



MEETING OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

TUESDAY, 20 SEPTEMBER 2005 2.30 PM

PANEL MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Kenneth Joynson
Councillor Mrs Judy Smith
Councillor Ian Stokes

**Councillor Jeffrey Thompson (Vice-Chairman
in the Chair)**

Councillor Mrs Azar Woods

OFFICERS

Head of Planning Policy and Economic
Regeneration
Economic Development Team Leader
Scrutiny Officer
Scrutiny Support Officer

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor John Smith
Councillor John Wilks

23. COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None received.

24. MEMBERSHIP

None.

25. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nicholson and Selby.

26. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mrs. Woods declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 7, should the Stamford bypass be discussed. Councillor Joynson declared a potential prejudicial interest on Agenda Item 7, should certain elements of development in Stamford be discussed. Both Members remained in the Room in accordance with para 12 (2) of the Local Members Code of Conduct.

27. ACTION NOTES

With the addition of Councillor Nicholson's name as Chairman of the DSP on 21st June 2005, these were noted.

28. FEEDBACK FROM THE EXECUTIVE

Noted.

29. TOWN CENTRE ACTION PLAN

The Head of Planning Policy and Economic Regeneration gave a presentation on the Draft Town Centre Action Plan. He reminded the Panel that Town Centres and the development of Grantham as a sub-regional centre were Council priorities. The Action Plan catalogues targets and subsequent actions to meet them. Any comments from the Panel would be noted and fed back to the Cabinet. The Panel were given a general introduction, which stated that a capital budget had been allocated to cover on-costs and the payment of all Town Centre Managers.

The Panel discussed why the Deepings was the only urban area within the District that had no Town Centre Manager; the Deepings Action Plan had not been developed at the same speed as the other areas and without a full action plan, provision of a Town Centre Manager would be inappropriate. Discussion ensued on the Town Centre Manager's role to instigate the action plan. Capital provision of £3 million had been designated for town centre development over the next three years. Further Partnership funding would also be possible.

The success of the Town Centre Management Partnerships (TCMP) was considered. Their effectiveness varied across the District, although some had achieved positive outcomes. The TCMP model for each town would need to be reviewed to establish a fit for purpose organisation. The most successful TCMPs had a clear vision and set of priorities; specific geographic focus; an appropriate balance between public and private sector interests; strong relations with the business community; a robust working structure and partner support.

General actions to improve the efficacy of TCMPs included: ensuring broad aims and objectives for all TCMPs with clear visions and priorities; a defined area of activity; exploration of the establishment of a company structure to permit asset realisation; confirmation of the support of partners, business organisations and other groups behind the TCMP; monitoring and benchmarking exercises and the production of an Evening Economy Strategy.

Panel members debated the principle of an Evening Economy Strategy; this would affect Council priorities including economic development, Anti-Social Behaviour and Street Scene. The perception and reality of anti-social behaviour were considered, as were steps to counter these. The Panel also discussed the roles of Town and District Councillors on each TCMP within the District.

Grantham

Actions for Grantham had been identified as a review and roll forward of the Grantham Town Centre Masterplan, a feasibility study for the development of the canal basin, marketplace pedestrianisation, the development of St. Catherine's Road and potential development of Conduit Lane, reviewing the development potential of Greenwoods Row and St. Wulfram's Gateway, improving the approaches from the railway station, investigating the potential of a rail halt at Gonerby Moor and the development of a visitor economy.

The Panel were advised that Lincolnshire County Council had commissioned a transport study of Grantham, in which the possibility of rail halt had been included for consideration.

A Panel member was concerned that discussions replicated previous plans. Members

were advised that, while covering many items included in the original Grantham Masterplan, this document was specific and identified how things should be done and by whom. Some projects identified in the original Masterplan had been enacted including the development of St. Peter's Hill Green and Abbey Gardens. The Panel discussed the potential of increasing tourism to Grantham.

Stamford

Five key priorities had been identified by Stamford Vision, these were: the Stamford Gateway Project, traffic relief, the Local Development Framework, the Welland Quarter and car parking. Actions required would include the preparation for area action plans as part of the Local Development Framework, the appraisal of Eastern Relief Road proposals, supplementary planning guidance for the Welland Quarter and the development of the visitor economy.

Some Members felt that any development should preserve the historicity of Stamford. Members also considered the potential impact of transport development. Development of Stamford Town Centre would have positive influences on Tourism and stimulating visitor interest.

