

Stronger City Economy Scrutiny Panel

Minutes - 16 March 2016

Attendance

Members of the Stronger City Economy Scrutiny Panel

Cllr Philip Bateman
Cllr Payal Bedi
Cllr Paul Singh
Cllr Tersaim Singh
Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman (Chair)
Cllr Martin Waite

Employees

Deborah Breedon	Scrutiny Officer
Heather Clark (Economics)	Manager Strategic Projects/Funding
Keren Jones	Service Director - City Economy

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 Apologies**
Apologies for non-attendance were submitted on behalf of Cllrs Val Evans, Welcome Koussoukama, Daniel Warren and Jonathon Yardley.
- 2 Declarations of Interest**
Cllr Phil Bateman declared a non-pecuniary interest in items 5 and 6 on the agenda relating to public transport.
- 3 Minutes of Previous Meeting**
Resolved

That the minutes of the previous meeting be approved and signed as a correct record subject to an amendment to paragraph four on page three, delete Cllr Bates and replace with Cllr Bateman.
- 4 Matters Arising**
There were no matters arising.
- 5 Stronger City Economy presentation and Review of the Year 2015/16**
Keren Jones, Service Director City Economy provided a presentation detailing 'A Stronger City Economy for the City – City Development, Enterprise, Skills and Employment'. The Service Director advised that the presentation captures many of

the issues considered by the Panel during the year and should be considered in conjunction with item 6 on the agenda relating to the Review of the Year 2015/16.

The presentation detailed the key points as follows:

- City Economy corporate plan priorities
 - A Vibrant City
 - Business, Enterprise and Inward Investment
 - Skills and Employment
- The City Economy Team – There have been changes to the team, new appointments have been made to form a new team.
- Vibrant City Priority special areas
 - 15/16 Northern Growth Corridor key achievements (i54); a hotel study has been commissioned as there is real market demand for hospitality and a quality hotel in a stimulating market.
 - City Centre key achievements - Wolverhampton Interchange; i10; The Way Youth Zone; Sunbeam (excellent residential development) ; Civic Halls Scheme; Grand Theatre Improvements
 - Bilston Centre key achievements
- Vibrant City 2016 highlights/ priorities 16/17
 - Northern Growth Corridor - On-going work with i54, college and schools; Enterprise Zone
 - City centre - Wolverhampton Interchange; Westside; Southside; Royal hospital site
 - Connected places
 - Highlights - One public estate
 - Improved retail offer
 - Bilston Centre
- Business and Enterprise
 - Key achievements 15/16 - Wiggle, Business Improvement District; Business week; Wolverhampton leading on the redesign of the Black Country Growth Hub
 - Priorities 16/17 – Establish area based approach; Economic Growth Board Priorities; Gain increased traction with local business; invest website and city branding launched; 2016-7 City Board Conference
- Skills and employability
 - Key achievements 2015-16:
 - Launched JLR Education Centre
 - 1811 young people supported work placements
 - 5334 young people engaged with 144 local companies for employment and enterprise activities
 - Over 6000 young people engaged with STEM Ambassadors across 126 events
 - Partner in European Social Funded and Youth Employment Initiative impact Project worth £51 million
 - Continues reduction in the NEET 16-18 figure for the City
 - Completed Employability and Skills Review
 - Skills pathways developed for warehouse, logistics and care sectors
 - Skills for Growth recruitment support
 - Two job fairs attracted over 100 employers and 3500 residents

- 9 planning applications with S106 resulting in 16 apprenticeships and 15 work placements
 - Priorities 2016/17
 - Highlights - £15 million University Technical College at Springfield Campus ; £11 million Elite Centre for Manufacturing Skills
- Marketing the City
 - Marketing strategy – our approach
 - Marketing framework – our strategic objectives
 - Marketing framework – Key audiences and messages

The Service Director and Heather Clark, Service Development Manager responded to questions and requests for further clarification from the Panel. The following comments were highlighted during the discussion:

- The Council is approving its approach to account management in relation to inward investment and is working closely with colleges and schools.
- The JLR educational facility is a fantastic facility although the take up to visit by Wolverhampton schools needs to be encouraged and influence used with Head teachers to be aspirational and inspirational. The Economic and Education services are working together and will pursue and increase the level of influence to make the centre work for Wolverhampton Children as it is for neighbouring Councils.
- The traders market will remain at the same place at Westside but there will be a different offer. Westside development is at a critical point with two remaining bids being considered. Once the preferred developer is appointed, the leisure led development can commence. The development will be mixed use office, living and leisure.
- In relation to the Connected Places Programme, a model has been completed to cover parking, walking, cycling through the process for more connected bids to inform a 100% local growth bid to improve the route between the train station and Springfield Brewery site.
- In relation to small business grants and enterprise and business, small grants make a difference to small businesses and lever in the additional private business support, business champions and others involved. Wolverhampton has been the leading Black Country growth hub who are likely to be getting £2 million for business support. The priorities will be enhanced by a better Customer Relations Management (CRM) system to shared with our partners.
- The momentum to build off what we already have in place and the renewed and improved City Conference Programme; a platform for showing off Wolverhampton in Spring Autumn and Summer.
- Wolverhampton is participating in a European funded programme involving 12 Cities looking at high level skills development and graduate retention.
- With relation to skills and employment there has been a lot of work being done to move forward, a model has been captured and is working well. This is a very small team who are putting in place a framework for action including the City Work Box and work with the City Campus.

