

ECONOMY AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 6 June 2011

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	M Johnston (Chair)	
	Councillors	A Cox P Hackett A Hodson P Kearney S Kelly	S Niblock D Realey L Rowlands (In place of G Ellis) S Whittingham
<u>In attendance:</u>	Councillors	G Davies (Cabinet Member)	
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	G Ellis	

1 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.

Councillor S Whittingham declared a personal interest in respect of minute 87 (End of Year Performance Report 2010-11)) by virtue of him being a member of the Wirral Partnership Homes Board.

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.

2 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.

3 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

The Committee was requested to appoint a Vice-Chair.

It was moved by Councillor Rowlands and seconded by Councillor Cox that:

Councillor Hodson be appointed Vice-Chair of this Committee for the current municipal year.

The motion was put and lost (4:5) (1abst)

It was moved by Councillor Hackett and seconded by Councillor Realey that:

Councillor Kelly be appointed Vice-Chair of this Committee for the current municipal year.

The motion was put and carried (5:4) (1abst)

The substantive motion was put and carries (5:4) (1abst)

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

4 **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Interim Head of Strategic Investment and Regeneration gave a presentation comprising an overview of the committee's terms of reference, the areas of activity, key strategies and key projects.

Resolved – That the presentation be noted.

5 **END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT 2010-11**

The Interim Director of Corporate Services 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.

There were 21 indicators that could be reported at this year end to the committee. Of these 21, 15 could be compared with the previous year and 18 could be reported against target. The overall performance against the 2010/11 projects showed that 23 projects were green (Appendix 2 - all milestones had been met) and no projects were red or amber.

He highlighted the key achievements:

- The number of jobs created had exceeded the target.
- The Wirral Waters proposals were not called in by the Secretary of State and planning permission had been given.
- Peel announced that their preferred location for the International Trade Centre was at West Float, Birkenhead. This was a unique development and had the potential to create significant investment and employment opportunities.

- A major development of the New Brighton waterfront was on site and good progress was being made by Neptune Developments to bring investment and employment to this area.
- A major development by ASDA was on site in Birkenhead Town Centre. This project and the associated highway improvements would bring significant investment and employment opportunities.
- The Apprenticeship Programme had seen a further £1million investment. The Wirral Apprentice was one of the ways in which the Council was helping to tackle the Borough's unemployment rate, particularly within the 18-24 year old age range. This investment would see the creation of 146 new jobs, primarily within small and medium sized firms taking The Wirral Apprentice programme to over 300 jobs since its launch in September 2009. It had also received a North West award.
- During 2010/11 300 affordable housing units had been completed within Wirral. This had surpassed the original target which was set and has been achieved by the Council securing additional funding from Government Initiatives via the Homes and Communities Agency.
- Of the 300 units, some 119 extra care units for older people had been delivered offering housing for both rent and shared ownership and a further 23 shared equity homes aimed at supporting first time buyers and supporting developers.
- Wirral Council's Cosy Homes Insulation Programme which was funded by Wirral Council and British Gas commenced in October 2010 and was now well underway with 7654 measures installed into private properties across Wirral, which represented a 131,929,256 kg per annum CO2 saving in the borough.
- Wirral's Cosy Homes Insulation Programme offered loft and cavity wall insulation subject to an initial technical survey to establish the levels of insulation required, and a maximum grant allowance. The insulation was usually free of charge and this had been the case for the vast majority of Wirral residents who have already benefited from the Scheme.
- The Programme, which has also created 30 jobs locally, has made insulation available to private properties throughout the Borough, and included a targeted campaign in certain areas from the Council's delivery partner Energy Projects Plus, to encourage take-up
- There had been significant over performance of the HMRI Programme resulting from additional HCA investment secured to accelerate clearance and demolition to help support new build. This had been further enhanced by the higher than expected take up of refurbishment programmes such as group repair in Birkenhead and Energy efficiency improvements.

The main risks to the achievement of performance targets were the current economic situation, the availability of national resources, the continued housing market stagnation and lack of mortgage liquidity.

The Director responded to questions from members concerning current housing policies relating to affordable housing and agreed to bring back a further exempt report to this committee on the financial implications for different parts of the borough. He also agreed to provide further information to members by email regarding lettings to people with priority need status and a breakdown of homeless families living in temporary accommodation over a one year period.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Director gave an explanation regarding the calculation of Gross Value Added (GVA) per head and the consequences for Wirral having the lowest GVA in England in terms of businesses, jobs and worklessness.

Resolved –

(1) That the report be noted.

(2) That the Director be requested to report back to the next meeting on the implementation of affordable housing policies.

6 APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMME

Further to minute (14/3/2011) the Interim Director of Corporate Services presented a report comprising an analysis of:

- the funding of the new apprentice programme and the current support given to different levels of qualification within the programme;
- ways to encourage attainment of Level 3 qualifications and access to higher paid employment opportunities
- ways to improve the current support for apprentices aged 19 or over;
- ways to build on the success of the programme.

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

Resolved – That:

(1) The details of the Wirral Apprentice be noted.

(2) Committee looks forward to commenting on the work currently being undertaken to increase level 3 up-take within the scheme and asks that the idea of specific premiums be considered as part of the review.

(3) Committee notes that many apprenticeship frameworks are soon to replace the requirement for key skills qualifications with the new requirement for functional skills, and asks the Director of Children's Services to report on the preparedness of the education sector for this new challenge.

(4) Committee asks that the Cabinet Member makes appropriate representations to government ministers to seek an increased contribution to training apprentices in the 19-24 age range.

7 SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2011/12

The Chair referred to his discussions with the spokespersons and outlined his suggestions on items for inclusion in the committee's work programme for the current municipal year:

- (i) Green Growth – to progress the notice of motion that was approved at the Council meeting on 18 April, 2011 (minute 126);
- (ii) Business Start Programme – development of a more targeted approach;
- (iii) Use of the European Social Fund to provide employment opportunities;
- (iv) Inward Investment – map activity against the government's priorities for growth. In this connection, the Director reported that he was preparing a report on the Regional Growth Fund highlighting those areas where the government would give additional mentoring and support.
- (v) Housing Market Renewal Initiative (HMRI) – development of plans to address the reduction in funding.

The Chair emphasised the need for members to be involved in the scrutiny function and he asked the spokespersons to let him have their nominations for the above workstreams.

The Director suggested that it may be useful to arrange a tour of regeneration and housing sites e.g. housing schemes, Wirral International Business Park and Wirral Waters.

Councillor G Davies, Cabinet Member (Housing and Community Safety) commented on the issues raised during the earlier discussion regarding affordability and suggested that a tour of the housing schemes would enable members to see the cleared sites, repair schemes and new affordable homes that were built to a very high specification e.g. the Sevenoaks development in Tranmere.

The Forward Plan for the period June to September 2011 had now been published on the Council's 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.

Resolved –

(1) That the proposed work programme for the current municipal year, as outlined by the Chair, be approved

(2) That the Director be requested to make the necessary arrangements for a tour of regeneration and housing sites in consultation with the Chair and spokespersons.

8 EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved – That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by the relevant paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The public interest test had been applied and favoured exclusion.

9 REGENERATION UPDATE

The Interim Director of Corporate Services provided an update on major development schemes within the borough.

Resolved - That the report be noted.