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**GREAT YARMOUTH ECONOMIC FORUM**

**11 September 2008 – 4.00 pm**

**PRESENT:**

Councillor Plant (in the Chair); Councillor Collins (Norfolk County Council), H Foal (LSC), R Parkinson (Great Yarmouth College), I McCreadie (Chamber of Commerce), S Earl (Heritage Partnership) and R Perkins (Waveney Economic Partnership).

Mr T Howard, Mr P Wright, Mr P Warner and Mrs C Webb (Borough Council Officials).

Mr T Leonard (LSP Officer)

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence had been received from J Holt, T Aydin, Councillor Reynolds, M Pearson and J Steward.

**2. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meetings held on 18 June and 14 August 2008 were agreed.

**3. THE ECONOMIC FORUM – THE WAY FORWARD**

The Economic Development Officer reported the work he had undertaken following discussions which had taken place at the recent special meeting held on 14 August 2008. He circulated a paper which detailed the suggested make-up of the four identified groups.

- Group A – Perceptions/Inward Investment
- Group B – Enterprise/Business Growth
- Group C – Skills and Employment (Supply)
- Group D – Infrastructure/Land Availability/Plans/Prospectus

The remit of the four Work Groups would be to deliver the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS), to set targets and to monitor/report performance. Richard Perkins suggested that the Forum should use the specific LAA 2 targets, the local Indicators being the most important.

The Economic Development Officer envisaged these groups as being focussed delivery bodies which would be free to add new co-opted and seconded members where appropriate and that each group would report to the Economic Forum (acting as a Reference Group), perhaps twice a year. A decision would need to be made regarding how these groups would be serviced.

The circulated paper listed suggested attendees, together with the names of suggested Chairman/Champion, Vice-Chairman and Co-ordinator for each group. These four Groups would need to be populated with names.

The Chairman reported that the remit of the groups were open for discussion.

Councillor Collins stressed the importance of involvement of County Councillors and Officers in the four groups. The Economic Development Officer also stressed that there may be other interests that might need to be represented across the four groups.

The Conservation and Heritage Manager requested that the Great Yarmouth Heritage Partnership be added as a suggested attendee in the Image Group.

The Chairman asked whether the Forum was happy with the proposed structure and themes of the groups, as they would be the tools to drive the Forum forward during the next twelve months. Providing, the main structures were in place, specific targets could be discussed at a future meeting.

The Economic Development Officer informed the meeting that he would write to all Forum members who were not present at the meeting to keep

them fully informed of the proposals. Specific targets would need to be identified and discussed at the first meeting of each group, which would be held before 1st December 2008.

Robin Parkinson was concerned that the skills, employment and business growth issues were presented as two separate packages, when, in his view, they were much closer together. He agreed that it was imperative to draw together activities to meet both the supply and demand of labour market within the Borough.

There was a fine line dividing the supply of labour and employment and a brokerage system could be introduced to bring the two sides together. He agreed that he could identify the people concerned who could act as brokers, which could lead to a lightweight, semi-permanent structure, similar to a "clearing house", which could perhaps be facilitated and funded by the LSC.

The Head of Regeneration and Environment reiterated that these four identified Working Groups should meet prior to the next Forum meeting, which would take place on 11 December 2008. These groups should consider their remit and produce delivery plans which corresponded to the requirements of the SCS.

The Chairman reminded the Forum that business growth in these uncertain times would be unlikely. Business competitiveness and business retention were perhaps more appropriate.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) That the proposed Working Groups:
  - Image
  - Enterprise/Growth
  - Skills/Employment
  - Infrastructure be agreed as the way forward.
- (ii) That these Groups would report twice a year to the Economic Forum, acting as a Reference Group, which would monitor and evaluate their progress.
- (iii) That each of the Groups would meet to set targets prior to the next meeting of the Economic Forum which would be held on 11 December 2008.

#### 4. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

The Forum considered the Sustainable Community Strategy and the delivery plan, together with the Economic Development Officer's proposed alternative key aims.

The Economic Development Officer reported that the Economic Forum was concerned with Key Aim 4, A Flourishing Economy, and that he had reviewed the objectives set out in the draft Sustainable Community Strategy and was proposing an amended set which would relate more to the remit of the Forum. It was imperative that the Forum understood how it related to the Sustainable Community Strategy and that it should set targets and outcomes which the Forum wished to be judged by.

The Head of Regeneration and Environment reported that in setting goals and targets flowing from the SCS, it was important that the correct syntax and grammar was used, as otherwise, confusion could arise over both meaning and intention.

The Forum was concerned about objective 4.6 Sustainable Transport, as transport provision was largely out of the hands of the Council. It was suggested that the heading for 4.6, should be Transport, with a sub-group heading Sustainable. It was agreed that Peter Wright should hold discussions with Peter Warner to identify an acceptable title for Key Aim 4.6.

