

MINUTES: Business Advisory Group

Thursday 11th March 2010

34/38 Beverley Road, Hull



PRESENT

Barry Schofield	Tutty's Office Interiors (Chair)
Tim Evison	Eon Media
Graham Boanas	GKB7 Ltd
Andy Peterson	KCOM
John Britton	BCG Bridgepoint
Jeff Clarkson	Clarkson Business Strategy
John Roberts	Destinova Consulting
Paula Litten	Pro-Fusion Partnerships
David Marritt	Chamber of Commerce
Steve Jagger	Quickline Communications
Kevin Carter	ONE HULL
Nick Pontone	ONE HULL Business Forum

Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Apologies for Absence

365. Apologies for absence were noted from Darren Glew and Andy Lawrence.

Agenda Item 2: Minutes

366. The minutes of the meeting held on 14th January 2010 were agreed as a true and correct record.

Agenda Item 3: Matters Arising

367. There were no matters arising.

Agenda Item 4: ONE HULL Earning Partnership

368. Nick Pontone reported that the ONE HULL Earning Partnership had been restructured and Richard Tuplin from The Insurance Partnership and Institute of Directors had succeeded Richard Brough as the Chair.

369. The Business Advisory Group would support the partnership and it's two new sub-boards which focused on employment & skills and enterprise. The Forum would be circulating details of these partnerships to local businesses in the coming weeks, and the sub-boards themselves would be appointing private sector members. Nick Pontone expressed the view that the restructured partnership was a positive move and that it would good that it would still be business led.

Agenda item 5: Local Area Agreement Progress

370. Barry Schofield welcomed Kevin Carter from ONE HULL to the meeting to talk about the progress the city was making on the key performance targets relating to the economy, education, health and crime.
371. Kevin Carter explained that the headline targets for Hull on issues such as unemployment, business start ups, teenage pregnancy, GCSE attainment etc were contained in the Local Area Agreement (LAA). This was an agreement between the ONE HULL partnership and the Government which was effectively the 'business plan' for the city. Hull had negotiated 29 specific LAA targets with the Government and had the monitor progress on the rest of the 198 National Indicators on which performance was measured.
372. Kevin Carter explained that the LAA system included a 'reward' element to incentivise localities to hit more stretching targets for the most important priorities. Hull was making good progress on a number of these targets and it was expected several million pounds would come back into the city through reward grants.
373. Members discussed the issues relating to the quality of data and problems associated with setting targets. It was noted for example that there was a time lag in receiving some data, such as VAT registrations, which made it more difficult to determine whether steps taken were having an impact. Some targets therefore had proxy measures which could be collected more regularly. It was recognised that statistics told only part of the story and that a wider view must be added to figures to make proper assessments of progress.
374. Kevin Carter was asked about the impact of the recession on employment targets which had been agreed before the economic downturn. He reported that the relevant targets on employment had not been 'locked down' due to the changing economic circumstances and these targets would be re-negotiated in due course to take account of the recession.
375. There was a discussion about a number of specific targets including teenage pregnancy and educational attainment. Members felt that it was important to recognise that targets were inter-related and the underlying problems were complex. Members noted the LAA Performance Update which had been circulated. It revealed that the city was on track to meet 45% of its targets and was not on track for 38%. This was a considerable improvement on the position earlier in the year.
376. Barry Schofield thanked Kevin Carter for his presentation and highlighted that the group would take a continuing interest in key targets, particularly those relating to Earning for which the Advisory Group played a supporting role.

Agenda item 6: Hull's broadband provision

377. John Roberts introduced the item by stating that the Hull's digital infrastructure and broadband provision was item which had regularly been raised at the Business Advisory Group. The purpose of the discussion was therefore to consider in more depth the various issues and options the city and its businesses had available to them. Barry Schofield welcomed Steve Jagger of Quickline Communications to the meeting and asked

him to give members his perspective on these issues. Andy Peterson from KCOM was also welcomed to the meeting.

378. Steve Jagger gave members a presentation on the key issues as he saw them. He explained that contrary to widely held perceptions, Hull was not particularly worse off in terms of digital provision than other cities. He said that from an infrastructure perspective, the issues in Hull and the rest of the UK were broadly similar, the significant difference being that Hull was KCOM dominated and the rest of the UK was BT dominated. Hull was different from a retail perspective with the perception of a less competitive market.
379. Members discussed the various network options including copper-line, fibre and wireless, each of which had different merits and markets. It was noted that fibre optic cables were expensive to lay and maintain, and that wireless offered an alternative. The various factors which influence broadband speeds and prices were discussed.
380. Steve Jagger expressed the view that it was practically difficult for other providers to enter the local market because of KCOM. Andy Peterson highlighted that OFCOM had not supported this view and that the questions about market competitiveness should be directed at other providers who chose not to enter the Hull market. He said KCOM welcomed competition and emphasised that they themselves were investing heavily for their customers. There was a difference of opinion about why other companies did not come into the Hull market.
381. Members discussed how digital infrastructure would be developed in the future, and particularly how fibre optic networks would be developed and who would pay. It was noted that taxpayers money was being invested in South Yorkshire in the Digital Region project which was laying new fibre optic cabling.
382. An open discussion ensued about the issues raised in the presentation. It was agreed that the Advisory Group would reflect on the discussion before deciding whether to take forward any representations on the matter. Barry Schofield thanked Steve Jagger for his presentation.

Agenda Item 7: Any other business

383. There was no other business.

Agenda Item 7: Dates of future meetings

384. Thursday 6th May 2010, 2pm