

Wiltshire Strategic Economic Partnership

Minutes of the Partnership meeting 23 November 2010

Present:

Steve Stone	Chairman	John Matthews	Rural
Victoria Nye	North Wiltshire Economic Partnership (NWEF)	Ken Teal	Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)
Peter Wragg	VisitWiltshire Partnership	Ian Larrard (for Nicky Alberry)	Business Link/GWE Business West Ltd.
Glen Leat	Jobcentre Plus (JCP)	Tony Mitchard	Community First (CF)
Steve Richards	South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA)	Mike Williams	Wessex Association of Chambers of Commerce (WACC)

Others:

Alistair Cunningham (Wiltshire Council)
 Peter Wheelhouse (Wiltshire Council (Company Secretary))
 Sara Vigor (Wiltshire Council (taking minutes))
 Robert Murphy (Wiltshire Council)

Item 1: Apologies

Jack Wills (South Wiltshire Economic Partnership Chairman)
 Nicky Alberry (GWE Business West) – Ian Larrard attended in her absence
 Councillor John Brady (Wiltshire Council)
 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 – 15th July 2010

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

The following were raised as matters arising:

Item 3: Matters arising from Minutes of Partnership meeting – 8th April 2010

Item 6 within Item 3:

Peter Wheelhouse (PW) reported that confirmation had been received from Ariane Crampton that the Government had not made any decision or provided any guidance on National Climate Change Indicators and to this end the Climate Change Team were proceeding as before.

Item 8: North Wiltshire Economic Partnership

RAF Lyneham is on the Agenda for this meeting

Item 4: Chairman's Update

The Chairman informed the Board that he had attended two meetings regarding the proposed Local Enterprise Partnership between Gloucestershire, Swindon and Wiltshire.

He had also attended a meeting regarding e-technologies

On 5 November he had attended the Action for Wiltshire Programme Board.

Item 5: Local Transport Plan 2011- 2026 - Presentation by Robert Murphy (Principal Transport Planner – Wiltshire Council)

Robert Murphy (RM) presented the Local Transport Plan 2011-2026 and the results of consultation to date. The presentation document had previously been forwarded to the Board for consideration before the meeting.

Once the presentation was completed RM took questions:

The Chairman asked RM with regard to maintenance activities, how is the £12 million capital that is received from the Government spent?

RM said that the capital gets spent on structural works e.g. bridge maintenance, creation of new roads. RM also said that revenue is spent on routine maintenance works such as works in the local parishes. There is currently a backlog of routine maintenance work.

Victoria Nye (VN) asked whether the area boards had received the presentation. RM indicated that presentations have been made at each area board

Ken Teal (KT) raised the issue of the economic impact of the Council's Car Parking Strategy and specifically whether this had been assessed.

RM indicated that economic issues had been taken into account in bringing forward the Strategy.

Ken Teal (KN) asked "Could Community Wardens not be used to carry out routine maintenance works?"

RM said that in principle this was a good idea; however there are already Parish Stewards who do the same sort of thing.

A question was also raised with regard to improved access from A350 to Bowerhill and Knorr-Bremse. Alistair Cunningham (AC) confirmed that this is something that is being dealt with.

Action (PW)

It was agreed that the following points should be fed back in response to the Local Transport Plan consultation:

- **The Board would like to see the economic impact of the Council's Car Parking Strategy properly assessed**
- **Concern is expressed regarding having a Transport Strategy with little funding to make a difference to economic development**
- **Concern is expressed regarding the level of investment in maintenance planned**

Item 6: Regional Growth Fund proposal

AC tabled two papers which had previously been presented to the Action for Wiltshire Programme Board. They related to a proposed second phase of the programme. He explained that the Action for Wiltshire Programme was set up to deal with the impact of the recession. There are a number of initiatives that form part of the programme, the most notable being the Future Jobs Fund programme. Approximately £1 million had been invested to date.

Any new programme must still address the impact of recession. There are approximately 4,900 people in Wiltshire that are currently unemployed. However, it must also address the projected loss of public sector employment. The key areas of activity identified in the second phase are as follows:

- The starting point is a 'help and advice' core offer to assist individuals with tackling the difficulties caused by the recession and the impact of public sector cuts. From there are three programme pathways:
- An 'Employment Support Programme' aimed at addressing the hardening of unemployment, re-skilling a new workforce for Wiltshire and maximising

opportunities for self employment and establishing a new business support model.

- A 'New Business Development Programme' aimed at maximising opportunities for self employment and establishing a new business support model – the plan is to involve the chamber network in developing this model given the changes to the national business support network including Business Link
- A 'Business Location of Choice Programme' aimed at securing business investment in Wiltshire and tackling barriers to growth.

The Chairman said that WSEP would monitor the success of the second phase of the programme. He highly commended the proposals and the work of the Economy & Enterprise Service of the Council in developing them.

One possibility is that this programme could be put forward to help secure Regional Growth Fund but AC recognised that there may be other proposals that stand a better prospect of success. For example, the Council has been in discussion with a company that proposes to establish a new manufacturing operation in Westbury creating in excess of 500 jobs. The company had been encouraged by the presence of sub-contractors in the Westbury area and the availability of rail access as it wishes to move its containerised product by rail. However, to do so, it needs to invest in a rail head. The Council will be talking to the company and partners regarding a possible bid for Regional Growth Fund to support this project. KT expressed support for a freight interchange.

