

Growth and Prosperity Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Monday 5 September 2011

PRESENT:

Councillor Nicholson, in the Chair.

Councillor Coker, Vice Chair.

Councillors Mrs Aspinall (substitute), Berrow, Churchill, Martin Leaves, Murphy, Mrs Nicholson (substitute), Dr. Salter, Wheeler, Williams and Wright.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Ken Foster and Mrs Nelder

Also in attendance: Steven Bashford - Economic Research & Monitoring Officer, David Draffan - Assistant Director for Economic Development, Jeffery Kenyon - Economic Development Co-ordinator, Gill Peele – Business Manager for Development and Regeneration, Clive Perkin - Assistant Director for Transport, Andy Sharp - Public Transport Coordinator & Assistant Sustainable Transport Team Manager and Adrian Trim - Head of Sustainable Transport.

The meeting started at 3.00 pm and finished at 5.00 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

23. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest in accordance with the code of conduct.

24. **MINUTES**

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2011 are approved as a correct record.

25. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's Urgent Business.

26. **TRACKING RESOLUTIONS AND FEEDBACK FROM THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD**

The panel noted their tracking resolutions; under this item an update on the tracking resolution relating to minute 16 'Highway Maintenance Task and Finish Group Progress Report' was requested.

Agreed that a summary paper relating to minute 16 'Highway Maintenance Task and Finish Group Progress Report' on the regime for gully maintenance would be submitted to the next panel meeting.

27. **BRIEFING NOTE GOVERNMENT POLICY CHANGES**

The panel noted the briefing note on Government policy changes; the Business Manager for Development and Regeneration informed the panel that at the next meeting an update would be provided under this item on a planning consultation which the council was proposing to respond to.

28. **ECONOMY AND GROWTH BOARD UPDATE**

David Draffan, Assistant Director for Economic Development, Jeffery Kenyon, Economic Development Co-ordinator, and Steven Bashford, Economic Research & Monitoring Officer, provided the panel with an update on the Economy and Growth Board.

The panel was informed that –

- (a) the Economic Development department was a small service which ensured that policy frameworks were in place to support growth in the city;
- (b) the council's aspirations for growth was reflected in key strategic documents and frameworks;
- (c) there was an emergence of new partnerships such as Local Enterprise Partnerships and the Economic Development Service;
- (d) the Growth Board was created to encourage and deliver growth and hold partners to account and was the successor to the Local Strategic Partnership's Wealthy Theme Group; the Growth Board consisted of five themes (Business, Skills, Centres, Economic Inclusivity and Leadership) and each theme contained action plans to support growth and delivery;
- (e) Plymouth's main economic issues included the over reliance on the public sector, the high proportion of claimants aged 18-24 and high rates of economic inactivity;
- (f) Plymouth had a pool of talent due to the large University and specialised in the marine sector, advanced engineering and medical and healthcare professions;
- (g) there were several successes for Plymouth's economy including the overall downwards trend of employment in the city, securing of the America's Cup and over 400 jobs to be created at Hemerdon Mine;
- (h) it was considered that the closure of Plymouth Airport would not have a major impact on the economy;
- (i) Plymouth City Council submitted a strong bid for the Enterprise Zone however Cornwall Council were successful in securing the bid;

- (j) key issues to focus upon in the future included job creation, productivity and economic inclusion;
- (k) worklessness in the city would be tackled by a worklessness plan; Plymouth City Council had two phases for tackling worklessness which included both internal and external processes; the internal process would consist of a Worklessness Officer Group and the Worklessness Plan, the external process would consist of consultation groups of external partners and a city-wide worklessness strategy;

