

**MINUTES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MEMBER WORKING GROUP
THURSDAY 9TH AUGUST 2007 AT 7PM
BROCKS HILL COUNTRY PARK**

PRESENT: Cllr. J. Boyce
Cllr Mrs. J. Gore
Cllr G. Kaufman
Cllr. K. Loydall
Cllr. Mrs S Morris

Wendy Back -	Chief Executive
Martin Cregg -	Director of Community Services
Rob Harbour -	Head of Built Environment
Rebecca Miles -	Economic Development Officer
Adrian Thorpe -	Forward Plans Manager

APOLOGIES: Cllr. C. Gore and Cllr. M. Griffiths

1. MINUTES OF MEETING: Agreed.

2. MATTERS ARISING

- Rebecca Miles is now in post as Economic Development Officer and introduced herself to the group.
- Cllr. Morris is awaiting feedback in relation to a Marketing Consultant.

3. BUSINESS WEB PAGES/WEBSITE

RM produced tree diagram of Business/Economic Development information that other Borough/District Council's in Leicestershire have on their website. From this a matrix which highlighted the most frequent information was produced and distributed. This formed the basis for a Draft version of a Business/Economic Development Website for the Borough, which summarised the key issues and core information that the Council should provide.

Cllr. Boyce asked how difficult/how long. RM said that she would need to prepare all the pages herself using Contensis Software or organise for it to be hosted externally. This could cost up to £7,000 to set up. Would also need to pay annual costs – usually minimal. RM has organised training with IT on Wednesday 15th August.

Cllr. Kaufman said that an externally hosted website would remove bureaucracy associated with the Council's system. Cllr. Morris agreed that an externally hosted site is easier but more expensive.

WB asked for RM to obtain quotes for an externally hosted website.

RM said that in terms of content about half is standard information available elsewhere – the other half we will have to obtain ourselves and collating the content information would take time whether the website was produced internally or externally.

RM has enquired with IT and they had indicated that website could be up and running by December, with a Business Directory following in early 2008.

Cllr. Boyce asked for a more realistic timescale to be brought back to next meeting. Cllr. Morris thought end November should be the deadline. Cllr. Boyce happy with 1 January 2008. RM suggested also dovetailing with a launch date. The draft content was agreed and commended by Cllr. Boyce.

4. BUSINESS BREAKFASTS

RM had noted requirements for Business Breakfast and that one had previously been held. RM distributed a proposal of a regular programme of events and outlined key objectives of the meetings.

Cllr. Morris did not feel that there was anything 'sexy' enough in these objectives.

Cllr. Gore suggested that the first aim should be to benefit local businesses.

RM referred to the proposal which outlined the things that the event would cover.

Cllr. Kaufman referred to people who work from home and suggested that we need to try to invite these people to the meetings.

Cllr. Boyce agreed that we have to get people there and that this was important in terms of marketing. Cllr Boyce also agreed that the first event could co-ordinate with the launch of the website and the dates should be in the diary from word go. There needs to be a balance between what we get and give back from them.

WB suggested that the website should include a business network/forum so this was identified as important at the last business breakfast.

WB asked what is going on with the South Wigston Trader website. MC reported that approval is being sought from the South Wigston Regeneration Steering Group on Monday – but no detailed timescales as yet.

RM advised that the breakfast and website should be launched at the same time with the message, "we are ready to work and engage with you", along with a marketing campaign surrounding the breakfasts/website.

Cllr. Morris disagreed with this and wanted to see a breakfast event up and running ASAP as previous attendees to the breakfast organised in March were expecting something sooner.

JB suggested that a compromise would be to have a business breakfast in November even if website can't be launched until the New Year.

Cllr. Loydall said that he agreed with RMs approach and get all of the information available first and bring all the marketing and promotion together.

RM suggested that she visit the company's instead. Cllr. Morris thought this would be a waste of RMs time. WB suggested that RM comes back to September meeting with proposals including a plan for one of four meetings and dates and website proposals, together with a draft letter to send out if it is decided to hold a Breakfast. Cllr. Morris noted that she has a letter that was written by her Marketing Consultant.

5. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

RM will put a timetable together for next meeting so that the strategy is in place by 1st April 2008. RM will need the Working Group to contribute to the draft strategy. Cllr. Kaufman requested an Executive Summary.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- RM advised the group of free Business start-up courses run by Business Link/EMDA. Currently businesses from the Borough have to go to Blaby where the District Council host the courses at their offices. However, RM has spoken to the organisers and they would be happy to provide courses in the Borough if we could provide a room for half a day, every six weeks or so. Cllr. Boyce requested that this be investigated further and will get information regarding a room for the next meeting.
- RM also advised group of a free Business Advisor that is provided for businesses across Leicestershire from Business Link East Midlands. Oadby and Wigston could tap into this free service if we can provide a room for the Business Advisor regularly – perhaps one day every two weeks? Cllr. Boyce to follow this up.
- RM stated that part of her role is to provide Councillors with information in relation to major developments or proposals which could have economic impacts in the Borough. RM suggested doing this through a briefing note outlining the key details. RM/WB had taken advice from Anne Court (Head of Legal and Licensing) who had agreed that a presentation could be given regarding economic impacts of developments, of which may have their planning applications still to be determined without prejudicing interests in terms of being a member of the planning committee. RM gave factual information regarding the economic impacts of South Leicestershire College.
- Cllr. Morris handed RM a promotional/video/DVD she had received from an event she had attended.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 8th September 2007 at 6.30 pm (if there is no Local Development Framework meeting). AT/RM will confirm time with members of the group.