

ECONOMY AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 17 June 2010

Present:

Councillor	G Davies (Chair)	
Councillors	E Boulton J Hale M Johnston S Kelly D Knowles	A Pritchard D Roberts J Stapleton I Williams

44 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

Members were asked to consider whether they had personal or prejudicial interests in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state what they were.

Members were reminded that they should also declare, pursuant to paragraph 18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, whether they were subject to a party whip in connection with any item(s) to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement. No such declarations were made.

45 MINUTES

The Director of Law , HR and Asset Management submitted the minutes of the Regeneration and Planning Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 15 March, 2010

Resolved – That the minutes be received.

46 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

The Committee was requested to appoint a Vice-Chair.

On a motion by the Chair seconded by Councillor Roberts it was:

Resolved – That Councillor J Stapleton be appointed Vice-Chair of this Committee for the current municipal year.

47 **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The terms of reference were submitted for Members' information.

Resolved – That the terms of reference be noted.

48 **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2010/11**

The Chair referred to his discussions with party spokespersons chief officers regarding issues that were likely to be significant over the next twelve months. The following issues were identified for scrutiny by this committee:-

Meeting Date	Work Areas to be scrutinized
June 17	Work plan discussion and agreement by Committee
September (date to be confirmed)	Housing Strategy
November 24 consultation	Update on Housing Strategy Invest Wirral including the Support of business in the present economic circumstances NGA Broadband
January 12	Child Poverty Needs Assessment Outcomes from projects and programmes currently receiving funding and then to define the future outcomes to be achieved. (Programmes include Working Neighbourhoods Fund, Future Jobs Fund, HMRI, Business Start and Business Support Programmes)
March 14	Review of work programme

Members indicated their wish to continue at each meeting the confidential verbal updates on regeneration issues. There was an opportunity for members to raise additional items with the Chair, and any urgent items could also be considered.

Performance reports, covering the remit of the Scrutiny Committee, would continue to be given on a quarterly basis.

The Forward Plan for the period July to October 2010 had now been published on the Council's intranet/website and Members' were invited to indicate to the chair or party spokespersons whether scrutiny should take place of any items contained within the Plan. Any urgent items could also be considered.

Resolved – That a work programme listing the reports from chief officers on key issues during the year and the progress of major development schemes form the basis of the committee's work programme for the current municipal year.

49 **FOURTH QUARTER PERFORMANCE - PRESENTATION**

The Head of Housing and Regeneration gave a presentation and submitted an overview of progress made against the indicators for 2010/2011 in the fourth quarter and key projects which were relevant to the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

He gave details of what was working well, including:

- Wirral Council was currently dealing with the largest planning application in the UK, submitted by Peel for Wirral Waters, for a major development scheme to change the dockland area in Birkenhead and Wallasey over a 30 year period.
- Planners were working on the second phase of 'Brand New Brighton' which would include mixed use development along the waterfront. The second phase had been boosted by £3.9 million from Northwest Regional Development Agency and had already attracted six new major businesses to the area. It was hoped that this project would create 714 new jobs through a series of new retail and leisure facilities by 2012.
- Wirral Council had secured almost £1.5 million for new, affordable rented homes in three areas of the borough.
- The number of affordable homes delivered had improved considerably.
- A million pound plus cash injection to boost a major housing development in Tranmere, with £1,078,123 from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to enable work to begin in Whitford Road to build 56 family houses.
- Bristol-Myers Squibb was investing £3.5million pounds in its research and development laboratory in Moreton, which would support approximately 100 existing scientific, technical and related jobs at the site.
- Good progress continued to be made to create and safeguard jobs.
- The 'Wirral Apprentice Programme' had created 150 new apprenticeships within local small and medium-sized businesses.

- The number of new business start-ups and number of businesses supported through the Council's Business Start Programme continued to improve

In his presentation the Director referred to the impact of the recession on the local economy and key performance indicators relating to: the overall employment rate; out of work benefits ; the housing market; and local market conditions. He also referred to some of the planned interventions in response to the economic recession.

In respect of the financial position, the outturn position for the departments for the financial year 2009/10 had now been finalised and they were within budget.

The Director responded to a range questions from members regarding:-

- New businesses and the net effect in terms of gains/losses
- The Business Start Programme and intensive support given to new businesses during formation and the ensuing 12 months which had resulted a high sustainability rate (75/80%)
- Job creation and the need to encourage manufacturing jobs to Wirral
- A request for further information on vacancies notified and the occupational areas
- The quality of jobs on offer (earnings)
- The skills gap and the need to continue to receive this information following the demise of the Learning Skills Council
- Monitoring of the Council's Apprenticeship Programme

The Director presented the latest Job Seekers Allowance figures:-

- The total unemployment figures - 9058 (5% of the working age population) showed a 0.7% reduction
- The youth employment figures for the 18-24 age group – 2550 (9.2%) were 2.4% down for the same period last year.

The figures from Jobcentre Plus showed that there were 13,061 vacancies in May 2010 compared to 6,879 vacancies in May 2009.

Resolved – That the presentation and reports be noted.

50 **DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services reported concerning the use of delegated authority to accept a tender in the maximum sum of £111,008 for the Construction Employment Intermediary Service.

Resolved – That the Committee note that the tender submitted by Wirral Metropolitan College for the anticipated value of £111,008 was the most economically advantageous tender and had been accepted under delegated powers exercised by the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services in accordance with paragraph 14.4 of the contract procedure rules.

