

Swindon Borough Council Update on Swindon's Economic Strategy 2016-36

Growing the Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 30 November 2016

Author: Corporate Director of Economy, Regeneration & Skills

Wards: All

Locality Affected: All

Parishes Affected: All

1. Purpose and Reasons

- 1.1 This report is in response to a request from Growing the Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee to report on progress to date in respect of Swindon's Economic Strategy, and to give an update on the production of a revised Economic Strategy over the longer timeframe 2016-36.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to consider and feedback on the emerging vision and aims:

3. Detail

Swindon's Economic Strategy

- 3.1 Members are referred to the [June committee papers](#) for the update and progress report on the Swindon Economic Strategy 2013.
- 3.2 Work to update and refresh the Swindon Economic Strategy (2016-36) is underway. Doing so offers the following opportunities:-
1. To introduce a framework for growth that is consistent with the Swindon and Wiltshire LEP's Strategic Economic Plan (published in 2016), the forthcoming Industrial Strategy and to present the strategy in a way that is understood by, and appeals to, national government.
 2. Strong demand for industrial, warehousing and office stock, and shortage of available employment land, gives the opportunity to allocate additional strategic employment sites that will enable Swindon to grow sustainably; creating employment opportunities to accompany the planned housing growth over a long time horizon to 2036; and to consider how we work with existing land-owners to encourage re-investment in dated existing commercial stock.
 3. To re-engage with the business community around the related issues of place-making and the economy.
 4. To reflect changes in economic outlook at the international, national, regional and local levels. Since 2011, much has changed: we have

Swindon Borough Council Update on Swindon's Economic Strategy 2016-36

Growing the Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 30 November 2016

emerged from a global downturn, the UK narrowly avoided triple-dip recession and in the recent UK referendum, voters decided we should leave the European Union. The Economic Strategy gives us an opportunity to engage with businesses to better understand the impacts of that decision and how we can support them over the short, medium and long-term to mitigate any associated risks and capitalise on emerging opportunities that may arise as a consequence of leaving the EU. The government's forthcoming Industrial Strategy, an outline of which is expected around the same time as the Autumn Statement, may present some key opportunities, and the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan provides important local context.

4. Swindon's Economic Strategy to 2036: progress to date

- 4.1 The Strategy will sit alongside the next iteration of the Local Plan (2036) and the forthcoming Swindon Transport Strategy. It will sit above the Town Centre Masterplan, the emerging Swindon Skills and Employment strategy, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and the Swindon Town Centre parking strategy which is currently being developed.
- 4.2 Officers have developed a comprehensive evidence base that is aligned to the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) process and this has guided the identification of the emerging Vision and Objectives (see Appendix B).
- 4.3 The table in Appendix C presents a summary of the comprehensive evidence base, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses inherent in the Swindon economy.
- 4.4 Reflecting upon the evidence base, the Council's Vision, and based on early engagement with the business community via our INFLUENCE forum, the draft Swindon's Economic Strategy Vision reads:
- 4.5 *"By 2036, Swindon will be the UK's most innovative, productive, fast-growth city, and will grow sustainably and create employment opportunities for more of its residents."*
- 4.6 The strapline to sit alongside the vision is "**Accelerating Swindon's Growth Potential**" as this reflects our status as one of the UK's fastest growing cities. To date our growth has been predominantly around housing, but in the economic strategy, we articulate our intent to grow the economy to match housing growth.
- 4.7 The aims of the economic strategy are:-
 - 1. To enhance Swindon's competitive position as one of the UK's most productive economies by attracting investment and high value employment

Swindon Borough Council Update on Swindon's Economic Strategy 2016-36

Growing the Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 30 November 2016

-
2. To grow sustainably and create a diverse and resilient economy by encouraging growth in small and medium sized businesses
 3. To make Swindon a desirable place to live, work and invest to attract highly skilled residents through delivering transformational change in town centre regeneration that includes significant improvement to the leisure, cultural and evening economy
 4. To create a fast growth high value economy by upskilling our residents to enable them to compete for high value jobs whilst providing education and employment opportunities for everyone
- 4.8 The themes, outcomes and associated actions are currently being developed as we are in the midst of our engagement programme. We propose to bring those back to the Committee for 1st February 2016 which will inform a draft strategy later that month. This draft will then be circulated to the committee as part of the engagement plan process.
- 4.9 We propose to engage with our business community on the revised Vision, objectives and associated actions in late January 2016. Businesses may suggest other outcomes and associated actions that could reasonably be taken forward under the remit of the Swindon Economic Strategy. Business are key partners in the development of the Strategy given the Economic Strategy is a strategy for Swindon, not the Council. They will also be key delivery partners.
- 4.10 The following consultation programme is proposed:

Swindon's Economic Strategy Work Programme	
Milestone	Start and Finish Dates
Evidence gathering	Oct 2015 – Autumn 2016
Engagement	July 2016 – February 2017
First draft	Late February 2017
Consultation	March 2017 – April 2017
Final draft	June 2017
Sign off by members and publish	July 2017

5. Engagement Plan

- 5.1 Cabinet members for Economy, Planning and Highways have been briefed throughout the programme. Businesses were engaged throughout the

Swindon Borough Council Update on Swindon's Economic Strategy 2016-36

Growing the Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 30 November 2016

production of the Economic Strategy (2012-26) and, as a result, officers will engage the business community in a light touch way.

