

DEVELOPMENT, HOUSING AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

29 NOVEMBER 2010

Present – Councillors J Barrow, Burrows, A Connell, Critchley, Mrs Fairclough, Francis, Jones, McKeon, Pickup, Mrs Ronson, J Walsh, and D Wilkinson.

Lay Members

Mrs B Berry	-	BATRA
Mrs J Horan	-	BATRA

Also in Attendance

Councillor Ibrahim	-	Executive Member, Development, Regeneration and Skills
Councillor Peel	-	Executive Member, Housing, Neighbourhoods and Regulation
Mr A Donaldson	-	Assistant Director, Policy, Performance and Partnerships
Mr K Davies	-	Director of Development and Regeneration
Mr S Young	-	Assistant Director, Policy and Performance (Environmental Services and Development and Regeneration)
Mr J Smethurst	-	Chief Housing and Regeneration Officer
Mr A Walker	-	Head of Service (Enterprise, Employment and Skills)
Miss L Boardman	-	Principal Project Officer
Mr M Oglesby	-	Chairman, MIDAS
Ms A Robinson	-	Chief Executive, MIDAS
Mr T Newns	-	Deputy Chief Executive, MIDAS
Mrs S Wootton	-	Senior Scrutiny Officer

Councillor Critchley in the Chair

25. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the proceeding of the meeting of the Development, Housing and Skills Scrutiny Committee held on 4 October 2010, were submitted.

With reference to minute 23, Affordable Warmth Update, Members queried whether or not it would be possible to obtain figures from the NHS regarding affordable warmth.

Resolved – (i) That the minutes of the proceedings of the Committee be signed as a correct record

(ii) That figures from the NHS be made available at the next meeting of this Scrutiny Committee regarding affordable warmth.

26. DECISION MONITORING REPORT

The Director of the Chief Executive's Department submitted a report detailing the progress of decisions previously taken by this Scrutiny Committee.

In relation to the advertising of Bolton Town Centre on Northern Rail trains, this was still being looked into, however, the second stage of marketing had commenced, which would allow for adverts to be placed in Bury.

Resolved – That the position be noted

27. ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME

The Director of the Chief Executive's Department submitted a report which puts forward a list of suggested issues which the Committee may wish to receive reports on or investigate further during the current Municipal Year.

Members were made aware that this was a continuing document and could be updated at any time during the Municipal Year and any items Members wished to add to the Work Programme would be considered and added accordingly.

Members requested that further to the item entitled, "Housing and Employment Land Updates" which would be considered by the Scrutiny Committee at its January 2011 meeting, that it would include the availability of land in Bolton.

Resolved – (i) That the Work Programme be noted

(ii) That further information be included in the item relating to Housing and Employment Land Updates at the January 2011 meeting in reference to the availability of land in Bolton

28. MANCHESTER INVESTMENT DEVELOPMENT AGENCY SERVICE (MIDAS)

Mr Michael Oglesby, Chairman, Ms Angie Robinson, Chief Executive and Mr Tim Newns, Deputy Chief Executive, attended the meeting representing MIDAS, to provide the Scrutiny Committee with information regarding MIDAS and its links to Bolton.

Members were informed of who MIDAS were, in-so-far as it was Greater Manchester's investment and development agency with a remit to attract new investment and employment to the city region, MIDAS offered an extensive, free and confidential package of advice and assistance for location consultants and potential investors, the organisation was wholly owned by the ten AGMA authorities and was funded by those authorities and the North West Development Agency (NWD A).

There were five nominated AGMA representative, including one Member from Bolton Council who sat on the Board, which also included KPMG, BT and Manchester Airport. The core functions of MIDAS were listed as follows:-

- Proactive Lead Generation in key sectors and target markets;
- Project handling;
- Extensive programme of Employer Engagement – Foreign and UK owned firms;
- Promoting the city as a world class business destination;
- Shaping the Greater Manchester product;
- Advice and support to Bolton Council; and
- To ensure Bolton remained part of the Greater Manchester family.

The presentation went on to explain MIDAS' relationship with Bolton. There was deemed to be strong partnership working with economic development teams in line with both MIDAS and Local Authority protocols respectively, which was aimed at maximising efficiency, avoiding duplication whilst ensuring results were being delivered. The account management of foreign owned companies, including Vertex, Stateside Foods, Webster Drives and Adecco. 31 companies had been targeted for intensive account management this year with Business Bolton. Joint working opportunities were also being established with India, adding to the close ties Bolton already had with the country.

