



Coventry Partnership Business Group Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on Tue 12th Jan, Jaguar Lounge, Ricoh Arena

Present:

Les Ratcliffe, Jaguar & Land Rover Cars - Chair
John Cave, Force
Linsey Luke, Federation of Small Businesses
Dianne Williams, Chamber of Commerce
Karen O'Donoghue, Coventry First
Faye Williams, Common Purpose
Nigel Wain, Coventry Partnership (Minutes)
Sarah Perry, Coventry Partnership
Jo Sandford, Consultant
Jim Newton, Coventry City Council- Planning
Michael Checkley, Environment Theme Group

Apologies:

Roger Lewis, Peugeot Citroen
John Guildford, Business in the Community
Andy Walmsley, Coventry City Council
Chris Briggs, Business Link
Dave Long, CVOne

Meeting Highlights

- **The Business group were asked to promote the Coventry Community Cohesion awards which were launched at the Partnership Conference in December.**
- **Tim highlighted the work of the Partnership Communications group and the need to keep the press engaged with positive human interest stories to show how the Partnership is improving people's lives.**
- **The Business group encouraged Tim to link up with the Image group.**
- **The City Centre Area Action consultation was presented.**
- **John agreed to represent the Business Group on the new Strategic Climate Change group.**
- **Dianne asked for information on the local economy to be forwarded to her so she could include it in her presentation on the Economy at the at the next Partnership Meeting.**
- **Linsey agreed to represent the group at the forthcoming Partnership event on developing a framework for consultation.**

1. Welcome and Apologies

Les welcomed everyone to the Jaguar Lounge for the ninth meeting of the Coventry Partnership Business Group.

Introductions were given and apologies were noted as above.

Nigel reported that he had contacted Dave Long at CVOne to replace Pete Walters on the group; Dave will attend in future but had to send apologies for today's meeting

2. Minutes of Last Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th Nov were approved.

Matters arising:-

2.1. Feedback from Coventry Partnership

Dianne fed back from the conference:- the turnout was excellent, the conference maintained interest through the day but the venue was freezing.

Dianne and Roger had presented the Business community perspective on Community Cohesion in the form of a conversation stressing the part Business role in generating wealth to pay for services and the key role employment and employers play in social inclusion.

The feedback was positive and more people now recognised the need include a Business perspective in their work.

Karen also thought the day was very energetic and clearly highlighted the barriers to cohesion that may exist.

Les thanked Dianne and Roger for standing in for Louise and him at short notice.

2.2. Community Cohesion Awards

Nigel highlighted the Coventry Community Cohesion awards which were launched at the conference.

The Business Group had supported the inclusion of an award for the private sector so Nigel encouraged the group to ensure suitable projects were nominated.

The closing date is end April 2010. The link to the awards had been circulated to the members and an article will be included in the Partnership newsletter. This could be included in any newsletters sent to private sector companies.

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

2.3. Community Safety

Linsey reported that as a result of the police attending the last Business group meeting, links to the Coventry police had improved and they had signed up to the FSB Listen to Business campaign to encourage business to work with neighbourhood policing teams.

2.4. Employment Placement Scheme

Nigel updated the group with the progress of the Coventry Partnership employment placement scheme. Employers preferred to offer placements to graduates and unemployed managers so there is a shortage of employers offering placements to the younger NEETS group.

Nigel had raised this at the Business in the Community - Power of Partnership Event and BiTC were exploring how they could cooperate on identifying NEET placements.

Dianne raised concerns about the Future Jobs Fund placements needing to provide community benefit which acted as a barrier for the private sector. Despite raising this at the highest level there still has not been any relaxation on the requirement.

Dianne also fed back some issues on the process where the Chamber had interviewed potential candidates who had little knowledge of job prior to attending for the interview.

2.5. Partnership Meeting

Dianne confirmed she had fed back the Business groups views on the lack of timely consultation on the Community Cohesion strategy and the need to have Business Group feedback as an agenda item at each Partnership meeting.

Dawn had apologised for the late consultation and Martin Reeves had confirmed that agenda would include the Business Group in future.

3. Communications Group – Tim Coleman

Tim introduced his role as chair of the Partnership Communications Group which he took over 12 months ago.

The group consisted of Partnership Communications officers and its aims were to improve coordination of Partnership messages and to provide opportunities for officers to share their expertise.

The energy level of the group had increased over the year as partners had seen the benefits of collaborating on shared activities. The group had explored the use of IGoogle to share documents and the use of social media tools. The group had also developed an events calendar which is accessed on the partnership web site.

Tim also highlighted his responsibility to encourage news coverage across the Partnership and to help people identify positive stories. Certain of the local media have the belief that negative stories sell. Meetings have taken place with local media and Martin Reeves and the Police to encourage the take up of more positive stories. Tim is working with Theme groups to help them identify human interest stories which the local news would find it easier to engage with and had developed a flier – 'communicating for confidence'.

Linsey replied that she had realised benefits from joining the Comms. Team.

Dianne commented that the Chamber promotes positive Business stories to enhance the city profile and the private sector generally had stronger links to the press so could be used to get Partnership messages across.

