

MINUTES: Steering Group
Tuesday 27th January 2009
Village Hotel, Hull



PRESENT

Tony Cosgrove (Chair)
David Burnby
Jonathon Leafe
Paul Litten
John Sharp
Richard Tuplin
Nick Pontone

Agenda Item 1: Welcome and Apologies for Absence

728. Apologies were received from Richard Brough, Barry Schofield, Francesca Devine, Linda Ellis, Paul Burnley, Gordon Shields and Sue Dobbs.

Agenda Item 2: Minutes

729. The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 1st December 2008 were agreed as a true and correct record.

Agenda Item 3: Matters Arising

730. i) Education Business Links: it was requested that Steve Tomlinson's contact details would be circulated to Steering Group members. Nick Pontone reported that the business support guide Steve Tomlinson had described at the meeting would be going to press shortly and the Forum was included in the document.

731. ii) HBF Connect: the Chair reported that he had tested HBF Connect by adding a vacancy for a board member of East Hull Passenger Transport. Nick Pontone reported that the site was up and running but needed to be built up with relevant opportunities and vacancies for local businesses to consider.

732. iii) ONE HULL Sustainable Community Strategy: Nick Pontone reported that the Forum had inputted to the refresh of the Community Strategy through the Earning Partnership. The new strategy would go to the next Hull Partnership for agreement.

Agenda Item 4: Forum Meetings

733. i) Programme for 2009 Quarterly Forums Nick Pontone reviewed the agenda for the Quarterly Forum which would follow the Steering Group. It was noted that the Cllr Minns would not be able to make his 'State of the City' address due to illness and that Cllr Robinson would deputise. Richard Tuplin would also be speaking about the local economy and the work of the IoD. Some other alterations had been made to the agenda to accommodate this change. Other agenda items would include Young Enterprise companies.

734. The April Forum would be held at the new Hull Truck Theatre. Speakers were anticipated to be Nigel Richardson, Director of Children & Young Peoples Services at Hull City Council to speak about education in the city and possibly a business champion for the new diplomas. Paul Sewell would also speak on Business Week and there would be a presentation by Hull Truck. The Steering Group were invited to suggest topics for future Forum meetings.

Agenda Item 5: Response to economic conditions

735. The Steering Group discussed a range of issues relating to the national and local response to the recession. Nick Pontone highlighted that the Forum website had a dedicated 'special feature' page with details of the major business support initiatives announced in response to the recession to help local firms access this support where appropriate.
736. Nick Pontone reported that Gordon Shields had suggested the idea of a credit union type concept for small businesses to complement providers such as Acorn, Partnership Investment Finance etc. It was felt this idea was worth exploring if more detail could be provided.
737. There was a discussion on the city's response to the recent Centre for Cities report which had put Hull at the bottom of a league table of cities resilience to the recession. The Steering Group debated a number of points relating to the city's boundaries, statistical profile and the nature of this type of survey.
738. The key issue discussed was the lack of clarity about which organisation should be leading the city's response to such negative headline. The respective roles of Hull Forward (which included the merged Cityimage with the former Citybuild), Hull City Council, Visit Hull & East Yorkshire and ONE HULL. Richard Tuplin highlighted the discussions he had had with Nicola Yates at Hull City Council on this issue and it had been suggested that local private sector marketing expertise be better utilised.
739. A range of other issues were also discussed including the future of the Farmers Markets and various transport issues in the city.

Agenda Item 6: ONE HULL VCS Forum

740. Nick Pontone reported that the new ONE HULL VCS Forum was now established and that he had attended their first Steering Group meeting to provide a relevant link to the Business Forum. There were a number of areas of potential for future joint working, not least on HBF Connect, and these would be explored in the future.
741. It was noted that the VCS Forum had requested that a representative of the Business Forum join their Steering Group, as an observer rather than a voting member, and Nick Pontone would ask for a volunteer from the Steering Group.

Agenda Item 7: Reports

742. i) ONE HULL Executive Group: Tony Cosgrove and Richard Tuplin updated the Steering Group on the activities of the ONE HULL Executive Group. It was noted that a number of projects had been funded including an extension to the Acorn Fund and the Wilberforce Sailing Academy. The Executive Group had also discussed a health initiative for LSP partners to adopt good practice. There was circa £9m of Working Neighbourhoods Fund yet to be allocated and there would be a further call for projects in the Spring.

743. ij) Earning Partnership: Nick Pontone reported that the Earning Partnership would be meeting in the next week. Key items for discussion included the performance against the economic targets in the Local Area Agreement, some of which were subject to review as a result of the recession. There were various actions and projects designed to try to help the city through the economic downturn. Another item on the agenda would be a discussion on the Council's Cabinet recent decision to develop 'social clauses' in procurement. This policy was welcomed as it was felt it could have the potential to increase local benefit from public spending in the future.
744. iii) Business Advisory Group: Nick Pontone reported that Barry Schofield felt that the Business Advisory Group was now making good progress on its priority issues. The last meeting had included a presentation and discussion with David Martin, project director for Building Schools for the Future on the potential education and economic benefits of the forthcoming £400m investment programme.
745. Hull City Council Business Ratepayers Meeting – Nick Pontone reported that he had attended the recent business ratepayers consultation with Hull City Council which focused on their budget plans for the next year and beyond. The Budget was likely to include a 3.9% increase in Council Tax; some reductions in the Council's headcount; and bringing forward the park and ride scheme for the east of the city.

Agenda Item 8: Managers Report

746. The Report was noted.

Agenda Item 9: Any Other Business

747. Port rates: John Sharp highlighted the ongoing problem of business rate for port users which was a major concern for a number of businesses in the city. It was noted that there were very strong business representations being made and the Forum would support these where appropriate.

Agenda Item 10: Dates of future meetings

748. Steering Group: Monday 2nd March 2009 at 12 noon
 Tuesday 28th April 2009 at 3pm
- Hull Business Forum: Tuesday 28th April 2009 at 4.30pm