

Birmingham Strategic Partnership Regional Economic Strategy Policy Choices Consultation

Work shop 1: Enterprise and Innovation

ENTERPRISE

- Needs to be inclusive of diversity and skills strategy;
- One approach may not work across an economically and culturally diverse region;
- Potential to make sustainability part of regional 'Trademark.'

INNOVATION

- Part of keeping enterprise healthy so the two should be seamless;
- ? – How to target innovation in more deprived areas and engage local workforce;
- Ageing population leads to an increase in demand in caring professions, but there is a lack of innovation in this sector.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

- Partnerships with purpose and clarity of outcomes work well;
- Can help reduce fragmentation of services;
- Need to consider effect of reorganisation/restructuring on organisational memory.

Work shop 2: Skills

SKILLS

- It should not be an 'either/or' – a mix of strategies/policies is needed;
- Tackling basic skills is key, otherwise the legacy is really weak and the 'gap' between the wealthy and poor will widen;
- Really aggressive action on issues that lead to basic skills problems in the 'doughnut' – Birmingham, Black Country, Stoke-on-Trent;
- More work with school-age kids;
- Can't just tackle skills in isolation - or people move out when they have got the skills – need to align with housing, place making, etc;
- Distinguish basic skills from issues around not being able to speak English well. Some highly qualified professionals don't have English as their first language;
- Integrate skills with needs of employers in longer term. More work with employers to invest in skills:
 - pre-entry work
 - support when in employment
 - progression routes – Train to Gain;

- Higher level skills – target businesses who don't recruit higher level skills – stimulate the market, sell benefits to business and connect to the cultural change required to meet enterprise/innovation agenda – target by local authority areas;
- More support for schools and the family, e.g. extensions of SureStarts, role models, peer support:
 - longer term solutions to avoid exclusion;
 - need to recognise that as more women are at work and expected to be at work, more support is needed (not just childcare) to avoid children becoming “at risk.”

Q11 – have to look at needs of region and apply all three.

Partnership working – yes, yes, yes!

Graduates

- Universities – target graduates to stay in the region;
- More gap year/work placements in local companies to encourage long-term employment;
- Data needed to understand issues
- Universities working with local employers to provide employment, interview skills, etc.

Work shop 3: Economic Activity/Infrastructure

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

- We need to ensure that the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) is strongly linked to, and co-ordinated with the priorities of the Regional Spatial Strategy;
- Within Regeneration areas, Birmingham RES needs to ensure that local people are well placed to access local jobs;
- The RES should address worklessness through focusing delivery in target underperforming areas, to address the regional GVA gap;
- Need to address skills gaps in order to assist those currently economically inactive in to work;
- Through improved research to address gaps in intelligence, the RES needs to identify and address barriers to becoming economically active;
- The RES should be based on a review of previous initiatives/policies – building on successes and learning lessons from failures;
- Worklessness/economic inactivity should be addressed through a ‘bottom - up’ approach to policy development and delivery – responding to differing sub-regional issues and needs;
- Worklessness based policy/initiatives need to actively engage employers as well as the community/those currently not in work;
- The RES needs to engage different partnerships and identify new routes to delivery.

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Through future changes to laws governing CO2 emissions and climate change, there is an opportunity for the region to establish the infrastructure required to attract new types of enterprise and subsequent employment;
- Congestion is a real issue for the region – need to address this if we are to achieve any significant economic change;
- There is a growth trend in inner city living, and housing/infrastructure development need to recognise this;
- There needs to be a greater range of housing choice to provide for differing population requirements at varying lifestyle/lifestages;
- Transport options, particularly public transport, needs to be improved to enable residents to access job opportunities – greater connectivity, and strategic planning;
- Further investigate the potential development of an extended Birmingham metro service;
- In terms of an evidence based approach to establishing the RES, it would be beneficial to further understand/identify the potential economic impact of infrastructural developments, such as the BIA runway extension, New Street Station etc;
- The extension to the BIA runway is of critical importance to the continued economic growth of the region;
- The region needs to lobby central government on the importance of transport infrastructural improvements, and priorities for investment outside of the South East. For example, significant West Midlands transport infrastructural improvements could be achieved for the equivalent value of the proposed extension to the London Underground Jubilee line in response to the Olympics;
- The RES should consider the economic impact of the proposed road pricing/charging policy;
- The RES should further consider the impact of the housing agenda on achieving economic growth - attracting businesses to the region, retaining residents, and opportunities for land use rationalisation;
- There is a severe shortage in social housing in Birmingham;
- The RES should further consider the impact and opportunities generated through the climate change agenda – such as the development of Combined Heat and Power (CHP) facilities throughout Birmingham;
- Environmental technology improvement opportunities should be 'built into' and be at the heart of planning policy/spatial development proposals/policies;
- Birmingham's role as the nation's second city, and economic centre for the region should be considered throughout the RES.

Work shop 4: Quality of Life

SAFEGUARDING & DEVELOPING RURAL AREAS

Q: Should the partnership answer from a Birmingham-centric or a Regional perspective?

What strategic value Birmingham can bring to the picture.

Q: Golden thread or Lip service?

Community cohesion should cut across the choices like a golden thread: there are a lot of issues that need to be addressed together, across the themes.

- Addressing the BME majority from 2011 is a major issue;
- Community safety also needs to cut across all policy questions;
- Consider how Birmingham could build business linkages with rural areas;
- Sharing Birmingham's good practice and experiences of a diverse workforce could add value to handling migrant workers, especially regarding:
 - The mismatch of skills;
 - High incidence of unskilled jobs being taken by migrant workers;
 - Voluntary sector links (at a cursory level there seems to be no push in that direction).
- Stress that failures in the rural economy have a detrimental impact on both urban and rural areas, exerting pressure on both communities:
 - Migrants often live in cities but work in rural locations (there could be a direct link, for example, between Handsworth and the region's rural suburbs);
 - The displacement of local traditional workers will increase the rural poverty gap;
 - Migrant spending of rural incomes in inner city reception areas has an additional impact on rural economies;
 - In both urban and rural areas this impacts upon need & demand for housing.
- There is a pressing need to facilitate communication between urban and rural partnerships to address these issues.

CREATING CULTURAL BEACONS

Q: What are Cultural Beacons? Does the conflict with existing policies?

- Beacons are surely low down the scale – why focus on a limited number to attract new residences & businesses. Putting money into one or two places could be a flawed approach. Resources going to select flagships will create tensions;
- The RES review has to recognise the economic regeneration benefits of culture and the arts (B'ham is near the bottom of a Guardian Survey examining how local communities engage in the arts);

- There is a need for strong cultural infrastructure – organisations, venues etc, but this requires lots of little beacons across a wide range of activities;
- The opportunity to develop cultural activity in outlying areas rather than in hubs (e.g. The city centres) has been ignored. There is already tension between Birmingham’s European destination agenda and environmental issues (e.g. flights in);
- Centralised cultural marketing and service provision by Birmingham can have a negative impact on some outlying areas (e.g. the Jewellery Quarter Urban Village) – Andy Munro;
- There is no vision of success for cultural beacons, leading to concerns over what one is, and how effective it may be;
- Has a similar delivery approach (e.g. the Tourism Cluster) worked in the previous RES? Is there good practice/previous experience to be drawn on?

Q: Do we need to maintain what already exists or create a network of satellite cultural beacons?

With transient populations, there is not just room for, but a need for, both approaches.

GREENING THE REGION

Issue: Badly worded but not worth disagreeing with. There is a fundamental problem with economic language, and the need to articulate as separate themes creates a barrier.

- Issue is higher, and needs to be inclusive of urban space. Suggest referring to is as “Greening and Cleaning” to emphasise environmental aspects;
- Need to preserve green space in urban areas;
- Need to promote different use of green space in rural areas;
- Recycling needs to be made more relevant. This theme is not broad enough if focused only on green space:
 - Consider Environmental Visual Audits (EVAs – NCams);
 - Look at bringing brownfield sites back into environmentally friendly use.

Issue: The context needs to be clear, balancing priority of demand for space against the green agenda. Is green space to be considered more valuable? Where does important open space for children sit?

- Consider the impacts of VISUAL DEPRIVATION – this comes back to balancing urban-rural living:
 - Landscape changes as you move/commute;
 - What the environment looks like affects people’s sense of wellbeing and security;

- There is lots of evidence based on environmental perceptions (look at the impact of fly-tipping, vehicular abandonment, dangerous driving, noise pollution etc.).

CREATING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES WITHIN IMPORTANT SUBURBS OF MAJOR EMPLOYMENT AREAS

Q: Need to define 'important'.

- People are surely likely to be more workless in those areas not deemed to be important;
- Attraction & retention: people out of work aren't those with higher skills
- Its better to deal with the existing population - getting those with lower skills into work;
- Attracting more super-high earners surely creates a bigger poverty gap. Comes across as a quick fix attempt to get higher GVA;
- Must focus on closing the gap (in line with LAAs and government targets).

Q: Might this happen through national market forces anyway?

- Needs to focus on raising the awareness and aspirations of the existing diverse population;
- Needs to help the many groups coming in who need to be economically active, as well as the currently economically inactive;
- The range of job opportunities needs to reflect what people want to be doing
- More subsidised social enterprise activity;
- Needs to harness the existing employee base and plan for their future:
 - 25% will be young BMEs.

Issue: Needs to go back to the environmental agenda.

- Should not be need-driven.

FOCUSING ATTENTION ON SOCIAL ASPECTS OF QUALITY OF LIFE

Issue: Lack of community cohesion impairs effective intervention.

- Need to emphasise building community cohesion;
- QoL should make you healthy, but health should not be the social focus;
- Lifestyle issues need to be addressed: confidence, behaviour – a joined-up social context is needed;
- Long term healthcare/incapacity issues are major:
 - Bring people back into productivity to:
 - Minimise poor health;
 - Develop and support a relevant strategy for spiritual care.
- Offer the Castle Vale Model for lessons learned.

Issue: Poorly worded.