of merging them.

## **4. SUB-REGIONAL ECONOMIC STRATEGY**

Simon Birch said that the strategy would be a living document and refinements would be welcome. Tim Lansley then outlined changes that had been made since March. The document had been produced and revised in conjunction with the Economy and Skills Group and provided long-term direction for the group.

Cllr Helen Holland (Chair, Bristol) said the revisions reflected the comments made at the last meeting. Cllr John Calway (South Gloucestershire) welcomed the strategy and the comments about it being a living document. He would take it back to South Gloucestershire for further comments and thought that currently there was a gap relating to the rural economy.

Steve Grainger asked what being a living document meant. Simon Birch said that it was a rolling three year strategy which set the context for the Economy and Skills Group, which would agree annual priorities.

David Turner (North Somerset) thought there wasn't currently enough emphasis on the scale of improvement in Weston-super-Mere, particularly in relation to Locking Parklands and science-based development. There was also a gap in relation to the scale of development outside Bristol, Bath and Weston, eg in Portishead, where there were existing planning consents. North Somerset would like to add further details on the infrastructure required, including that linked to transport, to unlock the employment potential. They wanted to maximise the employment opportunities, which had not yet been delivered in Weston.

Cllr Elfan Ap Rees (North Somerset) said that the figures in the strategy for jobs didn't match those in the Regional Spatial Strategy for houses and that this needed to be aligned. Terry Wagstaff (Bristol) thought this may be due, at least in part, to demographic changes.

John Everitt (Bath and NE Somerset) thought that it was important to run with the document as it was and to focus on delivery. Cllr Nigel Ashton (North Somerset) said the changes to the emphasis that North Somerset wanted could be made immediately. David Turner agreed that the focus, once the changes were made, should be on how the document would be used and, in particular, how it would be used to get the necessary infrastructure.

Cllr Helen Holland suggested that a glossy summary be produced which could be used for investors and for partners beyond the Partnership, and which would include examples of the work currently being carried out.

**RESOLVED:**

**That each council and the SEEPs (with their constituencies) would informally scrutinise the strategy and forward comments to the Partnership Office**

**That the Partnership Office in conjunction with the Economy and Skills Group would produce a summary of the strategy for the December meeting**

**That the revised strategy would be brought back to the December meeting for information**

**That the RDA be invited to this meeting to discuss how their plans fitted in and supported delivery.**

**5. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE**

Steve Grainger (Avon Biodiversity Partnership) and Jon Clark (Forest of Avon) gave a presentation (available at [www.westofengland.org/downloads/GIPresentationSep07.pdf](http://www.westofengland.org/downloads/GIPresentationSep07.pdf)) outlining the work being carried out to develop a web-based green infrastructure (GI) toolkit which will be available to professionals involved in developments and to the public.

Cllr Steve Comer (Bristol) asked about the overlap with information already available through the planning system and Steve Grainger said that the GI toolkit was broader. In response to further questions he said that it did not include domestic gardens and that 80% of the cost of the toolkit development was being met by the Department for Communities and Local Government (through New Growth Points) and the rest was being met by Natural England. Cllr Paul Crossley (Bath and NE Somerset) asked about the maintenance of the website in the longer term. There was no final answer to this yet, but it was on the mind of the Steering Group and Natural England was committed beyond 2008. In relation to the protection of the environment, the toolkit will be limited to flagging up issues.

David Turner hoped the toolkit would work well with existing mapping frameworks. It was noted that the toolkit wouldn't replace the work of the Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre.

**RESOLVED:**

**The report's recommendations were noted.**

## 6. DISCUSSION

Simon Birch introduced the item by saying that he hadn't done a formal update because there hadn't been a lot of change since July, but there was a lot going on.

Approval from the Department for Transport for the **Greater Bristol Bus Network** was still awaited but expected in the next few weeks, and programme entry for the **Bath Package** was also still awaited. On **waste**, there would be a member board at the end of the month, which would receive a progress report.

The aim of the **Delivery Plan** was to pull everything together, map it and cost it. The government saw the delivery plan as imperative to show the inter-dependencies and it was also important for accessing funding. The detail of the framework would be updated as the information became available. There would be no clash with the Local Development Frameworks. The delivery plan was resourced from New Growth Points funding and office resources. The workshop would be taking place on 21 September and the draft delivery plan would form part of the agenda at the next meeting in December.

**New Growth Points** was piloted in 2007/08 and based on the delivery of housing. The West of England had had three projects funded in the current year. The bidding process for future funding involved a bid which included a number of projects, but once the funding was agreed the money could be spent on whatever projects the area decided, as long as the housing was delivered. The Partnership's consultants thought that the West of England could get £30-40m in the next round.

**Multi-Area Agreements** were a new concept focused on high level strategy at the sub-regional level and there was no guidance at this stage. The issues which have been identified as possible ones for the West of England are transport, waste and worklessness.

Simon Birch asked members to give guidance about how they would like to be kept informed about issues between meetings.

Cllr Helen Holland referred to the RDA's practice of holding quarterly decision meetings, plus site visits with presentations between these as a way of keeping members informed. They also used locations for board meetings, eg the port or the airport.

Other members suggested that regular e-mails with web links would be useful, as would locations linked with agenda items.

John Savage (Business West) thought it was important to show the outside world what the Partnership was enthusiastic about. Cllr Ruth Davis (South Gloucestershire) agreed that it was important to seize every opportunity to involve Leaders and Executive Members from the other councils in local area issues, so that councils can be seen to be working together.

David Clark (Bristol University) said that the University wanted to contribute to driving forward economic actions, rather than focusing on political points. David

Turner and John Calway supported the focus on delivery rather than process. Governance issues, currently focused on transport and waste, were taxing. Visits should focus on best practice in delivery. It was up to Chief Executives and Leaders to focus on the processes for taking things forward and report back. With the Sub-National Review the relationship with the RDA was critical now. The possibility of a joint meeting with the RDA Board was suggested. Terry Wagstaff said that there was an RDA Board meeting in November at which Bristol would be involved. John Savage commented on the importance of taking forward the health agenda as well.

Simon Birch confirmed that the Delivery Plan was a process of pulling things together from all organisations and it was not for the consultants to invent any of it.

## **RESOLVED**

**That visits will be arranged between quarterly Partnership meetings, starting with South Bristol**

**That the Chief Executive will update members through regular e-mail bulletins**

**That the next meeting should focus on the MAA.**

## **7. THANKS**

Cllr Helen Holland thanked Faith Davey, whose last meeting it was, for her involvement on the Partnership and her linking with the voluntary and community sector. Faith said she would let the Partnership know who her replacement would be.

## **8. LETTER**

### **RESOLVED**

**That the Partnership would endorse PTEG's letter to the Minister with responsibility for rail issues.**

**That a separate letter would be sent regarding the possibility of devolution of at least some rail responsibilities to the South West.**

## **DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

Future meetings of the Partnership to be held at 10am:

- Friday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2007 at Keysham Town Hall
- Friday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2008 at The Campus, Weston-super-Mare

Visits to be arranged on intervening dates