Further information was provided with regards to Hitachi, which were one of Bolton's largest investors. There was to be an expansion of manufacturing at the Bolton site and the introduction of a new research and development function. MIDAS also provided ongoing, intensive investor development support, which helped contribute towards the further security of operations at the site.

Members were provided information regarding Bolton's strengths:-

- More than 262,000 people live in Bolton. This large resident population provided the Borough with a key economic asset that had driven growth;
- Bolton represented a key strategic location for business investment in Greater Manchester;

- The Town Centre was ranked as the sixth best retail offer in the North West;
- Strong retail and leisure offer was not only a significant provider of employment, but made Bolton Town Centre of strategic significance for Greater Manchester, particularly north of the city;
- Key strategic links both into the city core and beyond Greater Manchester to Lancashire and Leeds; and
- The Trinity Interchange would significantly increase connectivity into Manchester and beyond, improving Bolton's residents' access to employment opportunities.

Members were appraised of information regarding the commute of people into and out of Bolton from various parts of east Lancashire and Manchester, with 7.7% of people commuting to Manchester from Bolton. Further to this, Members were advised of the strengths Bolton had to offer, with regards to the land at Cutacre and the Horwich Loco Works.

Following the presentation, discussions took place including the following:-

- The loss of the NWDA funding and how this would affect MIDAS;
- The need to improve Bolton Town Centre and to return it to the main focal point of the town;
- Although MIDAS were looking at investments from as far afield as China and India, it was important not to forget traditional countries for investment within Europe; and
- Concerns were raised regarding the combined area of the Northern hub which needed a huge injection.

Resolved – (i) That Members thanked MIDAS for their attendance and their informative presentation

(ii) That the presentation be noted.

29. THE ECONOMIC POSITION OF BOLTON

Mr Keith Davies, Director of Development and Regeneration, attended the meeting to provide Members of the Committee with an update regarding the economic position that Bolton currently found itself in.

Members were made aware that Bolton College and Bolton Sixth Form College were now officially open and were formally opened by the Duke of Kent in October 2010. Following the decision in March 2010 to proceed with Phase 1 demolition at The Knowledge Campus, on Commission Street, meant that:-

- 29 tenants had been re-housed;
- 8 further tenants had accepted an offer leaving two remaining;
- All the private owners had accepted the offer made; and
- Residents in Phase 2 were now enquiring on timescales regarding their properties.

With regards to the Bolton One facility, this was slightly ahead of schedule with the steel frame erection now complete. The concrete for the pool had been poured and the health and leisure shell would be completed by Christmas 2010, therefore the completion date was on track for spring 2012.

Members were also updated on the Trinity Interchange where a Places Matter Design Review Panel had been established which worked towards the reserved matters planning application in early 2011. Public consultation on a detailed design was well underway and indemnity and development agreements were due to be signed imminently. The strategy for bringing the commercial site forward was agreed by spring 2011 and finally in relation to the Trinity Interchange, a joint development brief for the Moor Lane site was being created.

The package of improvement works to Bolton Market was underway and due for completion in January 2011 and this would include new demountable tables, canopies, signage and energy efficient lighting. Work was also underway to develop a range of other short, medium and longer term enhancement works as well as identifying means of resourcing.

Further information was provided in reference to:-

- Central Street;
- Merchants Quarter;
- Town Centre Enforcement Update; and
- The former Woolworths building.

Members were informed that more shops were being leased with a few which had already commenced trading and Barclays Bank on Victoria Square were pushing for their opening of the new premises in December 2010, however, the quality of these shops were queried by Members.

Much discussion took place regarding further information regarding an economic assessment of the Town Centre and a more comprehensive understanding of Town Centre usage. Also, concerns were raised regarding the proposed bus station and how it was to be served.

Resolved – (i) That the presentation be noted

(ii) That a presentation be provided at the next meeting of this Scrutiny Committee regarding the recent economic assessment of Bolton and the Greater Manchester Town Centres study.

30. SKILLS SCRUTINY PANEL

The Director of the Chief Executive's Department submitted a report to update Members of this Scrutiny Committee of the Skills Scrutiny Panel, which had recently met for the first time.

By way of background information to its work, the Skills Scrutiny Panel received presentations from the Director of Development and Regeneration detailed the components of the Council's long term economic strategy, what had been achieved and how the Council would respond to the changed financial climate following the economic downturn. The Panel also received a presentation which outlined the apprenticeship position in Bolton based on information provided by the National Apprenticeship Service.

