

## **GROWING THE ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**WEDNESDAY, 30 JANUARY 2019**

PRESENT:- Councillors Emma Faramarzi (Chair), Paul Dixon, Garry Perkins, Roger Smith, Caryl Sydney-Smith and Chris Watts

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mark Dempsey, John Haines and Imtiyaz Shaikh.

Also in attendance: Councillor Oliver Donachie (Cabinet Member for Economic Prosperity).

### **35. Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting.

Councillor Oliver Donachie made a personal and non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of agenda items 5 and 6 in his capacity as a Board Member of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

Councillor Chris Watts made a personal and non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of agenda items 5 and 6 in his capacity as a Member of the Scrutiny Committee of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

### **36. Public Question Time**

No public questions were received during the meeting.

### **37. Minutes**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **38. Update on Learning Town, Higher Education and Apprenticeships**

The Committee received a report of the Head of Skills, Employment and Lifelong Learning and Head of Education setting out on progress on the Swindon Learning Town, Higher Education Strategy and Apprenticeship Strategy.

The Chair read out questions received from Councillor Jane Milner-Barry relating to apprenticeships, the use of apprenticeships to upskill the Council's workforce and funds in the Council's apprenticeship levy account.

Following a presentation on the report the Cabinet Member for Economic Prosperity and Officers responded to Councillor Milner-Barry's questions and Members questions and comments on the following issues:

- The different types of apprenticeships currently available, including level 7 Masters degrees; it was noted that there has been a growth in the use of higher and master degree apprenticeships by employers, including Swindon Borough

Council.

- The use of apprenticeships in employing and upskilling staff.
- Funds available in the Apprenticeship Levy Account and the Council's target for the employment of apprentices.
- The mobilisation of resources by Learning Cities to promote learning across the spectrum from basic to higher education, learning in the workplace, in extending the use of modern learning technologies and the fostering of a culture of learning, social inclusion, economic prosperity and sustainable development.
- The Borough's aspiration and ambition for Swindon's residents, including increasing the number of young people in higher education, especially from more deprived areas, and an increasing skills and qualifications at all levels of employment.
- The move towards lifelong learning and increasing wellbeing through employment opportunities.
- The launch of the Learning Town Website in October 2018 and road shows and other publicity with schools and other partners to bring the website to the attention of residents.
- Promotions, such as Tech Fest, during the year to raise awareness of the learning opportunities available within the Borough and to promote the status of learning within Swindon.
- The use of ambassadors, employers, community engagement and mentors in promoting learning opportunities and career pathways within the Borough.
- The Words for Work Programme for post 16 year olds to assist their transition to employment.
- On-going work to improve literacy across a range of age groups.
- The positive use of stories on the Learning Town Website and social media.
- The identification of barriers to learning across the range of programmes used within the Borough.
- The role of Councillors to help promote future learning and educational campaigns.
- The continual use of education by residents to help them develop their skills and the opportunities available to them.
- The variety of bursaries and grants available to those on means-tested benefits to help them in their educational development.
- The targeting of education, especially in improving prosperity, and how aspirations and outcomes were monitored.
- The effect of technology on the development of children's learning skills.
- The role of libraries across the Borough in the promotion of learning and skill attainment.
- Work with all schools and colleges in the Borough, through the Swindon Challenge Board, to improve educational attainment and to raise aspirations and personal progression.
- Work with universities, colleges and schools to increase aspirations for the cohort of pupils whose family did not have a history of higher education learning.
- Work to increase the number and range of apprenticeships on offer within the Borough.
- On-going work to identify barriers to learning and to assist residents with poor literacy skills access services.

Resolved – (1) That the Cabinet Member for Economic Prosperity and officers be thanked for their presentation.

(2) That the report and progress on the Swindon Learning Town, Higher Education and Apprenticeships be noted.

(Councillor Oliver Donachie made a personal and non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of this item in his capacity as a Board Member of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership.)

(Councillor Chris Watts made a personal and non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of this item his capacity as a Member of the Scrutiny Committee of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership.)

### **39.**

### **Switch Onto Swindon**

The Cabinet Member for Economic Prosperity and the Head of Strategic Growth made a presentation updating the Committee on the work of Switch onto Swindon and answered questions in respect of the following issues:

- Switch onto Swindon, which was into its third year, which had approximately 600 Ambassadors from over 400 companies who were working to make Swindon the best place to live and work.
- Details of the Business Board which was aligned around business representatives and their lead roles to co-ordinate activity within the themes of Governance, The Ambassador Network, The Talent Attraction Campaign, Discover Swindon and Ambassador Communication.
- The message that Swindon was the place to do business which was being led and championed by representatives of the business community.
- The Council's support to Switch onto Swindon in the form of senior political and officer input, co-ordination, insurance for events, communications and administrative support and a base budget to stimulate other financial and in-kind contributions to agreed activity.
- The reorganisation of Switch on Swindon to minimise political input and to allow business to deliver key messages.
- Work to widen the message of Switch on Swindon to businesses and employees across the country.
- The role of the Council in proactively seeking inward investment into Swindon.

Resolved – (1) That the Cabinet Member for Economic Prosperity and officers be thanked for their presentation.

(2) That this Committee formally extends its thanks and appreciation to all of the Switch on Swindon Ambassadors for their work.

(Councillor Oliver Donachie made a personal and non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of this item in his capacity as a Board Member of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership.)

(Councillor Chris Watts made a personal and non-prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of this item his capacity as a Member of the Scrutiny Committee of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership.)

**40.**

### **Possible Effects of Leaving the European Union**

The Cabinet Member for Economic Prosperity and the Head of Strategic Growth and Place submitted a joint report setting out in broad terms the issues identified to date arising from the United Kingdom leaving the European Union and the Council's response through its inward investment and business retention and expansion programmes.

Resolved – (1) That the report be noted and officers be thanked for their extremely detailed report.

(2) That the Cabinet Member for Economic Prosperity and Councillors be encouraged to promote the Government's website <https://euexit.campaign.gov.uk> to assist businesses with their preparations for leaving the European Union.

(3) That the Chair and Cabinet Member for Economic Prosperity be requested to report the Committee's consideration of this report to Council.

**41.**

### **Work Programme 2018/19**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Law and Democratic Services setting out the Committee's Work Programme, agreed at its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2018.

Resolved – (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That an update on Learning Town be added to this Committee's Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2019/20.