

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)
held at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 16 April 2014

Present:

Members: Councillor T Skipper (Chair)
Councillor M Auluck
Councillor D Galliers
Councillor M Hammon
Councillor K Maton
Councillor J Mutton (substitute for Councillor Welsh)
Councillor K Taylor

Other Members (by invitation): Councillor L Kelly
(Cabinet Member (Business, Enterprise and Employment))

Employees (by Directorate):

Place K Mawby
G Simpson
M Waters

Resources K Larsen
M Salmon

Apologies: Councillor F Abbott and Councillor D Welsh

Public Business

57. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Hammon indicated that, in respect of the matter in minute 59/14 below headed "Coventry Rail Story/Rail Investment Strategy", he owned land that would be affected by HS2. As the matter related to NUCKLE his interest was not deemed to be a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Other Interest, he remained in the meeting for consideration of the matter.

58. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 19th March 2012⁴ were agreed and signed as a true record.

59. Coventry Rail Story/Rail Investment Strategy

The Board received a briefing from the Council's Transportation Manager that provided an update on the progress and development of the Coventry Rail Investment Strategy. An outline presentation summarised the work to date.

Coventry had been historically overlooked by the rail industry in formal investment and planning strategies, despite record passenger growth at the rail station in recent years. To address and respond to and inform Network Rail's Long Term

Planning Process, which would determine national rail priorities for 2019 through to 2024, an evidence base was being developed that would set out what connectivity would benefit Coventry's economic growth. Initially called 'Coventry Rail Story', this was being developed on an evolving basis into a Rail Investment Strategy.

The Board questioned the officer and discussed a number of issues arising from the presentation, including:

- The preparation of a Business case for £30m of funding, of which £7.5m has already been secured through devolved local funding.
- £3,700 jobs expected from increased rail connectivity.
- Developing further electrification of trains to enable faster delivery and running times.
- The potential for increased economic growth for the City through the development of the Nuneaton to Leicester rail line.
- Masterplan – boulevard to Coventry Station (included in Friargate proposals), new entrance and improved setting, refurbishment/upgrade of Station buildings and improved car parking provision – all proposals are Friargate linked.
- Improved capacity through the re-designation of existing carriages from first class to standard class.
- Promotion of the West Coast Main Line to ensure its primary use.

RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Board (3) notes the update on the progress and development of the Coventry Rail Investment Strategy and requested that any further financial commitments and business cases be submitted to the Scrutiny Board for consideration.

60. **Jobs and Growth Strategy for Coventry 2014-2017**

The Board considered a briefing note of the Council's Economy and Jobs Manager, that provided details of the Draft Jobs and Growth Strategy 2014-2017 and sought amendments and/or additions to 3 key objectives and the associated outputs section of the document, that should be considered by the Cabinet Member (Business, Enterprise and Employment) in finalising the Strategy prior to its consideration at the meeting of Cabinet on 13th May 2014.

The Jobs and Growth Strategy supported the vision and priorities of the Council's Plan – Coventry Open for Business: Globally connected and locally committed. It also supported other City Council priorities in reducing poverty levels in the City; alleviating pressure from welfare cuts, reducing health inequalities and improving well-being. The Strategy reflected recent economic indicators showing improvements - unemployment was falling, business confidence was rising and new infrastructure was being built in the City. Despite the more favourable economic climate, it was recognised that many people still faced a multitude of barriers to finding employment.

The key objectives of the Strategy, including the focus on supporting young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEETs), remained unchanged from the first Strategy:

- Secure job opportunities through investment – businesses and investors continue to recognise Coventry as the right place for them to invest and grow.
- Help people get jobs – pursuing prosperity so that in Coventry everyone who wants a job will have the opportunity to secure one that matches their skills.
- Help people improve their skills – local universities, colleges and businesses will equip people with skills that businesses and investors want and will locate in Coventry to secure.

Targets set for 2014-2017, set at a similar or higher level compared to the estimated actual performance of the first 3 year strategy, had been based on prudent assumptions around securing external funding, as well as that Council annual funding remained at the same level as for 2014-2015.

