

**Luton & South Beds Joint Committee**

**Notes of the Meeting of the Member Steering Group held at  
South Bedfordshire District Council offices on 7th December 2007**

**Present:**

**Members:**

Cllr Roy Davis (Chair) (LBC)  
Cllr Tom Nicols (SBDC)  
Cllr Peter Rawcliffe (SBDC)  
Cllr John Scott (BedsCC)

**Officers:**

Ian Slater (LBC)  
Alan Storah (LBC)  
David Atkinson (LBC)  
Keith Dove (LBC)  
Tony Pierce (SBDC)  
Richard Watts (BedsCC)  
Bijon Bhowmick (Project Co-ordinator)

**Apologies Rec'd:**

Anne Brereton (SBDC)  
Laura Church (LBC)

		<b><u>ACTION</u></b>
<b>1.</b>	<p><b><u>Matters arising from meeting held on 16 November 2007</u></b></p> <p>The prize draw presentations were held at Luton BC and SBDC respectively.</p>	
<b>2.</b>	<p><b><u>LDF Way Forward - Updates</u></b></p> <p>i) <b><u>JTU Appointments and Co-location</u></b></p> <p>Chairman requested AS/DA/AJ to leave the room for the discussion of this item.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Discussion initially focused on the issue of co-location. Chairman felt that the process of setting up this Unit was causing problems. He explained that there was considerable uncertainty about the procedure being followed and asked whether it complied with the provisions of employment law in the public sector. He was also not convinced as to whether there was clarity/agreement in respect of the terms/conditions for the engagement of staff to the new Unit – including the redeployment of staff once the LDF was completed in 18 months time.</li></ul>	

		<b><u>ACTION</u></b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cllr. Nicols emphasised the need to move forward as this problem had remained unresolved since December 2002. Chairman agreed that this issue should have been addressed much earlier but reiterated the importance of securing compliance with the provisions of the Employment Law. He felt that this issue could be sorted out in a month.</li> <li>▪ The matters agreed included as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) TP to work with DH and RW to progress this matter;</li> <li>(ii) Relevant staff from HR at LBC and SBDC to liaise in order to arrive at an agreed view about the best ways of securing compliance with the Employment Law.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ With regard to 'Accommodation' itself, TP advised Members that there were plenty of small/medium types of office suites available in HR, one office in Dunstable and quite a few in Luton. He was working on the base criteria of a 3 year lease, 3,000 sq.ft., accommodation, a dozen work stations with adequate exhibition and reception space. Chairman was happy with the duration of the lease but favoured the inclusion of an opt out after 2 years and Cllr. Nichols would like the offices being geographically convenient and easily accessible to staff.</li> </ul> <p>It was agreed that TP would prepare a report on 'Accommodation' as soon as possible which would outline the available options, their merits and demerits and recommend the best choice. The report would need to be shared with the appropriate officers of the three authorities <u>first</u> before being presented to Members.</p> <p><u>Appointment of the JTU Manager</u></p> <p>IS suggested that the delivery of the LDF required somebody to manage the project on a full-time basis to whom Members/ officers could turn to for advice and other matters. AS was doing this job on a part-time basis and his contract had not been altered to reflect increased responsibilities.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>TP</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>HR staff at LBD &amp; SBDC to liaise</b></p>

		<b>ACTION</b>
	<p>TP proposed that the Recruitment Consultants (retained by SBDC) could be asked to provide a report and a proposal which would be presented for the MSG's consideration. This recommendation was endorsed by the MSG</p> <p>(ii) <u>Core Strategy – Getting to Preferred Option</u></p> <p>TP advised Members about the importance of getting involved in a wide range of discussions with the landowners/developers on various issues and options at future meetings of the Developers Forum. Chairman felt that this was a job for officers and suggested that we should define the requirements for stakeholders and they had to deliver those requirements. However, Cllr. Nicols expressed the view that sometimes a political steer was needed and that Members should be available for officers to provide that steer and also to reinforce what officers said at meetings. It was agreed that Members would be kept informed of developments in this regard.</p>	<p>TP</p> <p>TP</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p><b><u>Landowners/Developers – How We Work Together</u></b></p> <p>(i) <u>A Planning Performance Agreement Charter – Update</u></p> <p>Following discussion about the PPA at the meeting of the JC in November, TP reported that some consortiums had expressed an initial interest to get involved in this informal process. The issue was of particular importance in view of the two large-scale planning applications which were expected in the New Year – one in East Leighton Buzzard and the other in the North Herts area. These applications would raise issues of strategic importance and members were anxious to ensure that their approach in dealing with these applications were consistent.</p> <p>The matters agreed included as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ LBC would support SBDC in their stance on the application in the East Leighton Buzzard area;</li> <li>▪ A joint approach (LBC &amp; SBDC) would be made to Henry Cleary in seeking his help with regard to these two major applications – efforts will be made in getting an early meeting with him preferably before the end of this year;</li> <li>▪ Henry Cleary would also be requested for an early release of £250,000.</li> </ul>	

