

AT A MEETING of the HAMPSHIRE ECONOMIC BOARD of the HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL held at The Castle, Winchester on Thursday, 25 February 2010.

**PRESENT:**

Chairman:

p Councillor T.K. Thornber, CBE

p Dr. R.J. Ellis

p J.K. Glen

p M.J. Kendal

p D.A. Kirk

p R. Perry

a Mrs M.D. Snaith-Tempia

Also present, at the invitation of the Chairman:  
Councillor K Chapman.

**17 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dr. R. J. Ellis and Mrs M. D. Snaith-Tempia, who were engaged on other County Council business.

**18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were mindful that, where they believed they had a personal or prejudicial interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting, they should, normally at the time of debate, declare their interest and, having regard to the circumstances described in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 12 of the County Council's Code of Conduct, consider whether to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with paragraph 12 of the Code. The declaration to be made at the time of the relevant debate.

**19 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2009 were agreed as a correct record.

**20 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The chairman welcomed David Livermore, Chairman on the eHampshire Partnership, who was in attendance for the Digital Britain matter (see minute 22 below).

## 21 **SKILLS FOR THE HAMPSHIRE WORKFORCE**

The Board considered and approved the report of the Director of Economic Development (Item 5 in the Minute Book) on the main skills issues for the Hampshire workforce and current skills-related actions. During the discussion, it was agreed that there was a need to build an ongoing mechanism to assemble information gathered by organisations, such as the jobcentre and elsewhere, on what the current skills shortages were. This information would enable the County Council to have more influence over the future education and training provision requirements. It was also agreed that the Hampshire-wide Employment and Skills Board would be established as an immediate priority.

The recommendations set out in the report were agreed subject to the above and the decision record is attached to the minutes as Appendix 1.

## 22 **THE ROLE OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL IN DELIVERING DIGITAL BRITAIN – UPDATE**

The Board considered and approved the report of the Director of Economic Development (Item 6 in the Minute Book) providing an update on broadband service delivery across Hampshire and the interventions of local authorities across the country to address poor broadband services.

At the invitation of the Chairman, David Livermore, Chairman of the eHampshire Partnership, addressed the Board. He explained that the Partnership focussed on four main issues;

### Infrastructure

The Partnership felt that satellite and fibre optic technology was the future. It was reviewing the current activities both nationally and internationally, and mapping the activity in Hampshire. Hampshire was fairly well placed with broadband access in most of its urban areas. The rural areas presented the biggest challenge with over 400 villages without access to broadband speeds over 2Mb/s; the minimum speed required. Hampshire County Council, because of its Hampshire Public Service Network (HPSN) had a realistic chance of extending provision in Hampshire beyond what the market would provide.

### Driving e-Commerce

The Partnership had monitored the increasing number of small businesses in Hampshire using websites as their main interface with consumers, and had been able to offer incentives for increased use.

### Smarter working

The Partnership had been involved in the MATISSE project, which worked with more than 200 businesses to improve productivity and efficient operating through the adoption of ICT and flexible working. Results had been carefully monitored and over 80 travel miles per employee per week

had been saved and productivity had increased by 5%. 15.6% of the Hampshire workforce (second only to Manchester) already worked from home on a regular basis, and if the numbers continued to increase as expected would reach 21% by 2016.

#### Skills development

Interactive online learning was a growing way to train and educate people and in some cases was more effective than classroom teaching for adults. In order to deliver online training direct to the home, good broadband access was essential.

The Chairman thanked Mr Livermore for sharing his valuable knowledge with the Board.

The Director drew the Board's attention to the work undertaken in South Yorkshire, North Yorkshire and Cornwall by local authorities on intervention in broadband provision, as detailed in appendix 1 to the report. More feasibility work would need to be undertaken, however the initial investigations indicated that the model adopted in South Yorkshire was the most appropriate solution for Hampshire. It was noted, however, that both South Yorkshire and Cornwall were subject to legal action in respect of alleged breaches of state aid rules on competition and the progress and outcome of the legal action would need to be closely monitored.

The Board discussed the options fully including the proposal for a 50 pence levy on fixed telephone lines. During the discussion the Board noted that the County Council had led the way in communications, such as the plans for the public service network which gave it an advantage over other local authorities. It was agreed that the County Council should seek to facilitate enhanced provision by opening discussions with major providers such as Virgin Media, BT Group, BT Openreach, Alcatel, Sky and Carphone Warehouse.

The recommendations set out in the report were agreed with the addition of seeking meetings with relevant Ministers and government departments to progress the agenda. The decision record is attached to the minutes as Appendix 2.

## 23 **ENGAGEMENT WITH BUSINESS**

The Board considered and approved the report of the Director of Economic Development (Item 7 in the Minute Book) on the business support agency network in Hampshire and options for further business engagement. During the discussion it was noted that the most effective method of engaging with business on a regular basis was through the business support agencies, of which there were many, as detailed in the appendix to the report. The Director explained that the County Council already met many of these regularly through business network events and received

updates on the agencies' activities, current business issues and market forces in relation to the recession.

It was agreed that, in order to increase future engagement with business, an annual conference would be held by the County Council which would include representative of business organisations. The decision record is attached to the minutes as Appendix 3.