- The marketing plan for the City has to support the Wolverhampton Offer and the marketing strategy has to uphold the strategic objectives:
 - Improve the perceptions
 - Attract more investment
 - Help Businesses grow
 - Increase footfall in the City Centre
 - Increase residents and employers take up.

Cllr Phil Bateman highlighted the issues of measuring footfall in the City as a weakness. He suggested that it was important for businesses to know how many people are using the City and outer lying areas such as Wednesfield. He advised that Wednesfield was a good example of footfall from Bentley Bridge leaching onto the High Street and improving the local economy. The Service Director advised that the City is investing in footfall measuring in the City and that we are working with key partners. The Chair requested footfall data is reported to a future meeting.

The Service Development manager gave a brief summary of the site visit to the Custard Factory. The visit had been arranged to consider good practice to develop and facilitate the establishment and growth of enterprise. The Panel received feedback about the growing software arm in the Custard Factory, the fantastic and adaptable buildings and their model for future growth. Particularly of interest was the space to network and interact with other similar businesses in a cluster. The visit will inform the proposals to develop premises in Wolverhampton to house new business and enterprise working with partners; such as the proposals to develop the Grand Post House buildings with the University of Wolverhampton.

Cllr Martin Waite welcomed the importance of place and environmental space and found particularly of interest the way the business had grown organically. Panel welcomed the opportunity to learn about new and modern organisations and enterprises and how they network and communicate and grow.

The Service Director highlighted the balance of how much the Local Authority or other organisations intervene and how much they can let go. She indicated that around the City Centre and in other areas in Wolverhampton there may be buildings and structures which are right for intervention or where the Council can influence or encourage organic business and enterprise growth.

Councillors highlighted some potential areas or buildings owned by the Council but managed externally, to consider for future development:

- Parts of the Canal side Quarter
- Chubb Building

Cllr Phil Bateman welcomed the positive and aspirational line of discussion and the confidence of the Panel in the Council having the abilities to create something creative. The Chair Cllr Jacqueline Sweetman agreed wholeheartedly with his comments adding that the Custard Factory has the flexibility to be creative with space and can build or demolish internal walls to fit the businesses requirements.

She felt that the Chubb building would be more conducive to the flexibility and networking spaces that the Custard Factory holds; she indicated that there was a space in the central area for collaboration and networking in a communal space.

The Service Director agreed with the Chair that this aspiration should not be attached to existing plans for the Grand Post House in partnership with the University of Wolverhampton, but that the Chubb building may have more potential to explore this.

She suggested that the panel consider this issue again in the new municipal year and the Chair suggested that David Peebles from the Custard Factory be invited to attend the meeting.

Cllr Phil Bateman indicated that this part of the scrutiny function gives Councillors the opportunity to think aspirationally which he felt was really important in a Stronger City Economy Panel. To go out and look how others are doing things which we can relate back to our projects and programmes.

This work can be important in taking forward the economic agenda whilst saving some of our heritage. He felt this is a great opportunity for Wolverhampton and good scrutiny work.

Cllr Martin Waite asked what the impact of the Comprehensive Scrutiny Review (CSR) was on the skills funding. The Service Director advised that this did not take place as expected and that a close eye would be kept on the 'Area review for Further Education' focussed on the Colleges moving forward.

Cllr Phil Bateman highlighted that this Panel had considered a very exciting mix of actual and potential work throughout its work programme. In conclusion the Service Director advised that the footfall figures would be brought to a future meeting and that the investment delivered in Wolverhampton had been £1.7 billion.

The Chair thanked Panel members and officers for a really exciting year of scrutiny. Cllr Phil Bateman thanked the Chair for the manner in which she had chaired the Panel which had been very interesting, educational and professionally chaired.

Resolved

1. That the presentation and review of scrutiny year 2015/16 be noted.
2. That the items identified for further scrutiny be included in the work programme for 2016/17.

6

Review of 2015-16 Stronger City Economy Scrutiny work programme

The report was considered in conjunction with the presentation at item 5 on this agenda.

Termination of meeting

19:15