Robin Parkinson felt that the SCS was lacking in that it did not seem to recognise the full value of education and the impact of public spend on education on the local economy. A university, which could be sited between Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft, would create sustainable tourism throughout the year, with students and visiting parents using holiday accommodation. By including this, the SCS would be supporting an ambition of the Economic Forum.

The Economic Development Officer stated that it was important that the SCS covered all aspects, as, if ambitions were not stated within the document, this could be the crucial hook for future funding. If it was not detailed in the strategy, it might be overlooked for funding.

The Chairman asked whether officers had identified these potential funding "hooks". The Conservation and Heritage Manager reported that

he had not considered this implication and would, therefore, need to have an in depth look at the document to ensure that funding opportunities for heritage projects were not missed.

Tim Leonard reported that in the original 20/20 Vision document, the provision of an outer harbour had been included, which gave the document a “Visionary” feel. He felt that other projects which the people of the Borough of Great Yarmouth aspired to, should be included, for example, the third river crossing. If this was included in the strategy, this could prove to be central in the lobbying process for the road transport infrastructure within the Borough.

The Chairman suggested that the TENS “Priority Route” Network could be included in the strategy. This would be aiming for European money to complete the transport infrastructure between Great Yarmouth and Europe, including the dualling of the Acle Straight, improvements to the A11 and the A47. It could be that if this was not contained within the strategy, then it might be omitted by the ISC for further bidding consideration.

The Head of Regeneration and Environment endorsed the inclusion of the third river crossing and the TENS network, as it was imperative that the SCS not only sets out specific actions but also highlights “big ticket” aspirations for which the Borough would need external support.

The Chairman expanded the point further by stating that the wish list could include links to the University of East Anglia, for example, Bournemouth University provided sustainable tourism through education.

Further higher education would lead to a workforce which could be employed in the Renewables and Engineering sectors of the Borough. Education was paramount in the building of a strong sustainable community.

Robin Parkinson endorsed this suggestion and offered to submit a short document in support and suggested that this could become part of the remit of the Image Group.

The Chairman highlighted that the URC was omitted from the strategy. The URC affected employment areas, residential areas and the

upgrading of brownfield sites, by bringing them back into productivity for community use and that this should be included within the strategy.

The Chairman reiterated that as a result of these discussions, the Forum felt it needed more time to finalise its consultation submission.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) That the eleven revised headings for key aim 4, A Flourishing Economy, be adopted by the Economic Forum, apart from 4.6, Sustainable Transport, which required clarification.
  
- (ii) That the Key Aim 4 document prepared by the Economic Development Officer, including the revised headings to Key Aim 4, which had been agreed today, be forwarded to the SCS Co-ordinator with a request that these modifications be made to the Sustainable Community Strategy.

## **5. LSP STOCKTAKE – CONSULTATION**

The Economic Forum was asked to consider the LSP Stocktake document. The Forum discussed the report which considered whether the LSP was fit for purpose, its strengths, whether there were areas for improvement and suggested solutions. The consultation period for the LSP Stocktake ended on 26 September 2008.

The Head of Regeneration and Environment reminded the Forum that they should take note of the proposal that the four existing Fora should cease. He stated that if the Fora were dismantled, other groups would need to be set up to deliver the Action Plan. In view of the earlier decision taken regarding the new proposed structure, he felt that it was imperative that the Economic Forum compiled and submitted a response before the deadline for consultation.

The Head of Regeneration and Environment drew attention to page 23, item 7, Managing Resources More Effectively, where it stated that a Resources Strategy would be developed, which would co-ordinate all external funding streams, such as the Working Neighbourhoods Fund and enterpriseGY (LEGI). He was concerned by the proposal to disband the enterprise GY Board and felt that enterpriseGY required a specific governance structure.

Tim Leonard informed the Forum that County had already set up a Resources Advisory Group to ensure the maximum number of links with other similar programmes, which would lead to greater integration of area grant programmes.

The Head of Regeneration and Environment reiterated that this type of service provision needed to be governed and managed and pointed to the fact that there had been no proposal to scrap the Neighbourhood Management Board.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) That the Economic Forum did not accept the proposal for the Economic Forum to be disbanded.
- (ii) That the proposal to disband the enterpriseGY Board be not endorsed by the Economic Forum.
- (iii) That the Chairman of the Economic Forum would attend the Sustainable Community Strategy meeting on 25 September 2008.

**6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next scheduled meeting of the Economic Forum would take place on 11 December 2008 at 4.00 pm, venue to be announced.

**7. CLOSURE OF MEETING**

The meeting ended at 5.55 pm.