

**West of England Partnership
14th September 2007**

Report by the Chief Executive

West of England: Economic Strategy- Final Draft

1 Purpose of Report

1. To advise the Board about amendments to the draft Economic Strategy agreed by the Economy and Skills Group; and,
2. To recommend the attached revised Economic Strategy to the Partnership for approval.

2 Background

2.1 The West of England Economic Strategy has emerged from work by the Economy and Skills Group including consultation with stakeholder organisations. The Strategy offers long-term direction, in accord with the 'vision' of the Partnership, to the job creation and training activities of the local councils, other public agencies, business and other interests. It embraces a wide range of activity reflecting the diverse responsibilities of partners and their commitment to working jointly towards the delivery of the 'vision'.

2.2 The Strategy is expressed in terms of objectives and strategic initiatives arranged under some 7 themes as follows:

- Business competitiveness, productivity and support;
- Skills and workforce development;
- Business sites and premises;
- Infrastructure, regeneration and the environment;
- Tourism;
- Promotion and influence; and,
- Monitoring and intelligence.

2.3 At the meeting held on March 9th 2007, the Partnership considered giving its approval to a draft of the Strategy, as recommended by the Economy and Skills Group. However, the meeting decided instead that the Economy and Skills Group should be requested to amend this draft by addressing the following concerns.

- More emphasis on 'green' technologies, renewables and relevant 'green' skills;

- The need for a specific reference to the role of the ‘third sector’ as an integral component of the Strategy and not just a ‘bolt on’;
- The need for a focus on health and social care as a separate heading in paragraphs 4.4 and 4.7 of the draft as considered by the Partnership, in order to give greater recognition to the sector; and,
- The need to secure a better definition of the approach of the Partnership to airport development.

3 Proposed amendments to the Economic Strategy

3.1 A revised draft of the Strategy is appended on which amendments recommended by the Economy and Skills Group to meet the concerns of the Partnership are highlighted. These amendments are summarised below and highlighted on the appended Strategy document.

Giving more emphasis to Green technologies, renewables and relevant ‘green skills’

3.2 Proposed amendments are suggested at paras 4.27, 5.15, 6.3 and 6.4 (B & D), and to the list of initiatives shown under Objective 1 in the ‘Promotion and Influence’ section. These amendments seek to highlight the potential growth of ‘green technologies’ as a result of rising concerns about the environmental impacts of growth and development, and the need for the Strategy to encourage this growth in preparing a ‘marketing plan’ for the sub-region. The Draft Strategy already recognises the need to tailor business advice services to the needs of environmental technologies, amongst other priority requirements.

Identifying the ‘third’ sector as an integral component of the Strategy

3.3 Proposed amendments are suggested at para 4.8, to the initiatives shown under objectives 1 and 6 of the ‘Business Competitiveness, Productivity and Growth’ section and to the initiatives shown under Objective 1 of the ‘Skills and Workforce Development’ section of the Strategy. These amendments seek to acknowledge the contribution of the social economy to providing employment, offering enterprise advice, education, training and work experience, and to facilitating a focused approach to addressing local job shortages and concentrations of socially excluded communities.

A focus on health and social care

3.4 Proposed amendments are suggested at paras 4.6 and 4.7. These amendments highlight the importance of employment in sectors outside the industrial and office categories, such as health and social care, the recent growth of these sectors and their potential importance to supporting regeneration.

Support for the Airport and Port

3.5 Proposed amendments are suggested to para 5.10 and especially to Objective 3 under the ‘Infrastructure, Regeneration and the Environment’ section. These amendments seek to qualify support for growth of the Airport and Port to growth that is sustainable, addressing both local environmental concerns and encouraging the use of low carbon technologies, and to

prioritising development that is beneficial to business users and the attraction of tourists to the region.

3.6 In addition, the Economy and Skills Group recommends other amendments to the Partnership. These comprise: enhancing the commitment of the Strategy to sustainable development (at paras 4.27, 4.42, 6.3 and 6.4 A & D, and the first initiative shown against objective 1 under 'Promotion and Influence'); acknowledging the need for improvements to local employment at Norton Radstock (at paras 4.19 and 4.41); recognising the importance of jobs outside the office and industrial categories to meeting local employment requirements (at para 4.6 and to the initiatives shown below objectives 1 and 5 I under Infrastructure, Regeneration and Environment'.

4 Recommendations

4.1 The Partnership is recommended to:

- 1 Consider the amendments to the draft Strategy recommended by the Economy and Skills Group; and,
- 2 Approve the appended draft of the West of England Economic Strategy.

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