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (l) the Growth Board was private sector led and some of its members consisted of members of the University, Plymouth City Council, Babcock, Sutton Harbour and the Federation of Small Businesses;
- (m) Plymouth City Council was not successful in its bid for the Enterprise Zone; officers were unable to specify why Cornwall Council had won the bid however formal feedback was awaited;
- (n) there were several different strands to the growth strategy; it was important that the strategy did not only focus upon high growth rates;
- (o) the Council were currently aiming to protect Plymouth airport land to see if some sort of aviation from the site was feasible in the future;
- (p) officers accepted that several longstanding Plymouth businesses had closed however it was highlighted that there were always shifts in the economy where businesses would shift and evolve;
- (q) the business community was heavily involved in the analysis of Plymouth airport;
- (r) Plymouth had created its own local growth fund, which ring fenced the New Homes Bonus, in order to help create growth and support the economy;
- (s) there were a range of apprenticeships available to 16-24 year olds across the city from the Council and its partners;
- (t) the Waterfront Bid was currently in the consultation process however a business plan would be produced by February 2012;
- (u) officers had timetabled Councillor presentations into the consultation process for the Visitor Plan;

The Chair thanked officers for their attendance however due to the large size of the topic discussed it was agreed that this issue would be added to the agenda for the next meeting for further discussion.

Agreed that David Draffan would provide the panel with the full membership of the Growth Board and information detailing their appointment and election.

29. **SUBSIDISED BUS SERVICES BRIEFING**

Adrian Trim, Head of Sustainable Transport, and Andy Sharp, Public Transport Coordinator & Assistant Sustainable Transport Team Manager, provided the panel with an update on subsidised bus services.

The panel was informed that –

- (a) subsidised bus services have a £368,000 annual budget which has been fixed for three years;
- (b) subsidised bus services can be provided due to a social requirement or to assist with converting a failing service;
- (c) the report attached to the main agenda pack contained a full briefing on the subsidised bus service provided by the Council;

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (d) £50,000 had been saved in the subsidised bus services budget due to a reduction in service;
- (e) community transport, subsidised bus services, aspects of the park and ride service and the taxi bus service all came out of the public transport budget which was approximately;
- (f) there was a limited budget for subsidised bus services; this budget also included an element of section 106 funding;
- (g) it was important for patronage figures to remain stable in order to maintain the bus service provided;
- (h) a commercial operator was able to withdraw a bus service in 56 days, the Council also had this power;
- (i) the subsidised bus service is monitored on a monthly basis, a review of the service takes place on an annual basis; a review was due to take place at the end of 2011;
- (j) the tender for the subsidised bus services lasts for three years; changes to the service within this period would result in a review;
- (k) section 106 money was approximately £20,000 of the subsidised bus services budget;

- (l) the council was responsible for paying the rates for the Park and Ride bus service; other costs associated with the Park and Ride would be emailed to panel members;
- (m) the data from handheld ticket machines enabled officers to collate patronage figures;
- (n) officers were unsure as to the number of passengers with a bus pass that frequented buses however this information would be emailed to the panel;
- (o) Councillors were an effective mechanism in feeding back patrons' issues to the Sustainable Transport Department
- (p) the bus service that ran through the industrial estate in Estover ran on a limited timeframe due to the reduced patronage figures;

Agreed that Adrian Trim would provide members with the figures associated with the Park and Ride bus service as well as the number of passengers with a bus pass that frequented buses in the city.

30. **CONNECTIVITY (ROAD/ RAIL/ DIGITAL)**

Clive Perkin, Assistant Director for Transport, provided the panel with a verbal update on connectivity (road/ rail/ digital).

The panel was informed that –

- (a) BT was currently working on providing high speed broadband to some Plymouth properties;
- (b) officers were still in discussions to maintain and improve performance of the A38 corridor;
- (c) officers were pursuing improvements to the rail franchise in order to enable the possibility of an early morning direct train from Plymouth to London;

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (d) the closure of Plymouth airport did not equate to a higher risk of keeping Plymouth Railway network open; it was considered that the answer was in an improved rail service;
- (e) First Group, the owner of the present Great Western franchise, were terminating the current franchise agreement at the end of March 2013;
- (f) it was possible to aim for a three hour direct journey time from Plymouth to London without having to realign the rail network;
- (g) the issue if rail connectivity was to be added to Plymouth's Local Enterprise Partnership agenda;

- (h) officers were still in discussion with Devon Council regarding the de-trunking of the A38;

The Chair thanked Clive Perkin for his attendance.

31. **ANNUAL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORT 2010/11**

The Growth and Prosperity panel noted the Annual Overview and Scrutiny Report 2010/2011.

32. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The panel noted their work programme for 2011/12.

33. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.