



Minutes

Name of meeting	ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORT SCRUTINY PANEL
Date and time	TUESDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2009 COMMENCING AT 6.00PM
Venue	COMMITTEE ROOM 1, COUNTY HALL, NEWPORT, IOW
Present	Cllrs Ian Ward (Chairman) Roger Dixcey, Julie Jones-Evans, David Knowles, Wayne Whittle
Officers Present	Jonathan Baker, Steve Beynon, Stuart Love, John Metcalfe, Paul Thistlewood
Cabinet Members	Cllrs George Brown, Edward Giles
Other Members	Cllrs Vanessa Churchman, David Pugh
Apologies	None

1. **Minutes**

RESOLVED:

THAT the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy Commission for Business and Infrastructure held on Wednesday, [29 April 2009](#), be confirmed.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

Cllr Whittle declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 5 owing to his involvement with the Ryde Interchange (Gateway) process.

3. **Public Questions Time**

Mrs Rowney from Ryde submitted a written question regarding the frequency of the Wightbus number 29 service to the Medina Caravan Site. A written response would be provided.

4. **Terms of Reference**

The Panel was reminded of its terms of reference as had been agreed at the annual council meeting in June 2009.

In addition members were made aware of the related corporate priorities, Local Area Agreement (LAA) key indicators, items within the strategic programme and Eco-Island actions. Members raised the importance of marketing and promoting the Island's so it could take advantage of the historical attraction that drew people to it.

Members commented on the procurement process and whether it helped local businesses to secure work with the authority and thus share in the Island's economic success. Members were advised that the procurement process had to follow national guidelines in order to maintain a fair and open procedure.

Comments were also made by members on the delivery of the Local Transport Plan with regard to improving air quality and reducing congestion and the need for this to also include looking at the possibility of creating more free flowing traffic solutions as opposed to discouraging the use of the car. The Director of Neighbourhoods and Environment advised members that a report on the transport strategy would be presented to the panel in November 2009, prior to it being taken to a meeting of the Cabinet.

The panel expressed a desire to address the problems of commercial waste. The Director of Neighbourhoods and Environment advised members that whilst the council had no statutory duty to deal with commercial waste, it was something that was being looked at as part of the waste strategy.

RESOLVED:

THAT the terms of reference be noted.

5. Isle of Wight Economic Strategy

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for the Economy, Tourism, Leisure and Planning provided the panel with a PowerPoint presentation that gave an update on the Islands Economic Strategy. The Strategy had been approved by full Council in July 2008. There was now a need, due to the changing economic climate, to look at reviewing this in the light of these circumstances

Members of the panel were advised of the progress made with the delivery of the included the support of suitable renewable energy schemes, promoting the Island as an affordable tourist destination, promoting Island goods whilst supporting the farming industry in challenging restrictive UK and EU laws and supporting automatic business relief for local firms.

Renewable energy activities would include the initiation of an Island insulation scheme. Companies would also be offered support to develop renewable energy technology facilities on the Island as well as investigations into the possible use of tidal energy with Southampton University. Provision of biomass combined heat and power plant for the Pan development would also be considered.

The impact of such activities could be significant for the Island with an investment of £4 million by E-on for the Home Insulation scheme and the creation of 22 jobs.

There was also likely to be an expansion of renewable energy businesses as well as workers specifically skilled in such technologies. A reduction the Islands carbon footprint would also be a key impact.

On the subject of tourism, the Cabinet Member for the Economy, Tourism, Leisure and Planning advised the panel that a Memorandum of Understanding with the Chamber of Commerce to promote the Island was proving to be successful. Reference was made to the “Just Add Water” marketing campaign undertaken in early 2009 which was part funded by the council. This was aimed at encouraging visitors to the Island from many parts of the UK including London, and had been a major success. Active web and PR management in support of Island tourism was also doing well.

The impact of such activity within tourism included an increase of 41% in the number of visitors staying in excess of 5 nights with a further increase of 13.8% in the total number of domestic day visitors. The volume of all tourist trips was estimated to be worth approximately £209m which was up by 6.8% on the previous year.

Activity within the farming industry included delivery of the Leader programme of support for rural businesses, worth £2.6m over 5 years, a contract to produce a case for the development of an Island abattoir and an early stage consideration of an Isle of Wight produce distribution hub. The impact of such activity would include allowing for investment in facilities, plant, machinery and diversification leading to increased productivity and employment as well there being a cost benefit to Island farmers in the disposal of fallen stock and a cost benefit to local food producers with a raised profile of local produce.

On the issue of local employment, the panel were advised that the council's involvement with the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) task group was working to lessen the effect of the closure of the Vestas' production plant. The Cabinet Member for the Economy, Tourism, Leisure and Planning also reported that all planning applications in respect of the Research & Development (R&D) facility at West Medina Mills would be managed as effectively as possible to minimise any potential obstacles. The impact of retention of local jobs would see the preservation of 190 R&D positions at Vestas with a potential of 200 more and 456 jobs during its construction at West Medina Mills.

