

## **ECONOMY AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY, 25 FEBRUARY 2015**

**PRESENT:-** Councillors Junab Ali, Wayne Crabbe (Vice-Chair), Mary Friend, Mary Martin (Chair), Des Moffatt, Kevin Parry, Nicky Sewell and Steve Wakefield

**ALSO PRESENT:-** Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and Skills

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Roderick Bluh and Mark Dempsey.

### **19. Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting. There were no declarations.

### **20. Minutes**

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2014, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **21. Public Question Time**

No public questions were received during the meeting.

### **22. Economic Report**

The Committee considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and Skills and the Head of Economy, Skills and Property Development about the current position of Swindon's economy.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and skills, Paddy Bradley, Head of Economy, Skills and Property Development and Philip Smith, Strategic Planning Policy Manager to the meeting.

Members were informed that the aim of the report was to be a health check of the local economy, which drew on various sources of data to inform strategic decision making on investment and intervention.

The Head of Economy, Skills and Property Development spoke in detail about the data that had been collected in relation to the economy, business, skills and employment.

Following the presentation of the report, the Cabinet Member, Head of Economy, Skills and Property Development and Strategic Planning Policy Manager responded to members' specific questions and observations on the following:

- The format of the report was supported, however, a brief commentary alongside the statistics detailed on pages 15-17 was requested for future reports
- The conversion of office space to residential and how Council Policy impacted the conversion, including car parking spaces
- The rate of conversion of office space to residential in the town centre
- The reliability of the statistics and their source
- The delivery and completion of the house building target to 2026
- Population growth figures up to 2021
- The opportunities for training the older adult workforce
- The accuracy of survey findings and their use by large financial institution's in reports on the economy, especially when Swindon's economy is mentioned in the report
- Hydrogen powered vehicles and timescales for introducing charging points
- A suggestion to introduce electric vehicle charging points for all new homes being built in Swindon
- Funding for the bus exchange as part of the Kimmerfields development
- Details about the completion date of the MUSE agreement

The Cabinet Member circulated a response to a number of questions from Mr Symonds in relation to the function of Forward Swindon. A copy of the letter is attached at Appendix 1 to these minutes.

**Resolved:**

1. That the Quarterly Economic report be noted
2. That the Economy and Regeneration and Resources Joint Working Party be asked to consider the suggestion for the introduction of electric vehicle charging points for all new homes being built in Swindon.
3. That the Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and skills, Head of Economy, Skills and Property Development and Strategic Planning Policy Manager be thanked for a very interesting and informative presentation of the report.

## **23. Employment Land in Swindon**

The Committee considered the update report of the Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and Skills and the Head of Economy, Skills and Property Development on employment land in Swindon and the Council's approach to employment land through its Local Plan policies.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and skills, Paddy Bradley, Head of Economy, Skills and Property Development and Philip Smith, Strategic Planning Policy Manager to the meeting.

Members were reminded that the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 was a spatial representation of the Council's Economic Strategy and other corporate objectives with regard to employment land and employment.

The Head of Economy, Skills and Property Development spoke in detail about

employment land in the Borough, the Economic Strategy, future employment need, new employment land allocation, employment land review, existing land released to other uses and Council owned property.

Following the presentation of the report, the Cabinet Member, Head of Economy, Skills and Property Development and the Strategic Planning Policy Manager responded to members' specific questions and observations on the following:

- The need to track projected employment increases in the B-use Classes over a sustained period of time
- Concern at employment land being used for residential development and the effect on businesses
- Additional Funding from the Highways Agency to develop Junction 15, the route around the roundabout, Commonhead and the Eastern Villages
- The time and distance that people travel to work and the need to resist developers wishing to develop employment land for residential purposes
- The need to improve junction 16
- The process for determining the locations of existing and new employment land in Swindon
- The need for flexibility in determining locations for employment land to achieve the right balance
- Statistics for the density of employment across different business sectors
- The need for business to work in partnership with the town and residents

**Resolved:**

4. That the Employment Land in Swindon report be noted
5. That the Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and skills, Head of Economy, Skills and Property Development and Strategic Planning Policy Manager be thanked for a very interesting and informative presentation of the report.

**24. Work Programme - 2014/15**

The Committee received the report of the Scrutiny Officer setting out details of the Committee's work programme.

**Resolved:**

That the work programme be noted.

**25. Date of Next Meeting**

**Resolved:**

That the next meeting of the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee be held at 5:00pm on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at the Civic Offices, Swindon.