Karen asked about any work with the Image working group which promotes the city. The group meets the first Wed in Feb at 8-00, Tim agreed to make links with the group.

Tim finished by reminding the group that the deadline for the Newsletter was Friday.

4. City Centre Area Action plan - Jim Newton

The draft City Centre Area Action Plan (AAP) was subject to public consultation, which closed on 14th January. The Council would consider all representations received and make any changes necessary. This will be followed by a further six week consultation on the 'proposed submission' draft - which will be what the Council considers to be the final version. After the document is 'submitted' to the Secretary of State there would be an 'Examination in Public', which was similar to a public Inquiry. The Independent Inspector will then publish a report, which would be binding upon the Council..

The current draft plan builds on the Core Strategy and Regional Spatial Strategy - these set out the 10 'quarters' and office (additional 1/4 M square metres), retail (additional 100,000 square metres) and housing requirements(6,000 homes) respectively.

Key features of the plan were:-:

- an expanded city centre area, with additional retail areas
- the 'quarters' identified predominant uses, which enabled flexibility without compromising on character or function of specific areas
- improved accessibility - long stay car parks outside the ring road, short stay car parks within it
- primary frontages - this meant protecting the retail function of specific streets - Upper & Lower Precincts, Smithford Way, Market Way, West Orchards & Orchards Link, Broadgate & Cathedral Lanes
- specific sites allocated to specific use or uses, including residential, office, retail, mixed
- The expanded office space should bring in more spending power to the city centre

Nigel confirmed he had sent the consultation link for the Action plan to the Business group in December.

Dianne was concerned that the perception of the Ring Road for visitors needs to be improved. Faye thought its appearance could be improved by use of public art.

Jim confirmed that the groups emails were now included on the distribution list for updates re the city centre plans.

5. Environment Group Restructuring - Michael Checkley

Michael Checkley was representing the Environment Theme Group of the Coventry Partnership.

The Partnership had ambitious plans for Climate Change and reducing the CO2 emissions in Coventry. The UK is committed to an 80% reduction of emissions. The Theme group was re-launched in Sept 2009 and has successfully started key projects such as Electric Vehicles and Heat Pump Installations.

It was now recognised a strategic climate change group was needed to coordinate and direct key activities across the city.

The group would meet quarterly, chaired by Peter Woodward and set the strategic vision and direction for Coventry to be a low carbon city, identify any Gaps and engage with all partners.

Michael finished by asking the Business Group to nominate someone to join the Climate Change group.

John highlighted the work done by Force- the existing housing stock was one of the biggest contributors to CO2 emissions and FORCE were trying to set up a education house to highlight what could be done to reduce emissions.

Dianne was aware of a number of different projects and agreed that a strategic group was required with awareness of what others were doing.

Karen was interested in an exemplar office to show practical examples of what can be done to reduce costs and emissions.

John kindly agreed to represent the Business Group on the new Climate Change Strategic Group.

Les thanked John for agreeing to represent the Business group and was aware of the wide range of good environment stories that already existed in businesses

6. Business Group view on the Economy

Dianne reported that she was preparing for the agenda item on the economy at the next Partnership meeting. She would base this on the latest Chamber quarterly economic survey. There was positive news in the retail sector nationally. Businesses expecting sales to reduce had decreased significantly and 60% of businesses were reporting they expected employment levels to remain constant.

Compared to previous recessions employers seemed less willing to let staff go and were reducing contract staff and hours instead. The creation of new jobs would be a lagging indicator. The public sector cut backs have also not yet started.

John was concerned that construction has been badly hit and could suffer further when public sector cuts kick in. Access to finance was still a key issue.

Action

Dianne asked the group to forward any information / views on the economy so she can reflect this in her presentation. Les agreed to send the JLR sales figures, he thought Roger could provide the Peugeot figures.

7. Review of Partnership Board Agenda

The key item of interest on the next agenda was the economy. The inclusion of the Business group feedback on future agendas would provide an opportunity to change the way the Partners view the private sector.

There was discussion about how the next Chair of the Partnership would be selected as it was the turn of the private sector. Les and Louise had been chairs previously. Nigel suggested that if the group had any suggestions they should talk these over with Dawn who would need to identify nominations quite soon.

8. AOB

- **Inform Consult and Involve Pie Group Workshop-** Nigel highlighted the work the Partnership was doing to develop a partnership wide framework for consultations. Given the importance of engaging with Business it was essential that the Business Group is involved. Linsey agreed to attend the upcoming workshop on 25th Feb.
- **FSB Small Business Awards**
Linsey announced that the FSB was launching the Small Business Awards with a presentation event on 14th April. She would email details to the group.
- Faye informed the group they were recruiting a part time junior post based at the Ricoh.
- Les informed the group that Sarah Perry was taking of the support Partnership Business Group within the secretariat and thanked Nigel for the work he had done supporting the group in the last 2 years.

7. Future Meetings

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

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

20th April, 13th July, 12th Oct, 18th Jan (2011)
All Tuesday 10-12.

Dianne kindly agreed to hast the next meeting at the Chamber.

.Nigel Wain