

Economic Development and Cultural Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 10 March 2010 at EPIC, Norwich

Present:

Mr R Rockcliffe (Chairman)	Mr J Mooney
Mr M C Langwade (Vice Chairman)	Mr G Nobbs
Mr J Dobson	Mr G Plant
Mr P Duigan	Dr M Strong
Mr S Dunn	Ms H Thompson
Mr T Garrod	Mr T Tomkinson
Mr P Hardy	Dr F Williamson
Mr G Jones	

Cabinet Members Present:

Mrs A Steward Economic Development

Deputy Cabinet Member Present:

Mr B Collins Economic Development

1 Apologies and Substitutions

1.1 Apologies were received from Mr M Carttiss (Mr T Garrod substituting), Mr S Clancy, Mr M Hemsley (Mr P Hardy substituting), Mr D Murphy and Mrs J Murphy (Mr J Mooney substituting).

2 Minutes

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2010 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 Declarations of Interest

3.1 Mr Rockcliffe declared a personal interest as a member of the Nar Ouse Steering Group.

4 Matters of Urgent Business

4.1 There were no matters of urgent business.

5 Public Question Time

5.1 There were no public questions.

6 Local Member Issues/Member Questions

6.1 There were no local member issues.

7 Cabinet Member Feedback

7.1 The Cabinet Member for Economic Development reported that a successful farming conference had been held at the John Innes Centre the previous week. The Prime Minister The Right Hon. Gordon Brown MP had recently visited the Alchemy Centre in Great Yarmouth. Phase two of the development of the Hethel Engineering Centre was being progressed. Norfolk County Council had been the top performing authority in the region for the Future Jobs Fund. The Broadband Conference had successfully brought together relevant agencies to discuss broadband provision across Norfolk, and it was noted that the www.broadbandnorfolk.com website had been established. Members were encouraged to go onto the website and follow the link to the regional website: (Eastern Region and Broadband Uplift Scheme – EREBUS – www.erebusonline.org.uk) and register their demand for faster broadband. Members were also encouraged to sign up for the Norwich in 90 campaign, lobbying for service improvements and a reduction of the rail journey time between Norwich and London to 90 minutes: www.gopetition.com/petitions/norwich-in-ninety.html.

Items for Scrutiny

8 Presentation of the East of England Production and Innovation Centre (EPIC) Future Plans

8.1 The Chairman of the EPIC Strategic Board gave a presentation (annex 8) demonstrating the future plans for the facility.

9 East of England Production and Innovation Centre (EPIC) Business Plan 2010-13

9.1 The annexed report (9) was presented by the Business Development Manager.

9.2 The following comments were made in response to questions from the Panel:

- It was noted that the Advisory Board constantly monitored how the facilities were performing and whether they should be redesigned for a different use. An example of this was the main studio. The aim was to make EPIC self sustaining.
- The long term financial overview contained future projects that were near certainties in relation to discussions taking place with future users of the facility.
- The unique selling point of EPIC was the educational facilities, the high specification technology and the creative businesses working in the space. The business plan demonstrated a diverse range of projects because the Board was open to all suggestions for use of the space and closely monitored the success of the use of the facilities.
- It was confirmed that the Board was satisfied with the expertise in place to take the facility forward, but that the facility must not work in isolation. Hethel Engineering Centre was given as a good example of partnership working.

- Marketing of EPIC and Norfolk as a creative area was discussed, and it was noted that it was cheaper and logistically easier to use EPIC than London facilities. Perceptions needed to be altered and the profile of EPIC as a facility to make game / talk shows needed to be promoted. It was acknowledged that the Advisory Board needed to be dynamic in its approach.
- The Advisory Board met monthly to monitor the progress of the facility, and the Cabinet Member for Economic Development was a member of the Board. Future opportunities were discussed and any concerns flagged up. The Board was very well supported by the Economic Development team at Norfolk County Council.
- It was clarified that the financial position was based on actual activity taking place and took into account ongoing contracts. Unconfirmed projects were not included.
- It was noted that the costs to Norfolk County Council to date had been presented at past Panel meetings and details were available in those reports. It was confirmed that the Panel would review future financial input from the Council.
- Mr Dobson proposed and Dr Strong seconded a motion that officers were asked to bring to each meeting a report on the financial progress of EPIC. The motion was duly agreed with all in favour.