		<b><u>ACTION</u></b>
4.	<p><b><u>Work Programme Monitoring</u></b></p> <p>i) <u>LDS Update</u></p> <p>AS reported that the LDS was due to come into effect on the 10th December and that the issues ancillary to it (like placing the document on the website, etc) were in hand.</p> <p>ii) <u>Status and progress of evidence studies</u></p> <p>AS updated the MSG in respect of the LDDs listed in the anticipated work programme as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>SCI</u> – it has been through the Full Councils of the authorities. Officers now have the option to send one document.</li> <li>▪ <u>Core Strategy</u> – Analyses of the responses would begin once the data entry exercise is completed. The current focus of work is on resolving the outstanding issues related to Limehouse. AS expressed confidence with regard to Limehouse being operational soon. In the context of the discussion on the analyses of responses to consultation, AS drew Members’ attention to an outline of Report to the JC which he had circulated prior to this meeting. The broad ‘structure’ proposed in the outline was accepted.</li> <li>▪ <u>Houghton Regis Town Centre Master Plan and High Town Master Plan SPD</u> – Both are scheduled for completion as programmed in February 2008.</li> <li>▪ <u>Green Space Strategy SPD</u> – Audit of green space completed – draft report expected in Jan/Feb 2008.</li> </ul> <p>Discussion then moved on to the work programme of Essential Studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Strategic Housing Market Assessment</u> – In view of the proposed timing for the completion of this study, AS suggested that the CS might need to go with less information in respect of issues of affordability.</li> </ul>	

		<b><u>ACTION</u></b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Urban Capacity Study (UCS)</u> – DA reported that the report from Consultants in respect of this Study is expected to be available in January/February and its findings are expected to provide one of the key inputs into the preparation of the SHLAA.</li> <li>▪ <u>Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)</u> – DA had circulated an 'Update on the Housing Figures to the Member Steering Group on 7th December 2007 relating to the delivery of Housing in the Luton &amp; South Bedfordshire Grown Area' prior to this meeting.</li> </ul> <p>The principal finding of this paper was that the estimates of the urban capacity had now increased to 7300 – 12200 from that proposed in the Core Strategy (4800 – 8000). However, DA emphasised that the higher estimates need to be treated with caution as they were likely to go down as a result of market testing of sites. DA agreed to bring forward an update of these findings once the market testing was completed.</p> <p>Cllr Nicols asked whether it was feasible to assist developers with land assembly. DA suggested that the JC could adopt a bold stance (if deemed appropriate) and use the CPO powers to bring forward urban sites and cited the example of LBC where these Orders were being used effectively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Employment Land Review</u> – AS circulated a Briefing Note on the emerging Employment Land Study. The purpose of the Note was to provide clarification in respect of the two Scenarios (3 &amp; 4) which formed the primary focus of the report and the Consultant's presentation to the JC and the accuracy of the figures presented in relation to the amount of employment land required under each of these scenarios. Chairman thanked AJ for producing an excellent piece of work.</li> <li>▪ <u>Retail Study</u> - AS reported that the study was now 2 years old and funded by 5 organisations. Although the report could be updated, he suggested that it could be done in-house.</li> <li>▪ <u>Social/Infrastructure Study</u> – Cost estimates have been requested from Halcrow to undertake this study.</li> </ul>	<b>DA</b>

		<b><u>ACTION</u></b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Environmental/Heritage/Landscape</u> – RW asked for an email which could be the basis for his instruction to staff.</li> <li>▪ <u>Green Belt Assessment</u> – AS suggested the need to review GC's report on the subject. Exercise needs to be done in house and it should not be a major exercise.</li> <li>▪ <u>Water Cycle Study</u> – Estimates of cost have been requested from Halcrow.</li> <li>▪ SFRA – EP had a reorganisation – new person awaiting to be briefed by his colleague(s). Stage 2 would need to be undertaken which could cost around £20,000</li> </ul>	<p><b>AS</b></p> <p><b>BB</b></p>
<b>5.</b>	<p><b><u>Major Transport Schemes – Update</u></b></p> <p>KD reported that there was not much to update since the detailed update concerning the above was provided in the report to the JC only last week. However, KD drew attention to the following matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Surveys were now being completed in the Leighton-Linslade area and that the report was expected in the next few weeks.</li> <li>▪ M1 widening – Letter had gone to the HA with regard to the issue of open space.</li> <li>▪ Dunstable Busway (Revised business case for the busway is to be sent to the DfT next week.</li> </ul>	
<b>6.</b>	<p><b><u>Any Other Business</u></b></p> <p>The following matters were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ GAF3 – Announcement now made – which suggested that £22m would be made available for the GA over 3 years. However, projects which needed to be accorded priority to receive a share of this funding had yet to be decided. It could include, for example, support for town centre improvements in Luton (Station Approach Works, Central Luton Station, transport links, etc.) essential transportation studies, etc.</li> <li>▪ LDV – funding of £250,000 would be available.</li> </ul> <p>Communications – Cllr. Nicols reported that he often found it difficult to pick up emails concerning JC matters and suggested the need to consider the use of a common identity.</p>	<b>BB</b>
<b>7.</b>	<p><b><u>Date of Next Meeting</u></b>  <b>Friday, 11th January 2008, SBDC, 2pm, CR2</b></p>	