

GROWING THE ECONOMY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 2020

PRESENT:- Councillors Junab Ali, Abdul Amin, Mark Dempsey, Jenny Jefferies, Vinay Manro, Kevin Parry (Chair), Roger Smith and Timothy Swinyard.

Councillors David Renard and Caryl Sydney-Smith were also in attendance.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Nick Burns-Howell.

1. 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 Kevin Parry made a non prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of Agenda Item No. 7 as he was employed by Honda.

Councillor Junab Ali made a non prejudicial declaration of interest as he was a Non-Executive Director for Business West.

2. Public Question Time

No public questions were received during the meeting.

3. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 11th March 2020, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

4. Update on the work of the Climate Change CMAG

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change made an oral report to the Committee regarding the Council's response to climate change, including the work of the Climate Change Cabinet Members' Advisory Group.

The Cabinet Member for Climate Change highlighted the following issues as part of his presentation and members' scrutiny:

- That the Cabinet Members' Advisory Group had initially constituted four sub-groups (buildings, transport, policy and lobbying and communications and education) but that these were to be consolidated into two as most of the activity had centred on buildings and transport which were the two largest contributors to climate change.
- The transport had already identified a lot of work and the Council could influence a lot of areas relating to transport, including alternative forms of transport and strategic planning for transport.
- The LED street lighting replacement programme which it was anticipated would reduce emissions by 60% and would also offer a major contribution to reducing the Council's carbon footprint by 2030 and would be in place by

2022.

- In June 2019, the UK Government set a legally binding target for the UK to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.
- The preferred option to achieve carbon neutrality was in order (i) Remove carbon production to reduce the amount of emissions at source by removing the need, for example, estate rationalisation, working practises, organisation structure and ensure that resources are used as efficiently as possible removing waste, through the design and operation of the building, (ii) Reduce Carbon production - ensure that resources are used as efficiently as possible removing waste, through the design and operation of the building and by behaviour through education, (iii) the use of technology - ensure that resources are used as efficiently as possible removing waste, through the design and operation of the building and behaviour through education, and (iv) Offset any remaining carbon emissions.
- A breakdown of Scope Emissions within the Carbon Reduction Strategy and targets including, Scope 1 - Carbon emissions from sources that directly burn the fossil fuel, such as gas boilers and combustion engines, Scope 2 -Carbon emissions from electricity usage, Scope 3 - Carbon emissions from sources that the Council does not directly control; but over which it has some responsibility and influence and Scope 4 - Carbon emissions from sources that the Council does not directly control; but over which it has some responsibility and influence.
- The use of standardised Government methodologies and conversion factors, we have gathered and calculated our Baseline (The target for Swindon Borough Council is to reduce our carbon emissions from 11,823 CO₂e down to Net Zero by 2030).
- A break-down of the Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions and targets related to their reduction.
- The further complication that accurate monitoring and measurement of emissions was very challenging and in some cases impossible. In order to help measure Borough wide emission the SCATTER (Setting City Area Targets and Trajectories for Emissions Reduction).
- The target for the wider Borough of Swindon is to work towards Net Zero carbon emissions from 1,532,000 CO₂e by 2050.
- Although this is a new Council strategy, emission reduction activities are not new, and there has already been a large amount of work completed or in progress, as a result of over £15 million investment by the Council.
- That emissions from Council housing was included in the wider Borough target as energy usage was outside of the control of the Council. Work on energy efficiency for Council properties such as energy efficient boilers was programmed.
- That transport and housing were amongst the highest contributors to carbon emissions and these had sub-groups to consider ways to reduce their impact.
- Problems with reducing the carbon footprint of Listed Buildings such as Lydiard House and the need therefore for mitigation measures.
- Swindon had established a reputation as one of the leading towns in the UK for renewable energy, delivering a number of key initiatives in hydrogen and solar power including (i) being home to the UK's first commercial hydrogen filling station, (ii) Wroughton Airfield Solar Farm with a capacity of 62 MW is one of the largest ground mount solar parks in the UK, (iii) Chapel Farm Solar Park was the first solar farm funded by a Council backed community solar bond and (iv) Common Farm Solar Park was the first solar farm funded

by an ISA-eligible renewable energy bond.

