



Coventry Partnership Business Group Meeting

**Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 20th April 2010
Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce**

Present:

Les Ratcliffe, Jaguar & Land Rover Cars - Chair
Karen O'Donoghue, Coventry First
Andy Walmsley, Coventry City Council
Dave Hughes, Business in the Community
Faye Williams, Common Purpose
Jo Sandford, Consultant
Roger Lewis, Peugeot Citroen
Dianne Williams, Chamber of Commerce
Sarah Perry, Coventry Partnership (Minutes)
Jim Newton, Coventry City Council- Planning (Item 3)
Sue Bent, Chair of the Equalities and Community Cohesion Theme Group (Item 4)

Apologies:

John Cave, Force
Linsey Luke, Federation of Small Businesses
Bruce Undy, Federation of Small Businesses
Dave Long, CVOne

1. Welcome and Apologies

Les welcomed everyone to the Chamber of Commerce for the tenth meeting of the Coventry Partnership Business Group.

Introductions were given and apologies were noted as above.

Dave Hughes introduced himself as the new representative for Business in the Community taking over from John Guilford.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th January were approved.

Matters arising:-

2.1. Community Cohesion Awards

Sarah highlighted that the deadline for nominations for the Coventry Community Cohesion awards is the 30th April and asked the group to encourage as many nominations as possible.

Action: Business Group members to encourage nominations for the Community Cohesion Awards

2.2. Invite to the City Councils Investment and Business Team.

Karen asked if a representative from the City Councils Investment and Business team had been invited to the group as discussed at the last meeting. Sarah confirmed that she had contacted Deirdre Fitzhugh to attend a future meeting to explain the role of her team and then invite them to join the Business Group if appropriate.

Action: To be added on the agenda for the next meeting.

3. City Centre Area Action Plan (CCAP) Consultation - Jim Newton

Jim reported that the closing date for representations for the CCAP is 21st May, after that date we send all representations to the Planning Inspectorate, who will hold an examination in public. This is like a public inquiry, but does not require lawyers and is more relaxed.

Representations must relate to the 'soundness' tests, which are detailed in the guidance note which is available at www.coventry.gov.uk/ccaap

Key features of the area action plan include:

- Friargate scheme to improve connectivity between the railway station and the rest of the city centre, particularly the central shopping area;
- 5,000 new homes;
- 250,000 square metres (approximately 2.5m square feet) additional office floorspace;
- 150,000 square metres (approximately 1.5m square feet) additional retail floorspace;
- car parking provision re-organised so that long stay parking has direct access from ring road, short stay within ring road, with reduced traffic speed to aid pedestrian friendliness of the centre;
- city centre area extends beyond ring road, and has been divided into 10 "quarters", which are broadly character/function areas. Each quarter has a specific section and policy within the area action plan; and
- area action plan defines specific sites and allocates them for a single use or mix of uses

Representations are welcomed, and these must be received by 21st May. A representation form is on the Council's web site, which can be emailed or filled in on

line. You can print out and complete by hand if you wish. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate Jim Newton on 024 7683 1187 or email jim.newton@coventry.gov.uk

4. The Big Lunch – Sue Bent

Sue Bent was representing the Equalities and Community Cohesion (E+CC) Theme Group of the Coventry Partnership. Sue informed the group that the E+CC Theme Group is a cross theme and one of their key aims is to ensure that E+CC is embedded into all activities across the Partnership. Dave Hughes has agreed to represent the Business Group on the theme group and this will be one way that the two groups can connect and collaborate on activities in the future. Sue stressed that the E+CC Theme Group is fully aware that Cohesion is not possible without the Business Sector.