Bourne

Actions to enable the development of Bourne would include secure implementation of core area proposals (national retailers have looked to locate in Bourne); a review, roll-forward and re-prioritisation of the Town Centre Action Plan and a review of car parking provision as part of core area redevelopment.

Members attributed recent interest in Bourne Town Centre to developments around Bourne and Thurlby. Members felt that there would be further improvements on the opening of the Bourne Inner Relief Road. There was some concern over generally poor transport links to Bourne and whether this would push people to Peterborough. The development of the core area of Bourne Town Centre is hoped to begin by the end of 2006.

The Deepings

Development of the Deepings requires the securing of a robust and effective Partnership and a clear action plan and the appointment of a Town Centre Manager. The Panel discussed problems arising from the dual-parish nature of Deepings Town Centre. As remedy to this, the TCMP had designated one area as the town centre, where the TCMP would operate.

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

Should the BIDs scheme be pursued, a pilot district would be implemented in Grantham. A seminar on BIDs would be organised and a 'BIDs Champion' appointed. The scheme would require the introduction of an additional levy to business charges for all businesses within the appointed district following a positive ballot. These additional funds would be set aside for any projects the businesses decide would be of benefit, so long as the Council do not provide those services. Examples of how funds could be used include increased CCTV coverage, wardens to walk people to taxis in the evening or increased policing. A successful scheme in Lincoln had just been implemented. The businesses in the Alma Park area of Grantham expressed an interest in the creation of a district there. This would illustrate how BIDs, while ideal for Town Centres, would also be practicable in other areas.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Planning Policy and Economic Regeneration and the Economic Development Team Leader for their work on the document.

30. PUBLIC INFORMATION PILLARS

The Panel considered the update report from the Partnership Project Manager and appointed a Grantham member, Councillor Ian Stokes, to the Working Group for the pilot scheme in Grantham. He would feed back to the rest of the Panel. The Panel commented on the example pillar that had been placed in the courtyard and were generally impressed with the way they looked.

CONCLUSION:

To appoint Councillor Stokes to the Public Information Pillars Working Group as representative for the Economic DSP.

31. BUDGET PREPARATION

The previously circulated action notes of the budget Working Group from 15th August 2005 and 12th September 2005 were noted. The Resources and Assets Portfolio Holder was commended for the structure of the Budget Process for 2006/07. It was hoped that the new Budget structure would prevent an underspend and increase access to additional grant funding. Members were advised that questions could be put to the Portfolio Holder and the Corporate Director of Finance and Strategic Resources at the Local Area Assemblies. Consultation on the budget process had been included on the agenda of each Local Area Assembly.

32. DRAFT SCRUTINY HANDBOOK

Members were impressed with the clarity and comprehensiveness of the document and commended the work that had been done. The Scrutiny Officer advised members that following consideration by all DSPs, the document would be reviewed by the Scrutiny Co-ordinating Group on October 3rd 2005, after which time it would be issued. It was intended that the document would be updated periodically and then reissued.

Members commented that the only point of ambiguity was in reference to call in procedures. Text read that call-in was subject to a valid request signed by "five members (from any political group) or the Chairman of the relevant DSP". Members observed that this should read "five members of the Council (from any political group) or the Chairman of the relevant DSP".

CONCLUSION:

That the document should be amended to read "Any five members of the Council...or the Chairman of the relevant DSP", when discussing a valid request for call-in.

33. REPORTS FROM WORKING GROUPS

Reports from the Grantham Canal Basin Working Group and the Rail Link Working Group had been circulated with the agenda. Their contents had been noted. The Chairman stated that he would attend a meeting of the Local Strategic Partnership on behalf of the Rail Link Working Group and explain the proposal to register interest.

The Team Leader for Economic Regeneration advised the Panel that a bid for match-funding from Lincolnshire Enterprise had been successful. This would be used to conduct a feasibility study on the development of the canal basin.

34. BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Updated performance indicators were circulated at the meeting. These were noted.

35. WORK PROGRAMME

Correspondence had been received from Councillor Selby, requesting that the economic implications of closing Grantham's Accident and Emergency department be considered as an item for the work programme. This was noted.

The remit of the Small Business Working Group was discussed; it was clarified that this group had considered existing small business units and potential sites for development to this end. Sites had been considered in Grantham and Bourne; Stamford and the Deepings would be considered in due course.

36. ANY OTHER BUSINESS, WHICH THE CHAIRMAN, BY REASONS OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES DECIDES IS URGENT.

None.

37. CLOSE OF MEETING

The meeting was closed at 16:52.