9.3 The Panel **noted** the contents of the report.

10 Effective Broadband and Mobile Phone Coverage in Norfolk

10.1 The annexed report (10) was presented by the Chairman of the Broadband and Mobile Phone Coverage Working Group.

10.2 The following comments were made in response to questions from the Panel:

- A suggestion was made that an appraisal of work being carried out across the county and region in relation to broadband and mobile provision was conducted to ensure no duplication took place. It was important that all suppliers and key stakeholders were engaged in this process.
- A suggestion was made that the Eastern Daily Press could be approached to support a campaign to improve the communications network in Norfolk.
- It was noted that many organisations, including the Council, wished to encourage home working, however this was not possible because the broadband speed was too slow.
- It was acknowledged that Shaping Norfolk's Future held some information about broadband speeds and that this would contribute to the Working Groups discussions and evidence.
- The installation of the ducting for broadband improvements when developing an area or roadway was discussed and disappointment was expressed that broadband pipework had not been laid as part of the Nar Ouse Regeneration Area work.
- Mr Dobson proposed and Mr Mooney seconded the motion that an addition to the terms

of reference was included under 'Issues and questions to be addressed' to say 'To avoid duplication the working party will establish what work has been carried out or is planned by the local authorities and partners regionally and inter-regionally.' The motion was duly agreed with all in favour.

10.3 The Panel **noted** the contents of the report and agreed the terms of reference with the addition stated above.

11 Forward Work Programme: Scrutiny

11.1 The annexed report (11) was presented by the Policy Officer.

- It was clarified that the outcome of previous scrutiny reports become part of 'business as usual' and that they were only monitored if a specific request was made for an update at the meeting where the scrutiny was signed off.

11.2 The Panel **noted** the contents of the report.

Items for Overview

12. Cultural Services Department Integrated Performance and Finance Monitoring Report

12.1 The annexed report (12) was presented by the Finance and Business Support Manager.

- The e-book initiative would shortly be gathering feedback from users on what they would like this service to offer. The service was due to begin in May. It was anticipated that as more library authorities begin to deliver e books there will be more opportunity to work together on contracts and guidelines for lending.
- A question was asked regarding the take up of NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) and whether the numbers were being swelled by those in a gap year – it was agreed that the Head of Adult Education would give a full written answer.
- It was confirmed that the reserves would be reduced by £1million as part of a planned approach. Further detail could be given on request.

12.2 The Panel **noted** the contents of the report.

13. Cultural Services Service Plans and Priorities 2010-11

13.1 The annexed report (13) was presented by the Director of Corporate Affairs and Cultural Services.

13.2 The following comments were made in response to questions from the Panel:

- The library service was congratulated one being on of the best in the country.
- Closer working relationships with organisations such as care homes was raised, and it was noted that Cultural Services engaged with all departments across the local authorities in Norfolk.

13.3 The Panel **noted** the contents of the report.

14. Economic Development Integrated Performance and Finance Monitoring Report

14.1 The annexed report (14) was presented by the Economic Policy and Performance Manager.

14.2 The following comments were made in response to questions from the Panel:

- Concern was expressed regarding the loss of the county wide business start up scheme, which took place four years ago when it became a regional function. It was noted that the Economic Development team and local partners were examining gaps in the current business start up support provision, with a view to filling them.
- It was reported that the overall costs for the Thetford Enterprise Hub had risen, but there was no cost to Norfolk County Council over and above the previously agreed £50k capital grant, which will be spent by the year end.
- It was confirmed that the money allocated for the site in Great Yarmouth was for the railway sidings at Vauxhall, and that completion of the purchase was expected by the end of March 2010.
- The enterprise fund was intended to be made available to lend out to businesses who were starting up, however the legal implications and practicalities were being explored so this project was not yet running.

14.3 The Panel **noted** the contents of the report.

15. Cultural Services Service Plans and Priorities 2010-11

15.1 The annexed report (15) was presented by the Economic Policy and Performance Manager.

15.2 The following comments were made in response to questions from the Panel:

- It was confirmed that staffing implications from the organisational review were being monitored and that staff were being kept fully briefed.

15.3 The Panel **noted** the contents of the report.

The meeting closed at 12.05pm

CHAIRMAN



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An EPIC Future

Preparing to change

Preparing for change

“Never re-enforce a weak position”-Clauswitz

Preparing for change

- “The losers launched websites. The winners launched vibrant communities. The losers built walled gardens. The winners built public squares. The losers inverted internally. The winners innovated with their users”-Tapscott and Williams, “Mass Communication.”

