Coventry City Council

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Briefing note

To
Cabinet

Date: 13th February 2007

Subject
Scrutiny Board 3 comments on the Council's Response to the West Midlands Economic Strategy (WMES)

1 Purpose of the Note

1.1 To inform Cabinet of the recommendations of Scrutiny Board 3 (Urban Regeneration & Regional Planning and City Services), following their consideration of four of the report on the Council's Response to the West Midlands Economic Strategy (WMES) consultation on Monday 12th February, 2007.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Cabinet are asked to consider the issues raised by the Scrutiny Board and decide whether to incorporate their recommendations in the City Council's formal consultation response.

3 Information/Background

The Board considered the report of the Director of City Development and the draft City Council response. The Board held a wide-ranging discussion about the implications of the Strategy for the City and the Sub-Region and favoured the theme of directing more decision-making to the local or Sub-Regional level.

Members were, however, concerned about the regional output gap which put the West Midlands £10bn behind where it might reasonably be expected to be economically, when compared nationally. To bridge this gap the Board strongly favoured an approach that accentuated potential economic success in the Region and built on opportunities created.

Members were also concerned about the manufacturing skills base of the City and the need to ensure that this part of the local economy was not neglected. They also considered that the quality of jobs available in the City needed to be closely maintained, and if possible improved, and that the Strategy needed to reflect this.

Finally, the Board were concerned that investment should be made in the necessary transport infrastructure, and that development opportunities were not missed through poor existing infrastructure.

4 Conclusion

The Board endorsed the draft response, particularly emphasising the importance of:

- The targeting of investment into areas where opportunities exist, rather than focusing on needs
- Ensuring that the City's manufacturing skills base was not eroded or lost
- The provision of quality jobs in the City being maintained or improved
- Clear links being made to the necessary investment in transport infrastructure

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