The Board questioned the Officers on specific objectives in the Strategy as well as outputs and made the following points:

- The objectives needed prioritising and the Board recommended that the objective that related to job creation needed the strongest emphasis throughout the Strategy.
- The Strategy needed to be more ambitious: some targets were too soft such as recording the number of customer assists, and hard outcomes such as jobs gained needed recording. In addition, some targets were too low and not aspirational enough particularly ‘new businesses investing’ and ‘organisations influenced in their skills delivery’. Also, the outputs didn’t go far enough in driving the proposed activity forward and weren’t explicit i.e. instead of how many new jobs, it should state how many specific jobs e.g. scientists there would be.
- The table of targets gave a partial picture; more information was needed to measure the success of the Strategy. In terms of new jobs, the number of jobs lost over the same period as well as gained would show the net gain of jobs created. The same detailed context was needed for NEETs to provide details of how many people in total were NEET in each category, work, education and training.
- Following discussion on areas highlighted in the Strategy as issues, such as skill shortages and graduate retention, Members felt that no solutions were offered to rectify these situations. In respect of one of the three objectives relating to equipping people with skills that businesses and investors wanted, the question was raised as to who was predicting the skills needed and how were they going to be measured. Members did however recognise that this was a very difficult area to measure.
- Sufficient credit needed to be given to partners in improvements seen in the economy; the City Council had a key role as an influencer in this arena but could not take the entire credit for improvements made.
- The ability to put local procurement clauses into contracts was highlighted as an area that needed further consideration as a means of ensuring procurement processes were suitable for local businesses.

The Board would review progress on the Jobs Strategy as part of their future Work Programme.

RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Board (3) notes the details of the draft Jobs and Growth Strategy 2014-2017 and agrees that the points raised by the Board be forwarded to the Cabinet Member (Business, Enterprise and Employment) for her consideration in finalising the Strategy, and included in the report to be submitted to Cabinet on 13th May 2014.

61. **End of Year Review**

The Board received a Briefing Note of the Scrutiny Co-ordinator that reviewed the work of the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board carried out during the course of the Municipal Year 2013/2014, and sought to identify priorities or issues for consideration when planning the Municipal Year 2014/2015 Scrutiny Work Programme.

During the year, the Board had met 8 times and considered the items set out in the Work Programme. Recognising that the Board could not cover everything, the Work Programme was used to prioritise issues for consideration. Some issues were not covered during the year and some areas of Cabinet Member portfolios were not addressed. Scrutiny Boards had carried out their business through a range of activities including traditional Board meetings, task and finish groups and visits. Boards had gathered evidence from and engaged with Cabinet Members, Council Officers, partner organisations from the public, private and third sectors and Members of the Public.

The Board acknowledged that the involvement of partners and external experts had been of particular benefit to their meetings and had worked most effectively. They requested that the issues that the Board had not considered during the Municipal Year 2013/2014 be taken into account when planning for the Municipal Year 2014/2015. In addition they suggested that: scrutinising and monitoring Planning processes; a Board visit to City Centre businesses; the progress on NEETS; and housing, also be considered for next year's Work Programme.

RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) noted the Briefing Note and suggested that:

- 1) Future meetings of the Board would benefit from the continued involvement of partners and external experts.**
- 2) In addition to the remaining issues that the Board had not considered in the Municipal Year 2013/2014, the following issues be considered for the Work Programme when planning for the Municipal Year 2014/2015:**
 - **Planning – the Scrutiny and monitoring of processes**
 - **A Board visit to City Centre Businesses**
 - **Progress on NEETS**
 - **Housing**

62. **Outstanding Issues**

Outstanding Issues were included in the Board's Work Programme.

63. **Work Programme 2013/14**

RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) notes the Work Programme issues that have not been considered in the Municipal Year 2013/2014 and requests that these be taken into account in the Work Programme planning for the Municipal Year 2014/2015.

64. **Meeting Evaluation**

The Board commented that the presentations and briefings had been very informative. Comments given by Members would be used to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of future meetings.

RESOLVED that the Chair thanked Members and Officers for their support and contributions to meetings during the year and the Board placed on record their appreciation for the work of the Chair.

65. **Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved**

There were no other items of public business.

(Meeting closed at: 3.45 p.m.)