Where EPIC's at

- Lack of profile
- Operating in a hugely changed and challenging commercial environment
- Slow to react to shifts in the creative economy
- Not working to best advantage with partners

Where EPIC is also at

- Reputation for professional broadcast quality
- Unrivalled infrastructure for technology innovation
- A building which, successfully, links education and business
- Home to a creative community
- Home to a collection of desirable assets

Our key challenges

- Using EPIC's strengths to re-align ourselves in the commercial marketplace
- Re-positioning EPIC with emerging technologies and strategies
- To say “yes” until we have to say “no” –but then be ready to say “no.”
- Be prepared to slaughter the sacred cows

Getting real

- There are no quick fixes-and no magic bullet
- New business plan needs to show significant shifts in thinking
- New directions needed in
 - commercial activity
 - educational, social and creative engagement
 - strategic approaches to technology

Commercial directions

- Use the down-turn and lack of budgets to create comprehensive alternative to London
 - advertising production and post-production*
- Seize seismic shifts in technical and political approaches to broadcasting
 - BBC relationship to the regions; ITV withdrawal from regional commitments*

Social, Cultural and educational

- Work with partners in a more constructive way
- Promote and expect to benefit from synergies
 - e.g. The Norfolk and Norwich Festival; The Writers' Centre Norwich; the Arts Council*
- Help shape the debate
 - e.g. the proposed new Creative Economy Hub*

Social, cultural and educational

- Widen educational and training engagement
 - eg UEA; City College; ARU ; National Skills Academy as well as NUCA*
- Make sure it sticks –make the offer more compelling; more engaging; more relevant to changes in HE/FE direction and funding
- Understand and help deliver their changing agendas
- Never forget all-party commitments to diversity and increased opportunity

Strategic direction

- Lead, not follow
- Shift the focus of EPIC
- No longer “just” a production/innovation centre
- We become a national centre of excellence and innovation in ITC for media content
- We become the prime regional engagement with the digital economy
- We specialise and become a national centre for low-carbon production techniques
- PETS WIN PRIZES!

Practical routes to achievement

- Become the regional KTN in ITC in creative content and the creative industries
 - work now with EEDA to achieve this*
- Work with EEDA/Hethel to prepare pitch to the Technology Transfer Board
 - pitch for funding for low carbon production technology development*
- Pitch to become a test bed for the development of the digital economy.
 - "Real members of the public and businesses will try out new services and new equipment; new ways to run businesses and new businesses in the internet" (Digital Economy Bill.)*

Practical routes to achievement

- Be the regional route for the delivery of the Digital Britain vision
- "All participants in Digital Britain should benefit from the creation, distribution and consumption of digital content" (Digital Economy Bill)*
- Create joint proposition to house a regional alternative to the ITV regional news
- encouraging initial meeting with leading regional news chain*
- Work with ITV locally and nationally to provide a cost-effective alternative to Anglia facilities in Norwich
- initial discussions already underway*
- Develop a proposition for increased out-of-London production for the BBC
- ensure competent delivery of sports show; deeper engagement with BBC in the region*

Practical routes to achievement

- Advertising production
- an alternative to off-shoring, re-versioning of international material*
- leading to competitive low-budget production of original content*
- The Entertainment Master Class
- Developing a partnership and monetising the marketing engagement/*
- Deeper partnership working--key tenancy leading to joint developments
- ongoing discussions with leading regional agency*
- Cluster maps
- we don't have one for the regional CIs. Show EPIC as the centre of our particular universe*
- Promotion and publicity
- a story a month; updates to EEDA; engagement in the national debate on the future of broadcasting etc.*
- Engagement, engagement, engagement!

Re-structure for the future

- New management model
- Align EPIC and Hethel
- Create innovation arc for Norfolk
- Leadership of EPIC focussed on marketing and development
- Staff emphasis on service delivery
- Strategic funding initiatives with key partner(s)

An EPIC future

- There are no certainties – but the game is worth the candle
- Growth and new jobs will be in the knowledge economy
- Norfolk has a lead, but others will try to eat our lunch
- EPIC, Hethel, NRP etc show we are serious players
- We need to be courageous about where we can go – and brutal about the things that stop us getting there