The Panel was of the opinion that although the changed financial climate had resulted in a reduction in the number of new jobs to be created, there would still be over 5000 more jobs in Bolton by 2020. The Panel felt that its remit was to investigate ways of improving the skills base of Bolton people to enable them to achieve more and to put them in a position to take up the maximum number of those new jobs created.

The Panel had scheduled four meetings to March 2011, when it will discuss issues around employer feedback, the Council's involvement in the 14-19 Strategy and building skills for competitiveness and skills for work. The Panel had identified a number of potential contributors from both public and private sectors and had set itself a challenging timescale of submitting its final report to the meeting of this Scrutiny Committee on 11 April 2011.

Resolved – (i) That Members noted the position

(ii) That MIDAS be contacted to attend a future meeting of the Skills Scrutiny Panel for a question and answer session on how talent retention could be tailored to meet the needs of the Bolton workforce.

31. MEMBER'S BUSINESS

MEMBERS QUESTIONS

a) The following question was raised by Councillor John Walsh in accordance with Standing Order 36

Could the Executive Members for Development, Regeneration and Skills and Neighbourhood, Housing and Regulation

1. Explain the philosophy applied to each of the budget proposals for the Portfolio.

The Executive Members advised that the overall philosophy was set out in a report approved by the Executive on the 22 November 2010 titled "Spending Priorities and Savings Approach". A copy was circulated for information at the meeting. As set out in that document, in considering savings options, the major priorities of Economic Prosperity and Narrowing the Gap, along with minimising the impact on the most vulnerable citizens in the Borough, were taken into account when putting together the savings proposals. In addition, wherever possible, efficiencies were the first areas to be considered, although the practicalities and deliverability of savings by next April also had to be taken into account. This approach was set out in the Corporate Equality Impact Assessment, also agreed by the Executive on the 22 November 2010, a copy of which was circulated at the meeting.

2. Say how the policy options meet the Council's twin aims as set out by the Leader of the Council viz Economic Prosperity and Narrowing the Gap

The Executive Members advised that the objective in identifying savings was to wherever possible ensure that they did not significantly impact on the Council's twin aims. As could be seen from the options put forward, this was by and large achieved.

3. Explain into which of the 3 categories

- "efficiencies which do not impact on front-line delivery"
 - "a mix of efficiencies and reductions which also do not impact on front-line delivery, and
 - "charging outside agencies not service users more,
- Each of the budget proposals fall**

The Executive Members advised that rather than analyse it into the 3 above categories it was felt to be of more benefit to analyse them as follows

- A = Efficiencies – no impact on front-line
- B = Efficiencies – some impact on front-line
- C = Charging (*charges not to the general public)
- D = Savings with impact on front-line delivery

For information, the savings options analysed over the above categories were circulated at the meeting.

4. Tell the Committee which of the budget proposals the Executive Member personally proposed and which were left to Officers?

The Executive Members asked the Officers to prepare a list of proposals to meet the target set by the Council. The Executive Member then discussed these proposals with the Director to evaluate them against the savings priorities and to ensure that they were robust. The proposals were then agreed as the ones to go forward formally into the Council's budget processes which included

being considered by individual PDG's and the Corporate Budget PDG where all Members had the opportunity to consider and comment on the proposals and put alternatives forward if they wished to.

This was also part of a wider corporate process which involves the Leader of the Council, the Executive, the Chief Executive, Director of Corporate Resources and the Executive Management Team which tested and scrutinised the thinking behind all the options, their impact on the Council's priorities and ways in which any impacts could be mitigated. This process was set out in the Corporate Economic Impact Assessment (EIA) a copy of which was circulated at the meeting.

Resolved – That the question and response be noted.

- b) The Committee received the extract of minutes of other meetings of the Council relevant to the remit of this Committee:-

a)	Executive Member for Development, Regeneration and Skills held on 23 November 2010;
b)	Executive Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Regulation held on 25 October 2010 and 23 November 2010;
c)	Executive Members for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Regulation and Strategy and External Relations, held on 4 October 2010 and 11 October 2010.
d)	Housing, Neighbourhoods and Regulation Policy Development Group held on 7 October 2010;
e)	Housing, Neighbourhoods and Regulation Policy Development Group Augmented by the Development, Regeneration and Skills Policy Development Group held on 10 November 2010; and
f)	Development, Regeneration and Skills Policy Development Group held on 9 November 2010.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting be noted

(The meeting commenced at 6.10pm and ended at 7.50pm).