- 5.2 We have already consulted businesses at an INFLUENCE meeting in October 2016.
- 5.3 A large scale business event on 24 January 2017 gives us the opportunity to launch the Place Marketing campaign, consult on the Economic Strategy and showcase the Council's Business and Inward Investment Service.
- 5.4 The Economic Strategy refresh also gives us the opportunity consult with national Government departments, Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP), neighbouring local authorities and our fast growth city partners (Oxford, Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Norwich). We have had an initial meeting with Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), the Department for International Trade (DIT) and Homes and Communities Agency.

6. Public Consultation

- 6.1 The engagement plan schedules a full public consultation on the draft Economic Strategy in the Spring 2017. This will give people opportunity to comment on a limited number of questions as it will have followed wide engagement with businesses. There are a number of advantages to wide public consultation, not least that it will help to promote Swindon as a great place to do business, allow us to showcase Swindon's aspirations, and encourage businesses to get in touch with the economy team. This will help us in our business engagement activity generally.

7. Implications, Diversity Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 7.1 The report does not include any direct implications.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 7.2 The report does not include any direct implications.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 7.3 The report does not include any direct implications.

Diversity Impact Assessment

- 7.4 The report does not propose any change in policy or a new policy and so a diversity impact assessment has not been carried out.

Swindon Borough Council Update on Swindon's Economic Strategy 2016-36

Growing the Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 30 November 2016

Risk Management

- 7.5 The report is an analysis of the possible impact of the UK leaving the EU. It does not propose action requiring immediate risk assessment. The risk assessment will be part of the review of Swindon's Economic Strategy taking place during 2016/17.

8. Consultees

- 8.1 The Board Director, Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Democratic Services (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

9. Background Papers

- 9.1 Swindon's Economic Strategy 2012-2026 – available on request.
- 9.2 Economy and Scrutiny Report on the EU – available on request

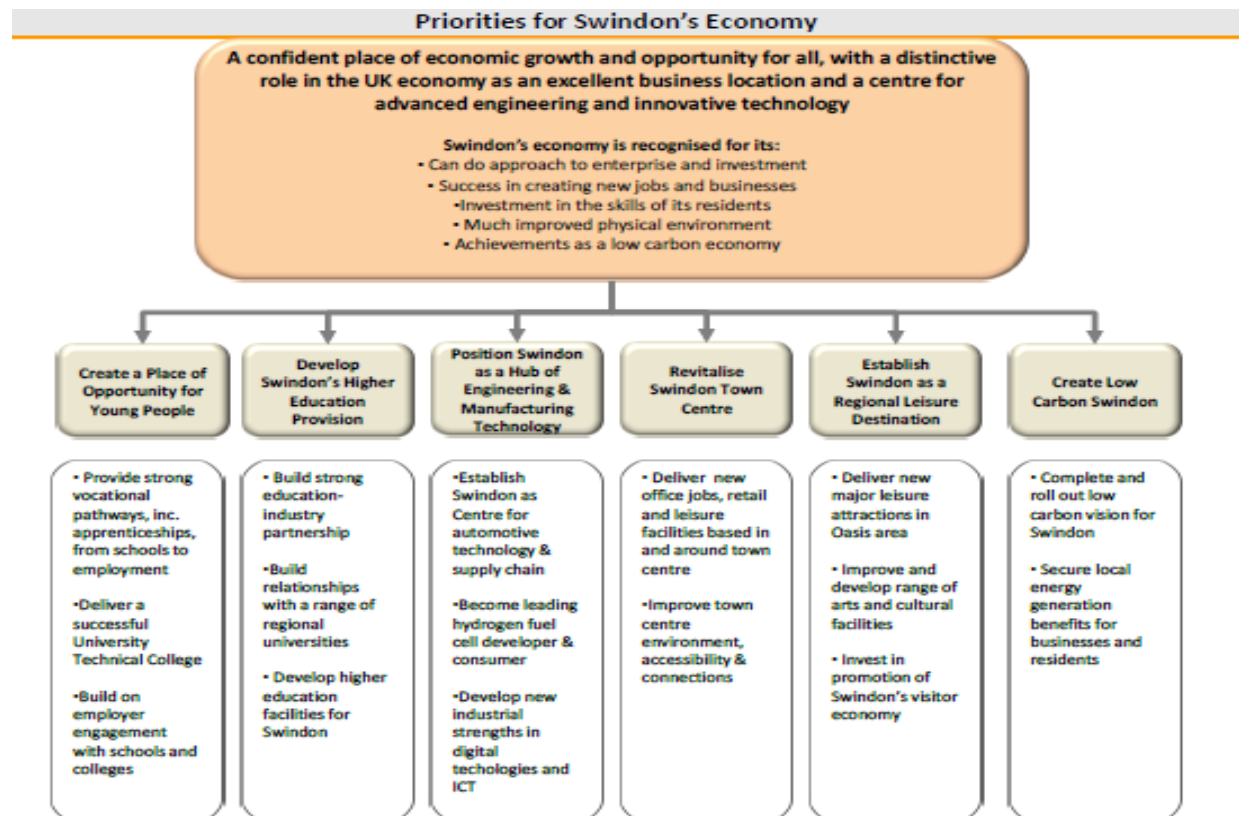
Swindon Borough Council Update on Swindon's Economic Strategy 2016-36

