

Economic Development Sub- Committee

**Minutes of the Meeting held on 24th March 2016 at
10.00 am at County Hall.**

Present:

Mrs C Walker (Chairman)

Ms C Bowes

Mr J Childs

Mr S Clancy

Mr C Foulger

Mr T Jermy

Mr J Timewell

Mr A White

Mr M Wilby

Also Present:

1 Apologies and Substitutions

No apologies received.

2 Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on the 21st January 2016 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 Declaration of Interest

- 3.1 Mrs C Walker declared an interest in item 8 as a member of the Norse group.
- 3.2 Mr C Walker declared an interest in item 10 as a member of the Great Yarmouth Area Board.

4 Items of Urgent Business

- 4.1 The Chairman advised that vacancies on the following Boards needed to be filled:

The LEP Skills Board which the Sub-Committee **Agreed** Mrs C Walker would be the representative.

The Agri Tech Board, which the Sub-Committee **Agreed** Mr J Childs would be the representative.

The Hethel Engineering Centre Board which the Conservative Group would nominate a member to be representative and inform the Sub-Committee.

5 Local Member Issues / Questions

- 5.1 Mr J Childs, the chairman and others raised concerns regarding the planned roadworks around the Britannia Pier area of Great Yarmouth during the Easter Holidays. The closure of road and disruption would affect the local businesses and it was felt that a better time of year could be found when the economic impact of the closure would not be so keenly felt.

The Sub-Committee were advised that the highway needed urgent repairs that had to be carried out in the right weather conditions and the planned works in April were designed to avoid the area being closed for the May Bank Holiday.

The Sub-Committee asked that the Executive Director take this back to the relevant service to be reconsidered and that in future the economic impact of roadworks be paramount in the planning of future works.

The Executive Director agreed to speak with the relevant officers to see if the date of the roadworks could be pushed back to avoid the Easter Break and would inform committee members and the public of the outcome.

6. Member Working Group Update

- 6.1 The Sub-Committee received verbal updates from members for the following outside bodies:-

6.2 North West Norfolk Economic Development Working Group

- There were no clear outcomes from the work that had been done so far and most of the issues raised were regarding engagement work with the local districts.
- It had been decided that more effective work could be carried out in reference to Thetford and therefore the focus of the working group had shifted.
- There was an interesting piece of work being carried out by Breckland Council on the A11 Corridor which members felt it would be worth working with the district as this was a good opportunity.
- Members agreed that it would be a good idea for the next Economic Development Sub-Committee to be held in Thetford.

6.3 Norfolk Rail Group

- The Rail Group had nominated their new chairman to be Mr T East.
- The group were looking at the franchise and the updating of the stock.

6.4 Scottow Enterprise Park Working Group

- The Royal visit that had been planned for yesterday did not happen.
- There were new signs going up around the site and the zones in the site were being colour coded to assist navigation around the site.
- Phase 2 of the solar farm was in progress and was going well.
- British Sugar were moving out of the hangars.
- The project was going well and Mr S Coward's input was proving to be

invaluable.

6.5 **Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex China Partnership**

- There had not been a meeting since the last Sub-Committee but a report would be provided at the next Economic Development meeting.

7. **Countryside Access and the Norfolk Tourism Economy**

7.1 The Sub - Committee received the presentation from the Countryside Manager.

7.2 The following points were raised during the discussion:-

- The action plan that had been produced was very effective and should help to make Norfolk a great place for cycling and walking but a lot of work still needed to be done.
- Only a few towns had been signed up to the 'Walkers are Welcome' scheme but the team were now working on expanding this number.
- Improving the infrastructure in Norfolk was key to making the countryside more accessible for people, whether this be roads or mobile phone signal.
- Mr Jason Borthwick was invited to address the Sub-Committee and made the following points.
 - Norfolk tourism had been undervalued for too long and now needed a real push for joined up working and support from the public organisations.
 - The key would be to work with what was already in place and build upon this rather than starting from scratch.
 - There was little common direction in Norfolk and the area needed a lead to move the tourism forward and to facilitate cooperative working and make Norfolk a well-marketed brand.
 - Conflicts with local authorities over planning and highways issues created barriers to the co-operative working that was required.
 - NCC could provide the lead that was required for the rest of the county.
- Mrs Roberta Hammond was invited to address the Sub-Committee and made the following points:-
 - There were events happening by entrepreneurial people, that were very successful events but due to lack of joined up working, the events did not link up with one another which was considered a waste.
 - The goal needed to be to get people who were coming to Norfolk to stay longer and therefore spend more money.
- In a study undertaken by the Broads Authority it had found that most people that came to Norfolk came to walk and enjoy the beautiful countryside and this was an area that had to be utilised; studies had shown that Norfolk as a holiday destination was more popular than Cornwall.
- Members raised concerns regarding the recent closure of public toilets by some of the district councils and the effect this may have for visitors to rural

towns and villages.

- Members agreed that Norfolk County Council could help by ensuring that departments within the organisation made the effects on the local economy and tourism a priority when making decisions.
- One area in particular where NCC could help would be to re-look at the signage policy for Norfolk. There are issues with illegal signs being put up in some areas, but the signing policy does not facilitate putting up signs to advertise local events.
Members agreed that this was a matter that should be taken to the Environment, Development and Transport Committee as this issue fell within its remit. Members also agreed to suggest to the Committee that Mr J Borthwick should be invited to speak at the EDT Committee on this matter and the Chairman agreed to discuss this with the Chair of EDT Committee.
- It was noted that tourism was an important aspect to the economic development of the county but that NCC had struggled to provide a good service in this area in the past so had sourced it out to Visit Norfolk with the aim being to create one brand of Norfolk. However, there had been difficulties as not all the local districts were co-operating which was a shame as this was a real opportunity.
- Mr P Waters from Visit Norfolk would be attending the next Economic Development meeting to provide an update for members.

7.3 The Sub-Committee **Agreed** that the issue regarding the signage policy should be referred to the EDT Committee for consideration and to suggest that that Mr J Borthwick should be invited to speak on the matter, which the Chairman would discuss with the EDT Chairman.

8. Procurement and Impact on the Economy

8.1 The Sub-Committee received the presentation from the Head of Procurement.

8.2 The following points were raised during the discussion:-

- The Sub-Committee were informed that all contract opportunities are tweeted on Twitter and any successful tender by a local business is also tweeted.
- For significant contracts, decisions about including social value requirements are brought to the relevant service committee.
- Research was done some years ago to determine what proportion of spend went to local businesses, and the figure at that time was around 42%.
- It was now a legal requirement that all contracts available for tender be published online on Contracts Finder; some 95% of local authorities were now compliant.

8.3 The Chairman allowed Mr M Lake to address the Sub-Committee and agreed that Mr M Lake would put his request in writing for the Sub-Committee to consider at the meeting in June.

8.4 The Sub-Committee noted the presentation.

9. Apprenticeships – Update

9.1 The Sub-Committee received the verbal update from the Employment and Skills Manager.

9.2 The Sub-Committee were informed that the reforms due to come would no longer effect smaller businesses within the originally defined timescales and at this time they will continue to access the funding in the same way as previously. Larger businesses would be required to pay the levy and would need to use the online system.

9.3 The apprenticeship event held at the Forum in Norwich had been a great success, the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the sub-Committee had attended and congratulated the team on an excellent job.

9.4 The Sub-Committee noted the update.

10. Norfolk Infrastructure Fund Update

10.1 The Sub-Committee received the report from the Executive Director, Community and Environmental Services which gave a progress update on the activity and spend in 2015/16.

10.2 The members queried why there was such a large gap between the business plan and outturn figure for the construction costs of the Beach Coach Station Car Park and were informed that this was due to the flood risk costs which had not been figured in the original estimate.
Members advised that this should be raised with the planning authority and were informed that this had been raised with the local borough council.

11. Finance Monitoring report

11.1 The Sub-Committee received the report from the Executive Director, Community and Environmental Services which provided the Sub-Committee with the financial position for the service to the end of February 2016, including the planned use of reserves.

11.2 The Sub-Committee noted the forecast year end position for the Economic Development and Strategy.

12. Forward Plan and delegated decisions

12.1 The Sub-Committee received the report from the Executive Director, Community and Environmental Services which set out the Forward Plan and other relevant

decisions taken under delegated powers by the Executive Director within the Terms of Reference of the Sub-Committee since the last meeting on 21 January 2016.

12.2 It had been agreed at the EDT Committee meeting that the vital signs relating to economic development would be monitored by the Sub Committee and a performance report would be brought to future Economic Development Sub-Committee meetings.

12.3 The Sub-Committee noted the forward plan and delegated decisions.

The meeting closed at 12:10pm

Chairman



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