

Wiltshire Strategic Economic Partnership

Minutes of the Partnership meeting 7 April 2011

Present:

Steve Stone	Chairman	Peter Wragg	VisitWiltshire Partnership
Victoria Nye	North Wiltshire Economic Partnership (NWEPP)	John Matthews	Rural Interests
Mark Barnett	Mid Wiltshire Economic Partnership (MWEPP)	Ian Larrard (for Nicky Alberry)	Business Link/GWE Business West Ltd.
Jack Wills	South Wiltshire Economic Partnership (SWEPP)	Michael Williams	Wessex Association of Chambers of Commerce (WACC)

Others:

Alistair Cunningham (Wiltshire Council)
 Peter Wheelhouse (Wiltshire Council (Company Secretary))
 Ed Bovingdon (Wiltshire Council (taking minutes))

Item 1: Apologies for Absence and Introductions

Councillor John Brady (Wiltshire Council)
 Nicky Alberry (GWE Business West) – Ian Larrard attended in her absence
 Steve Richards (South West Regional Development Agency)
 Tony Mitchard (Community First)
 Ken Teal (FSB)
 Andrew Kerr (Wiltshire Council, Chief Executive)

Item 2: WSEP Limited business

See separate minutes

Item 3: Matters arising from the Minutes of the Partnership meeting – 17th February 2011

The minutes were agreed and signed as being a true and accurate record.

The Board was informed that a meeting between the Local Economic Partnership Chairs, Mike Williams, Peter Wheelhouse and Steve Stone took place to discuss Local Economic Partnership related issues and to provide an update on the Local Enterprise Partnership proposal

Item 7: Action for Wiltshire Programme

The Green Deal has been shelved as a topic for discussion at the Board.

Item 4: Proposed Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership

Steve Stone (SS) and Alistair Cunningham (AC) confirmed that the Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP) proposal has been submitted to government. A reply is expected by mid to late May.

A consultation period was held during which an online survey was available and twenty strategically important businesses were visited, of which sixteen endorsed the proposal. All five MPs in the county gave their full support. Generally positive feedback has been received from local businesses. The main criticism was that the proposal does not read like a business document. However, it was written for the purposes of an assessment by civil servants.

The WLEP has been praised for its simplicity and thus far signals have been encouraging. Government is keen to fill the void left by the Regional Development Agency's departure. It was suggested that the ideas in the proposal should be adopted even if it is not officially approved by government.

A Shadow Board will be formed by the end of May at which point WSEP will be wound down in the transfer to the new WLEP. The WLEP will be a company limited by guarantee, similar to WSEP. The terms of reference will be written up shortly.

Within the South West region, Devon, Somerset and the West of England LEPs have received approval and Swindon has applied for a LEP jointly with the Thames Valley. Gloucestershire's proposal is awaiting approval.

The floor was then opened up for discussion, during which the following points were raised:

Local Economic Partnerships

A question was raised as to how the Local Economic Partnerships (EPs) will function once the LEP is formed. SS confirmed the plan for them to retain the same function that exists under WSEP but only one of the three Chairs will be represented on the Board rather than the current three.

It was also raised that the EPs could be better co-ordinated across Wiltshire to avoid duplication by providing clearer aims and more joined up working. However, there are no plans to restructure the EPs and it was suggested that improved communication and more frequent meetings would resolve any such issues.

Suggestions were made to change the name of the Local Economic Partnerships to avoid confusion with the Local Enterprise Partnership. Suggestions included: Local Economic Groups; Local Business Partnerships; Economic Partnerships. However, there was no resolution on this issue.

Board Membership

Although the Board has not been entirely decided yet, SS confirmed that he will stand down as Chair but will retain a role on the Board as Chair of Wiltshire College. There is also room for the involvement of Jobcentre Plus, the Army and other public sector organisations, which will be important to raise the profile of the WLEP and to take action on its decisions. A large Board is likely to be preferred over a small one in the hope that more can be achieved with broader membership. However, the new Chair, which has yet to be confirmed, might have a different view on the proposed membership of the Board.

Executive Group

The Executive Group for the WLEP is proposed to consist of a smaller 'core' of key members with task and finish groups working on specific projects as and when they are required. This will help in remaining task focussed and pushing through actions rapidly. The Local Economic Partnerships will continue to support the functioning of the Executive Group.

Inclusion of Small Business

Concerns were raised about the potential disillusionment of small businesses and rural interests due to a lack of representation on the LEP. SS highlighted that the Chambers of Commerce and the FSB will be represented and that the focus is on strategically important businesses rather than exclusively large businesses. At this stage the proposal is written to fulfil the agenda of the civil servants who will assess the document.

Item 5: Any other business

The Joint Strategic Assessment of Wiltshire

The report was released on 6th April. It sets out the strategic issues and priorities for Wiltshire. The refreshed Wiltshire Intelligence Network will play an integral role in facilitating joined up working between the Council's eight Thematic Delivery Partnerships. The Network will centralise research and data to enable the same evidence based conclusions to be drawn across the board.

Peter Wheelhouse announced the plans for Economy and Enterprise and the EPs to jointly undertake research into employment land to support inward investment.

Broadband

John Matthews confirmed that with reference to the Broadband Task and Finish Group, considerable progress has been made, particularly with the additional government money available. Caroline Godfrey is the Corporate Director leading the group and discussions should begin with her regarding the handover to the WLEP.

Wiltshire Open for Business Event

Mike Williams circulated information about the Wessex Association of Chambers of Commerce organised event taking place at the Corn Exchange in Devizes on 10th and 11th May. It will be an ideal opportunity for businesses to exhibit, market and promote their products and services to a wide audience across Wiltshire and to receive information and advice.

Actions:

PW/EB: Circulate link to the Joint Strategic Assessment for Wiltshire

Agreed and signed as a correct record:

Signature:

Dated: