

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
ECONOMIC WELL-BEING

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 6th MARCH 2006

Present: Councillors P Connolly (Chair); K Hitchen (Deputy Chair); D Banks; Mrs M Docherty; A Johnston; J Prince; A Wonnacott.

Also present: Mrs Sue Hearn

Officers: M Tichford, Head of Regeneration; Brian Kirkbride, Community Renewal Manager; Ms S Lewthwaite, Economic Development and Tourism; Ms Z Bergmann, Nuclear & Sustainability; Ms J Murray, Scrutiny Support Officer.

OSC-EW104 Nuclear Opportunities Group

In the course of a briefing from Mrs Sue Hearn, a consultant working for the Nuclear Opportunities Group and heading up the Supply Chain sub group, the following points were made:

- The supply chain sub group was now a very proactive sub group with a detailed action plan, to ensure that local contractors were not disadvantaged by the tendering regime. In addition, an European Union and West Lakes Renaissance project was providing support through promotion and marketing advice, training, co-ordination of tender opportunities and specialist consultancy advice. There had also been a series of events, including meet the buyer opportunities.
- Efforts were continuing to be made to attract international players to the area, but with a view to employing local people, changing the perception of West Cumbria into a centre of excellence for the nuclear industry.
- The Business Cluster was an active player in the Nuclear Opportunities group, numbering some 60 players – a 50-50 split of nuclear and non-nuclear companies big and small. Its remit is business growth, socio-economic issues and lobbying.
- A study into the potential/feasibility of nuclear new build in West Cumbria had been commissioned, funded in part by West Lakes Renaissance and headed by the County Council.

- A master-planning exercise was underway for West Cumbria as part of the work of the West Cumbria Strategic Forum. £500,000 had been set aside for the exercise, half funded by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.
- There was a need to ensure that the local planning framework was sufficiently flexible to accommodate any potential inward investment opportunities.

OSC-EW105 Regeneration in Copeland

Members considered briefing supplied on regeneration practitioners and programmes in Copeland. It was accepted that, given the change in this field at the moment with the birth of Cumbria Vision, that further work on the regeneration bodies should be put on hold pending a further briefing from the Chief Executive of Cumbria Vision.

With respect to the Council's own activities, the following points were made:

- The regeneration team – covering Community Renewal, Economic Development & Tourism, Planning & Building Control; housing strategy, homelessness and community safety - was only now getting to full strength with only one project officer still to be recruited.
- It was explained that a change to the planning law would mean that the Council would slowly move over to a local development framework rather than local plan, which would allow for greater flexibility.
- The department was active in the South Whitehaven Partnership, the area recently being the recipient of neighbourhood renewal funding to the tune of £500,000 per annum under the cleaner, safer, greener programme. There would be a cohesive approach by public sector services including education, health and it was expected that services such as transport would be addressed.
- The Housing Market Renewal Initiative for Furness and West Cumbria promised £900m over a 10 year programme. Lead partners have yet to receive the funding and therefore can't start delivery.
- There was a need to tackle renewal areas for renovation grants.
- Cleator Moor Co-op was expected to be finished by the end of April.

- Both Market Town Initiatives of Egremont and Cleator Moor were progressing well.
- Working with partners of the Whitehaven Regeneration Programme – 4 elements; Town Centre, Pow Beck; South Whitehaven and Coastal fringe. On questioning, it was confirmed that the Council was working with Tesco on their expansion plans to try and make sure that they fitted with the ‘Sea Change’ programme and to facilitate the transport interchange.
- A database of suitable business property was to be set up to provide greater marketing and better handling of enquiries, and the small business grant scheme was due for review.
- Beacon – the Council was just waiting for funding from West Lakes Renaissance to be confirmed before work could start.

OSC-EW106 Western Lake District Tourism Partnership

It was further explained to Members that this was the first time that a Service Level agreement had been put in place. The new post would be managed by Cumbria Tourist Board’s Graham Kennedy to ensure continuity of approach.

RESOLVED: that a tourism review should be scheduled for later in the year.

OSC-EW107 Work Plan

The work plan of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees was received and noted, and Members were asked to consider further items for the work plan of the coming year.

RESOLVED: that industrial estates in Copeland be considered.

OSC-EW108 Forward Plan

The Forward Plan of key decisions to be taken by the Executive was received and noted.

OSC-EW109 West Cumbria Strategic Partnership

The minutes of recent meetings of the Economic Well-being review group were received and noted.

RESOLVED: That Professor Fyffe’s presentation on his vision for West Cumbria be circulated.

CHAIR:

SIGNED:.....