

**Public Question Time**  
**Full Council**  
**19<sup>th</sup> April 2018**

**Mr Roy Worman has asked the Leader of the Council:**

Membership of England's Economic Heartland Strategy Transport Forum

1. Is the sum of £30000 per annum justifiable bearing in mind closure of children's centres, redundancy of council staff etc?
2. How often will this forum meet?
3. Will minutes be taken at meetings and signed as a true record?
4. How will Swindon Taxpayers be aware of any outcome?
5. What will the £420,000 per annum be spent on? How will you ensure that Swindon Benefits equally on any outcome?

**The Leader of the Council has responded:**

Thank you for your questions.

- 1) Yes, as a party to the England's Economic Heartland Strategic we are supported by the Business Unit, which provides a professional and credible advocacy service to Government on behalf of the EEH partners. It also secures us access to a key database from all the councils in the EEH covering local plans, transport strategies etc. to provide more robust and informed bids for infrastructure funding, also to have access to studies and technical reports which will support our business cases. It is our best means for making sure Swindon gets its share of infrastructure funding when we are competing against the city regions and combined authorities.

It will also mean Swindon is considered alongside other authorities in the Cambridge-Oxford-Milton Keynes corridor in terms of securing wider economic benefits brought by improved infrastructure, ie better digital connectivity, access to skilled labour and transport between key housing and employment sites.

- 2) At the moment, EEH is a voluntary partnership and its meetings are not covered by the standard local government access to information rules. Any formal decisions would be made by individual councils through their usual decision making process.
- 3) Yes, but these are not in the public domain. Please use the contact the England's Economic Heartland directly  
<http://www.englandseconomicheartland.com/pages/contact-us.aspx>.
- 4) As stated in my response to question 2, accountability will be provided through the Council's existing decision-making and scrutiny processes.

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- 5) Please could clarify to what you think this figure of 420k refers and I shall respond in writing.

As with any partnership working, we will negotiate to secure the best outcomes for the Borough. I can say that taking this opportunity to join will best place us – politically, strategically, economically, and technically - to make the case for the major infrastructure funding resources we need to improve the A420 and other key transport links that will benefit the growth, economy, and people of Swindon.