A meeting of the Economic Scrutiny Panel was held at the Town Hall, Nuneaton, on Monday, 1st March, 2010.

Present

Councillor W.B.H. Lobbett – Chair
Councillor D. Harvey- Vice-Chair


Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G. Ashford and M.C. Jones.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 15th December, 2009, 20th January, and 2nd February 2010, be confirmed.

Councillors J.A. Jackson, W.B.H. Lobbett and S.L. Wilson declared personal interests in any Agenda Item by reason of them being Members of Warwickshire County Council.

Councillor J.A. Jackson declared a personal interest in any Agenda Item by reason of her husband's employment by Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council and the Nuneaton and Bedworth Leisure Trust Board.

Councillor J.A. Jackson declared a personal interest in Agenda Item 8, Town Centre Management Activities, by reason of being a Member of the Nicholas Chamberlaine's School Foundation and Nicholas Chamberlaine's Hospital and Sermon Charity and by reason of her working in a town centre office in Bedworth.

RESOLVED that the subject of Public Consultation be added to the Work Programme for this Panel for the next Municipal Year.

The Head of Recovery Services - Finance and Procurement submitted a report on the implementation of changes recommended by the Panel in relation to Council Tax debt recovery.
After a discussion and a question and answer session the following suggestions were highlighted:

- Benchmarking would be more appropriate against members of the CIPFA group rather than the neighbouring Warwickshire Councils because of the differences in demographics.

- Longer targets need to be set for direct debit take-up.

- The costs of final notices should be provided to Members.

RESOLVED that

(a) the impact of the changes to Council Tax debt recovery be noted; and

(b) a progress report be submitted in six months time.

450 The Council's Role in the Current Economic Climate

The Head of Communities and Communication submitted a report and presentation on the impact of the work of the Economic Development Team since the last report to Panel on 4th November, 2009.

After a discussion and a question and answer session the following suggestions and requests for further information were highlighted:

- the information given on the advertising boards used to attract business to Nuneaton and Bedworth, that had been displayed at the meeting, should be on display at the Railway Station in Nuneaton.

- Members to be informed how many business leads for the Borough arose from the 'Growing your own business' show at the NEC.

- Members to be informed of the feed back received from the business clinics event held on 22nd February, 2010 and of what impact it has had.

- Members to be informed of the advertisement methods used for the Jobs Bus.

RESOLVED that

(a) the report and presentation be noted; and

(b) data on the Borough's skills levels and their relation to each age group be reported in the next report to the Panel.
451 **Town Centres Management Activities**

The Assistant Director Asset Management and Strategic Development submitted a report updating the Panel on the current economic position of the towns of Nuneaton and Bedworth and the work carried out by the Town Centres Team.

After a discussion and a question and answer session the following were highlighted:

- it was pleasing that Nuneaton Market had won the 'Best Market Attraction 2010' and Bedworth Market received a commendation as runner up in the small market category.

- it was encouraging to note that Nuneaton Market has been used as an example of good practice in the Parliamentary Select Committee report on markets and has now been incorporated in a Policy and Research report and used as an example of good practice in relation to Community Cohesion.

- the impact of the recession and the winter weather on the markets and town centres was recognised.

- Publicity should be given to the positive reports on both towns received from external visitors.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

452 **Cabinet response to Overview and Scrutiny Responses**

The Panel considered the Cabinet's response to the Panel's recommendations regarding Third Sector Funding and Contributions.

RESOLVED that the responses from Cabinet be noted.

453 **Work Programme**

The Principal Democratic Services Officer (Overview and Scrutiny) reported that the Dual use Agreement Working Group were to meet on 3rd March and would be examining feed back from the Centres concerned and looking to formulate Service Level Agreements.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

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Chair