Sue explained that the Big Lunch is a practical example of how the two groups can work together. Sue explained that the Big Lunch is a National event, and this is the second year it has taken place. It is a simple idea which Coventry would like to adopt as a good way of promoting Community Cohesion. A DVD was produced last year and this was shown to the group to give a flavour of the event. The Big Lunch will take place on Sunday 18th July and a steering group has been set up to start developing some plans. Sue is expecting that in Coventry we will have lots of little lunches. Sue asked the group how she could get businesses involved in promoting, after discussions it was agreed that Sue would draft a communications plan and send back to the Business Group – including some of the ideas generated today.

Action: Sarah to forward the Communications Plan to the Business Group, along with any material that is produced. Members to promote within their networks.

5. Business Group view on the Economy

Dianne gave a brief update; there are still major concerns around businesses getting access to finance, there are issues around the introduction of invoice discounting (factoring) instead of the use of overdraft facilities which is causing problems for businesses – banks are getting business to sign up to invoice discounting and making huge charges. In terms of Taxation, the HMRC are getting more aggressive when collecting, which could cause major problems for businesses. The quarterly economic survey shows that we are not doing as bad as we thought we would be. Businesses are operating under capacity – keeping staff on as it is too expensive to get rid of them – therefore this reduces opportunities for young people, apprenticeships and graduates. This will lead to a skill shortage when the economy picks up due to the ageing workforce.

Action: Discussions on what implications and what can be done about the potential skills shortage to be added to the next agenda.

The car scrapage scheme ended at the end of March – Peugeot are anticipating a uncertain and challenging year ahead. Last month Land Rover had the best sales since 1948, they recently recruited 1000 people at Castle Bromwich and are continuing to take on apprenticeships

There has been a reduction in the number of organisations taking part in CSR activities – BITC highlighted that 18 months ago they were working with 15 – 20 organisations which has now reduced to 4. Organisations are willing to get involved, but are not willing to pay.

6. Review of Partnership Board Agenda

A copy of the Partnership Board agenda was circulated with the agenda and a copy of the previous minutes were tabled at the meeting and discussed. Item 8 on the agenda is an opportunity for the Business group to feedback on the private sectors perspective, this will be a standing item on all future agenda.

Action: Sarah to produce a summary of today's discussion and forward to Les in advance of the Partnership Board meeting on the 22nd April.

7. Membership on the Coventry Partnership Board

Sarah reported that within the Coventry Partnership constitution it states that the Private Sector can have five representatives on the Board. Currently only four of the five places are taken. A copy of the top 100 employers in Coventry was circulated with the papers to aid discussions on who would be the best Organisation and person to represent the Private Sector on the Partnership Board.

After discussion it was agreed that both Barclays Bank and Severn Trent be contacted to inform them of the opportunity that we have available and what role they would have on the group. Following this a decision will be made on which Organisation should join the Partnership Board. Both Organisations will be invited to join the Business Group.

Action: A letter to be sent to Barclays Bank and Severn Trent to inform them of the opportunity that has been made available.

8. Any Other Business

- **Review of the group** – Les asked the group for their opinions on if the group is achieving what we set out to do. The group all agreed that the group is the key vehicle to ensure linkages are made to and from the Partnership Board. It was agreed that it is essential to have as many business voices represented as possible. We now had a standing item on every Partnership Board meeting which will enable us to promote the contribution that the Private Sector make.

- Discussions took place around the need to measure what impact we have over the next year. It was agreed that this should be discussed in more detail at the next meeting.

Action: To be added to the next agenda.

- **Re-confirm Business nomination for Coventry Partnership Chair** – Roger confirmed that he will be taking on the role as the Private Sector rotating Chair from July 2010. Meetings have been arranged with Dawn Ford to discuss agenda items prior to the Board meetings.

9. Future Meetings

The key item for the next meeting is planned to be the Local Economic Assessment.

Other suggestions are 2012 Partnership and the work and health project that has recently been launched through the Coventry Health Improvement Programme.

Date for next year had been set to coincide with the Board meetings:-

- 13th July – Room 50, Council House, Earl Street
- 12th October (venue tbc)
- 18th January 2011 (venue tbc)

All meetings to take place at 10 -12.