Steve Richards (SR) drew attention to the risks that are involved with the Regional Growth Fund (RGF) and the need to manage expectations. The offer of funding through RGF is essentially a promissory note as monies are only paid out once the programme has been completed. He informed the Board that Wiltshire Council would need to be sharp about the projects that are selected and discounted early on. BIS will be assessing the bids and if they think that bids do not meet the criteria including state aid regulations they will be quickly binned with no right of appeal.

The Chairman expressed how important it was that support was given to AC and his team to help to bring proposals forward.

Peter Wragg (PW) expressed the view that it was very important that private sector support is secured early for bids for Regional Growth Fund but without raising unreasonably high expectations.

AC indicated that alongside this work, Jane Scott and Andrew Kerr will be visiting major businesses as part of the Wiltshire 100 programme and this would help in terms of securing private sector support for bids

Action (AC)

It was agreed that:

1. WSEP should be the vehicle for bids to be submitted

2. Authority should be delegated to AC in consultation with the Chairman to coordinate the preparation of bids
3. Care should be taken to ensure that the bids that are submitted meet all the necessary criteria with particular attention being paid to cash flow given that grant aid will be in arrears.
4. The Action for Wiltshire Programme Phase 2 proposals be commended

Item 7: Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) – verbal update

AC indicated that Gloucestershire and Wiltshire were still committed to working together as part of a LEP. Whilst Swindon had signed up to the original expression of interest, Swindon were in discussion with the Thames Valley and the West of England Partnership regarding the possibilities of alliances with them.

On 2 November there was a meeting with BIS and CLG to understand their views on the Gloucestershire, Swindon & Wiltshire LEP proposal following the announcement that the GSW LEP had not been approved in the first tranche of LEPs. The following comments were received:

- It was a strong submission with a robust case around economic geography
- The level of business engagement was not strongly articulated
- Consideration needed to be given to working with other neighbours e.g. Dorset and Hampshire
- The West of England Partnership represented a coherent grouping for the purposes of a LEP
- The Government did not want single county LEPs

AC hoped that subject to Swindon signing up and Jane Scott and Andrew Kerr are currently pursuing this, it would be possible to gain approval. Any revised submission would need to deal more comprehensively with: rural issues; military/civilian integration as a beacon for England; business engagement.

Item 8: RAF Lyneham – verbal update

AC spoke to this item and informed the meeting that RAF Lyneham will be closing in 2012. Aircraft will be going in summer 2011 and personnel would be going in 2012.

The propositions that are being discussed/put forward at the moment are:

- Disposal of the site
- Moving army operations from other places e.g. Hullavington to Lyneham in turn freeing up other sites
- Bringing troops back from Germany and stationing them at Lyneham as it is cheaper to house troops in Britain than it is in Germany

AC informed the meeting that Wiltshire Council would support the following proposals:

- For the site to remain fully operational as a military site
- To bring troops back from Germany

AC and team are briefing the local MP to ask that he raises questions in the house regarding the Government's position on RAF Lyneham as they have not yet decided.

The Chairman expressed the view that that the key thing needed is a speedy decision by the Government. WSEP fully supports Wiltshire Council in its efforts to secure a quick decision.

Action (AC):

A letter is to be prepared on behalf of the WSEP Board which endorses the work of Wiltshire Council in securing an early decision on the future of RAF Lyneham

Item 9: Items for information

Visit Wiltshire Tourism Partnership

PWr talked to this item and informed the meeting that Visit Wiltshire had now been accepted to become an independent company limited by guarantee which means that it will operate independently from Wiltshire Council now. Funding for the new Company will be provided by Wiltshire Council and the private sector.

PWr reported to the Board that there was a series of meetings going on with various Tourist Information Centres (TICs) that are currently run by Visit Wiltshire/Wiltshire Council to secure local partnership agreements and make them independent.

Visit Wiltshire will continue to support 4 or 5 TICS with marketing.

North Wiltshire Economic Partnership

VN talked to the paper prepared by Colette Mallon and said that there was nothing further to add.

Action (Chairman)

To ask Bev Flanagan at Wiltshire College to contact the Local Economic Partnership Managers to update them with regard to apprenticeships

South Wiltshire Economic Partnership

Concern was expressed by the meeting that there has been a number of cancellations of meetings. It was felt that it would be useful to have a meeting with Jack Wills to discuss this.

AC said that SWEP had revamped the Salisbury inward investment brochure but he is concerned that it is not a good use of resources.

Mid Wiltshire Economic Partnership

Mike Williams (MW) talked to the paper prepared by Len Turner and said that there was nothing further to add except that the vacancy of the MWEPP Chairman has been addressed.

Q2 LAA/LAW Report

There was nothing to add on this report however it was agreed that the report on LAA/LAW performance is important.

Item 10: Any other business

The Chairman informed the meeting that it was Sara Vigor's last day with the Partnership and thanked her for all her work and efforts over the last 6 months.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 18:40

Agreed and signed as a correct record:

Signature:

Dated: