
MEETING	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP BOARD
DATE	13 MARCH 2007
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS STEVE GALLOWAY (CHAIR), KIRK (VICE-CHAIR), MERRETT, D'AGORNE, FRASER (SUBSTITUTE FOR BLANCHARD) AND HYMAN (SUBSTITUTE FOR JAMIESON-BALL) JEZ WILLARD (RETAIL SECTOR), MR ANDREW SCOTT (FIRST STOP YORK TOURISM PARTNERSHIP), MR LEN CRUDDAS (CHAMBER OF COMMERCE), PROF TONY ROBARDS (UNIVERSITY OF YORK) AND MR MARK SESSIONS (MANUFACTURING SECTOR)
APOLOGIES	COUNCILLORS HOLVEY, JAMIESON-BALL, MORLEY, AND BLANCHARD, MR BRIAN ANDERSON (TRADES UNIONS), MR MIKE GALLOWAY (EDUCATION/LIFELONG LEARNING PARTNERSHIP), MR KEVIN MOSS (FINANCE SECTOR) AND JULIE HUTTON (YORKSHIRE FORWARD)

15. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were invited to declare at this point in the meeting any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda.

The following personal non prejudicial interests were declared at the meeting:

Cllr Merrett is employed in the Rail Industry by Corus Infrastructure Services.

Cllr D'Agorne is employed by York College.

Cllr Hyman is a member of Science City York.

Len Cruddas is a member of the York Tourism Bureau.

16. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the last meeting held on 26 September 2006 be approved and signed as a correct record.

17. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak under the Council's Public Participation scheme.

18. YORK TOURISM STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Members considered a report which outlined the proposed new Tourism Strategy for the City of York, which had been developed by the York Tourism Partnership. The report highlighted objectives and priorities for tourism in York over the next few years, based on the fundamental principle of increasing visitor spending and length of stay.

The attached Tourism Strategy outlined the current strengths of tourism in York – very much a success story in the York economy, as demonstrated by the 52% increase in visitor spending from 1993-2005, the growing festivals and cultural offer and substantial commercial investment, especially in the retail, bars and limited service hotel sectors. The Strategy however recognised that in a competitive environment the city needed to be able to respond to internal and external pressures:

- Recent trends showing falling hotel occupancy in 2006
- The long term decline in overseas visitor numbers (from a third of York's visitors in 1995-96 to a fifth today)
- A change in visitor characteristics in the past 2-3 years which reflects an older and less affluent visitor profile (even though visitor spend has continued to increase)
- Changing visitor expectations and opportunities (through external developments such as low cost flights, alternative leisure spending opportunities etc)

The following points were made:

- It was noted that wider private sector involvement in this would strengthen the strategy, and keeping all partners actively engaged and fully supportive of the strategy was key.
- The strategy lacked vision and work was needed to provide a clearer consensus on where the partnership was going.
- The objective on addressing the specific skills and training needs of tourism businesses and their workforce should reflect the nature of the workforce which primarily consisted of low paid workers, although pay, and terms and conditions, had improved.
- Increasing sustainability issues should be reflected in the objectives, with an emphasis on green tourism.
- It was raised that marketing was key to the success of tourism, but was labour intensive. It was proposed that the new partnership embraces the marketing activity and employs staff to do that marketing. Officers reported that issues around governance, staffing and funding had not been looked at in detail, but they were looking at options for joining up various activities so that there was a single organisation going forward.

- RESOLVED:
- 1) That the above comments on the draft York Tourism Strategy be noted.
 - 2) That the objectives contained in paragraphs 7.1-7.12 be endorsed;
 - 3) That the establishment of a single tourism organisation to deliver actions be supported in principle, subject to a further report on the details of this.

REASON: This would allow the tourism partners to prioritise actions in future years by setting the context for activity and enable the tourism partners to best prepare tourism proposals to be put forward into the Sub-Regional Investment Programme

19. NORTHERN WAY GROWTH FUND 'HUB AND SPOKE' PROJECT

Members considered a report which brought bring members up to date with a major Science City York (SCY) infrastructure project funded through a Northern Way initiative designed to improve the level of innovation across the three Northern Regional Development Agencies regions.

The report advised that this £2.6 million project was funding three developments in the City. These were a Creative and Digital Centre on the Terry's site, a Biological Business Centre within the University's Department of Biology, and Park Central, an in-fill building between the Innovation and Bio centre on the York Science Park. These facilities would provide much needed business accommodation and collaboration facilities within Science City York's three focus clusters - bio-science, digital and creative technology.

The following points were made:

- It was highlighted that these state of the art sustainable buildings should serve as icons in terms of design and be built on as examples elsewhere in the city.

RESOLVED: That the project be noted and endorsed.

REASON: To help shape the effectiveness of future actions in order to bring benefits to the economic well being of the City and in meeting the City's corporate priorities which were designed to focus effort on improving the economy.

20. SCIENCE CITY YORK: ESTABLISHMENT OF COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE PLAN

Members considered a report which outlined the current progress in establishing the Science City York Company Limited by Guarantee.

The expectation was that the company would be formally established by the end of February, in time to appoint the Chief Executive in early March.

A formal meeting of the Members and Directors of the new company would be required in early March. The intention was to establish a company as a legal entity that was capable of employing the new Chief Executive. Once established, and with the advice of the new Chief Executive, the company would consider the governance arrangements required in the longer term, appoint additional directors, and amend the Memorandum and Articles of Association as desired.

Following formal registration of the company the City of York Council and University of York would become the sole members. This would leave the two stakeholders in full control of the company. Both the City Council and the University were arranging for formal decisions to become members of the SCY Company, and to appoint their representatives.

It was reported that the company had now been established but that there had been no appointment to the Chief Executive post as there had been no suitable candidates.

RESOLVED: That this report be noted and endorsed.

REASON: To help shape the effectiveness of future action.

21. SUB-REGIONAL INVESTMENT PLAN

Members considered a report which outlined the current position in producing a revised Sub-Regional Investment Plan (SRIP), allowing the Board (representing the Local Strategic Partnership) to comment on key issues emerging from the strategic framework for the Sub-Regional Investment Plan.

Yorkshire Forward had decided to review SRIPs in the year following the review of the Regional Economic Strategy (RES). The RES was reviewed in 2005. There was a general desire to produce a 'Better SRIP' moving towards commissioning a smaller number of investment programmes. So far, work on producing a revised SRIP had focused on undertaking a Strategic Economic Assessment – from which the priorities for investment should emerge – and, in parallel, producing an overall strategic framework/vision for the whole of the sub-region.

Whilst work was being undertaken on the Investment Plan review, Yorkshire Forward were consulting on a proposal to move away from a Sub-regional approach to investment planning being undertaken on a City region basis. It was likely that this matter would be considered further by the Yorkshire Forward Board at its meeting in March 2007.

It was reported that from April 2009, there would be a move, on a phased basis, towards city regional investment plans (CRIPs).

The following points were made:

- It was raised that within the five main activity areas listed under paragraph 5 of the report, there may be a danger of failing to benefit from people's changing awareness of sustainability and new skills. It

was hoped that this SRIP would mention how to relate to sustainability. Officers reported that they would feed this back to the Board.

- The report was difficult to read and would be incomprehensible to ordinary people in the street.
- Concerns were raised about not including the city centre in the York section. Officers reported that city centre retailing did not lend itself towards investment planning but instead it would be focussed towards tourism.

RESOLVED: That the above comments be noted and incorporated within the sub-regional process.

REASON: To assist in meeting Council and LSP objectives.

22. PROGRESS ON KEY ISSUES

Members considered a report which picked up on any matters arising from the last meeting of the Board and briefed Board members on issues/progress in other areas of economic development activity.

The following points were made:

- It was raised that under the rail related issues, it did not include the importance of the East-West link to Manchester Airport, and the Harrogate-Leeds link. Officers reported that things were happening in other forums in relation to the other rail links.
- Concerns were raised about the bottleneck in funding at the York Training Centre for NVQ level 2 qualifications in Early Years and Health and Social Care and whether the backlog was for all types of training or just from a particular provider. It was reported that potentially it was both and that there was an issue around the availability of qualified staff in that sector. This was a constant problem as contracts were not being renewed as they had to reduce the number of staff working in the area, which reflected the availability of funding to deliver courses.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and endorsed.

REASON: To help shape the effectiveness of future action.

CLLR STEVE GALLOWAY
CHAIR

The meeting started at 6.05 pm and finished at 7.05 pm.