

Appendix B Scrutiny Review – Economic Partnerships

25th October 2012

Present: Alan Blackwell, Cllr Andrew Cartwright, Neil Dart, Cllr Warren Davies, Mark Horan, Cllr Mike Howard, Jenny Ling, John Shaw, Cllr Trevor Webb, Cllr John Wilson.

Apologies: Cllr Peter Pragnell, Cllr Mike Turner.

1. Rationale for the partnership

a Why does this partnership exist?

The Hastings and Bexhill Taskforce and its delivery arm Sea Space, was established in 2001 shortly after the proposed bypass between the towns was rejected. It provided local ownership and democratic accountability to steer regeneration within the area.

In 2011 HBRL (Sea Space) became ESIED (Sea Change).

b What are its agreed aims?

To achieve economic development and regeneration within Hastings and Bexhill.

c Where have they been published?

This information is a matter of record at Companies House

d Can you identify a better way of serving the public?

The partnership only serves the public indirectly, its main aim is to serve the business community and those seeking employment.

2. Added value from the partnership in current financial climate

a How does this partnership add value?

By helping bring new business to the area and supporting existing businesses to expand. This provides jobs for local people. The next phase of development in Priory Quarter and North Queensway area has already been secured and potentially the new link road will provide more opportunities when completed.

b How do you demonstrate this added value to the public?

An indicator of how successfully the community is being served is to measure the level of employment. The lower the unemployment figures, the better the partnership's achievement.

c How do you know whether funds are being well spent?

A business plan and expenditure profile are in place as agreed by the Board who regularly monitor progress to ensure that targets are being met and parameters adhered to.

d How does the public know that partnership funds are being well spent?

As a company limited by guarantee, annually audited accounts are available for examination. Figures show that the number of VAT registered businesses in the area show a net growth over time and this would be reflected by better employment prospects for local people.

3. Governance arrangements

a How do your partnership's corporate governance arrangements link to those of individual partners?

Partners are members of the company and have their own robust governance arrangements and are signed up to the articles of the association. There is 100% link up between partners.

b How are decisions made?

The Board meets every 6-8 weeks. Each project has very detailed progress reports and the Board sanction every major decision. The terms and conditions of individual grants will also be taken into account.

c How are they recorded?

All Board meetings are minuted to a high standard although some of the decisions will be commercially sensitive so will not be made public. However, achievements are publicised via local media wherever possible.

d Who makes sure that they are acted on?

The members of Sea Change.

e Who scrutinises them?

A weekly project meeting takes place to monitor project progress.

f To whom are they reported?

Previously covered.

4. Performance management

a How do you know which partnership targets you are meeting and which you are failing to meet?

Targets are regularly monitored and the business plan is already two years ahead.

Close working links with partners especially University of Brighton in Hastings to provide educational attainment suitable to meet the needs of local employers will help to achieve the target to reduce unemployment. Ensuring local people can provide these skills too.

Statistics show that over 90% of the current business accommodation stock is occupied so we know that expanding this provision is necessary. North Queensway and the new link road are the most appropriate sites for development.

b Who manages and reports progress?

Previously covered.

5. Financial management

a Who provides the money?

This is a mixture of central government allocations and private funds. Some revenue can be raised through the development and rental of office space.

b Who decides how to spend it?

The Sea Change board of directors

c Can the money be reallocated?

Previously covered.

d What are the financial reporting arrangements?

These are recorded within the annual accounts reports.

6. Risk management

a How do you know when things are going wrong?

The weekly project meeting assesses risk to delivery. All project plans are subject to tight contractual arrangements to minimise risk.

b Who can take action when things are going wrong?

Previously covered.

c How do you resolve conflicts of interest?

Board members' declarations of interest are recorded in the minutes of each meeting. Any differences between the three local authorities would be resolved outside of Board meetings although this is very unusual. Decisions are almost

always taken by consensus – only very rarely is voting necessary.

7. Termination arrangements

a What are the arrangements if this partnership comes to an end?

Planned exit procedures are in place in this eventuality. A similar situation was encountered when Sea Space evolved to be Sea Change.

b Or if you decide no longer to be involved?

Previously covered.

c How will resources be reallocated back to partners?

Previously covered.

8. Serving the public

a How effectively does this partnership communicate with the public?

By the website (currently in development) and through formal press releases

b How can the public and service users obtain redress when things go wrong?

Previously covered.

c Is there a complaints and suggestions process the public can use?

Previously covered.

Any other business

John Shaw offered to come and speak at Council meetings if more information is required or to provide premises at the Innovations Centre for a roving Council meeting to take place. This would enable elected members to observe some of the established and start up businesses in situ. Elected members thanked John for the offer and will consider the best option.

A meeting to be established for Elected Members with Peter Chowney who is a director of ESEIDL and Neil Dart to explore further questions.