Members were advised that there had been a successful Private Finance Initiative (PFI) Industry day that outlined opportunities for local businesses from the highway PFI scheme and that the council's procurement activity would look to encourage the use of Island contractors as much as possible.

The panel were also advised that there would a distribution of information to all businesses about the national deferral scheme for paying increases in business rates as well as distribution of small business rate relief forms to all properties below the threshold.

It was also reported that an agreement with SEEDA for the Island to be classed as a sub regional partnership would provide the Island with some £250,000 of funding.

The Cabinet Member for the Economy, Tourism, Leisure and Planning summed up his presentation with a 3 year programme of planned outputs. These included:

- Work to develop the 6 key business sectors on IW.
- In person approaches to minimum 50 businesses to encourage investment in IW.
- At a distance approaches to a minimum 100 businesses to invest in the IW.

- In person advice and guidance to 70 Island businesses seeking to grow and develop on the IW.
- Influence regional bodies to understand the IW offer to business.
- Further Future Jobs Fund bid for approx 50 jobs (£300k)
- Work with Interreg (European) partners to support the development of 25 community interest entrepreneurs, Inc 6 new not for profit companies (€30k).

Following the presentation, members raised some concerns on the subject of High Speed Broadband for the Island and its potential to attract new enterprises to the region. The Director for Environment and Neighbourhoods advised the panel that the PFI scheme could offer a huge opportunity to establish a modern communications network.

The panel was also advised that whilst it was still early days, there was potential for a number of large renewable energy companies to consider operating on the Island, including a company that specialised in Biomass.

Members suggested that with regard to marketing, attention could be focussed on 2011 when the Island Games would be held on the Island, just 12 months prior to Olympic year.

Members were concerned at recent national news stories which reported on the contract rigging of some major construction companies with local authorities. The Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods advised the panel that the council had a rigorous procurement procedure in place and everything was being done to mitigate any risk of such an unlikely incident occurring on the Island. However, the council would continue to be vigilant and the internal Procurement Board that met on a weekly basis would address any areas of uncertainty.

The Cabinet Member for the Economy, Tourism, Leisure and Planning told the panel that it had a real opportunity to influence the future policy within its remit and any suggestions to officers and Cabinet Members would be taken very seriously and a reply would always be given. The Chairman suggested that if any correspondence was made between a member of the panel and a Cabinet Member or Officer, all other panel members should be copied in.

The Assistant Director for Economic Development, Tourism and Partnerships advised the panel that any suggestions from members relating to economic development could potentially be incorporated into the refreshed strategy. He also advised that all areas of social media were being looked at to promote the Island which included You Tube, Facebook and Twitter.

The panel were pleased with the actions undertaken with regard to the delivery of the council's economic strategy and would wish to be involved in reviewing the strategy prior to its submission to the Cabinet and Full Council.

RESOLVED:

THAT the progress on the delivery plan for the economic strategy for 2008 – 2010 be noted and that the panel be involved in reviewing and updating its contents.

6. Performance Management

- (a) To Review the Relevant Performance Management Information as Submitted to Cabinet on 1 September 2009, for Quarter 1 to 30 June 2009
- (b) To Review the Relevant LAA2 Performance Management Information for Quarter 1 as Submitted to the Island Strategic Partnership Board on 10 September 2009

Members agreed that both items (a) and (b) would be considered as one item.

The panel was informed that the performance information was taken from the overall Quarter 1 Performance Report that had been considered by Cabinet on 1 September 2009 and the ISP Board on 10 September 2009.

It was explained that in the Local Area Agreement (LAA) summary report where it was indicated that no data was available this was due to the indicators being for six monthly or annual activities rather than monthly or quarterly.

It was intended that in the future relevant performance information would be circulated to the panel once it became available to the cabinet and ISP board. This would then enable members to identify any key issues that they would wish to include as an agenda item for its formal meetings.

RESOLVED:

- (i.) THAT the Relevant Performance Management Information as Submitted to Cabinet on 1 September 2009, for Quarter 1 to 30 June 2009 be noted.
- (ii.) THAT the Relevant LAA2 Performance Management Information for Quarter 1 as Submitted to the Island Strategic Partnership Board on 10 September 2009 be noted.

7. Member Questions Time

Cllr Whittle asked an oral question relating to the inclusion of the island as a destination on mainland road signs. The Director for Environment and Neighbourhoods advised that the Department for Transport regulated road signs, but an approach could be made.

Cllr Churchman asked an oral question on the possibility for the council assisting small local businesses with completing tender application forms. The Director for Environment and Neighbourhoods advised that this was not possible under the procurement processes but assistance should be available through the local Chamber of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses

CHAIRMAN.....