Growing the Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 30 November 2016

10. Appendices

Appendix A – Economic Strategy 2012-26 (Priorities for Swindon's economy)

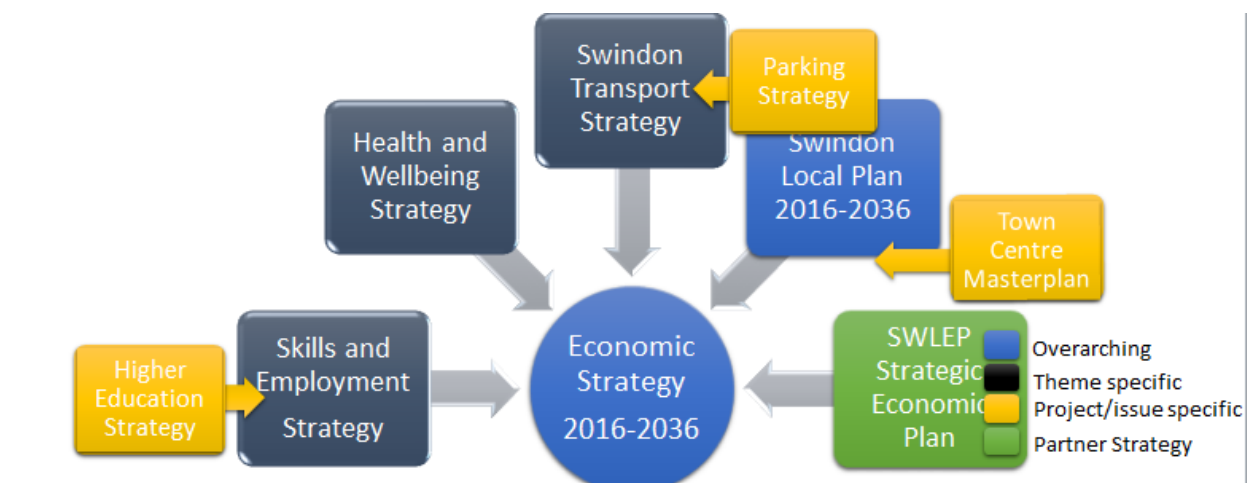


Swindon Borough Council Update on Swindon's Economic Strategy 2016-36

Growing the Economy Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 30 November 2016

Appendix B – how Swindon's Economic Strategy fits with other corporate strategies



Appendix C – Strengths and Weaknesses in Swindon's economy

Strengths	Weaknesses
Rapid population growth	No associated employment growth
High employment rate	Increased out and in-commuting (high employment rate)
High employment rates amongst older workers	Tight labour market conditions and potential for skills shortages; Some NEET young people / difficulties tracking
Improving levels of workforce qualifications	Poor secondary schools performance, low attainment in higher education
Full employment and low levels of worklessness	Pockets of worklessness : Penhill, Parks, Walcot
Large businesses and HQ activity	Low business start-ups and poor survival rates; shortage of employment land; poor perception of Swindon?
Sector strengths in: adv manufacturing (auto & pharms), Banking and prof services, ICT and digital	Nationally manufacturing sector in decline, high % of businesses exporting (Brexit uncertainty)
Strong town centre retail offer with many chains represented; town centre first policy	Historic development of 'out of town' weakened town centre offer. Despite strong footfall, problem with empty units
Well located with strong connectivity by road and rail	Poor public realm, especially in the Town Centre