- That the Borough solar generation capacity could provide 2/3 of its domestic electrical needs.
- Current carbon reduction projects included (i) EV charging and EV fleet rollout, (ii) Planning Policy including requirement for residential EV charge points, (iii) Street-lighting LED lighting project (expected carbon reduction 60%), (iv) Multi-Storey Carpark LED lighting project (carbon reduction circa 60%), (v) Energy Management Software implementation, (vi) Print Rationalisation project (15million to 1 million copies), (vii) Digitisation project – Move towards paperless offices, and (viii) Community Forest Project tree planting.
- An explanation of the 12 main objectives for this strategy that will enable the Council to progress towards Net Zero Carbon which included an educational element.
- Work of the Climate Change Working Group which was chaired by the cabinet member for climate change and was formed of cross party Councillors following the adopted motion for Carbon reduction. This work had informed the direction for the Carbon Reduction Strategy and included membership from Councillors, Officers and external interested stakeholders. It had given consideration to 33 key climate themes using Friends of the Earth resources and used of policy levers to encourage change. There was a key focus on engagement and education with the wider borough. Both residents and businesses.
- The work of the Carbon Reduction Strategy Group which was comprised of officers chaired by the Director for Economy Growth and Place. The focus of the group was to create a collaborative environment where Carbon Reduction work from across the Council is pulled together, shared and reported. The primary goal of the group was to achieve the Net Zero Carbon reduction target by 2030. Action groups would be formed below this group to focus on specific aspects for emission reduction, and will report progress to the main group.
- The way these groups fitted within and influenced the Council's decision making structure.
- Forthcoming work which would include (i) the Carbon Reduction Strategy going to Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee in October with the recommendation to Release the Draft for consultation until January 2021, (ii) the final strategy being developed and published by February 2021, (iii) the creation of an Implementation Plan draft which would commence imminently, (iv) officer Sub groups to meet to tackle the Council's emissions under Scope 1 and 2, informing the implementation plan, feasibility and resource requirements, (v) an annual monitoring report to be created and published externally to track progress against targets, and (vi) the creation of internal monitoring (Dashboards) which would be published on the intranet.
- It was intended that much of the work to ensure the Council's carbon neutrality by 2030 would be put in place within the next three years.
- It was recognised that the Borough carbon neutrality target was not directly under the Council's control and it would be working with partners.
- That the authority was looking to plant around 400 hectares of trees as part of the carbon reduction initiative which exceeded the off-setting required and would help meet the 2050 target.
- Future projects to increase public awareness of climate change and sustainability.

Resolved – That the Cabinet Member for Climate Change be thanked for his attendance and full and informative answers to members' questions.

5. Swindon's Economic Recovery

The Director of Economy, Growth and Place submitted a report updating the Committee on the work to date by Swindon Borough Council officers working with business and other partners in support of the economic recovery of Swindon, in the light of circumstances arising from Covid-19.

In presenting the report the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and Director of Economy, Growth and Place highlighted the following issues and responded to Members' questions in relation to:

- The Council's Covid-19 response and recovery plan that had been considered by the Cabinet.
- That economy work streams with partners and enablers which fell with the broad heading of (i) Intel, Impact and Evidence (including businesses, the LEP and Councillors), (ii) Business Support (£30 million had been distributed and welcome feedback on the efficiency of this work), (iii) Business Growth (grow existing businesses and encourage new business to the Borough), (iv) Investment in Swindon (including Switch onto Swindon and new investment strategy), (v) Regeneration and Capital Schemes - Town Centre and (vi) Strategic Place Making (including a review of employment land with the Local Plan).
- Swindon's Bounce Back Campaign which had commenced on 7th September 2020 which was a call to action to galvanise the whole community and to seize every opportunity to reinvent, innovate and play to the economy's strengths and demonstrate how the Council is playing its part to boost the local economy.
- The role of the Council in using influence, powers and assets to boost the local economy, spelling out key projects and activity and what this means for Swindon's residents and the lobbying of Government.
- The COVID response and recovery work such as business grants "Business As Usual" measures such as attracting investment and supporting employers in the town.
- The Covid-19 recovery framework and interaction between the Council and key partners.
- The Town Centre Recovery Plan which included:

Mission – Attract people and businesses to Swindon – now in the context of post Covid-19 restrictions.

Strategy: Tell the story to:

- (a) position Swindon as a top UK town for quality of life
- (b) attract investment and funding
- (c) challenge perceptions
- (d) React quickly as a collaborative network

Objectives (measures of success): footfall level, economic activity, level of investment, crime rates and other to be agreed by the Plan Ahead Teams

Method: Establish stakeholder networks, leadership group and Plan Ahead Teams.

- A summary of key partners in the Town Centre Regeneration work.
- A summary of the work of Plan Ahead Teams (Retail, Community, Leisure, Commercial, Public Space, Transport, Marketing and Public Service).
- That Swindon's town centre footfall had recovered more strongly than a lot of areas, for instance, Birmingham.
- Examples of new business being attracted to Swindon, including the new business warehouse recently given planning permission at Symmetry Park which would create around 2,000 new jobs through £400 million of investment.
- The continued promotion of Swindon's quality of life to help drive inward investment and to dispel misconceptions about the town.
- The creation of strong partnerships, both existing and new, through the Plan Ahead Teams.
- The promotion of the Swindon Tech-Fest.
- An assessment, from a number of government and business sources, of the likely COVID-19 and Brit-exit impact and how these might be countered.
- How the tangible benefits arising from the work being undertaken and how these might be measured.
- The potential future use of the Honda site and how this could positively impact business and employment opportunities.

Resolved – (1) That the activity undertaken by Council officers set out in the report be noted.

(2) That the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and Director of Economy, Growth and Place be thanked for their presentation and full and frank responses to Members' questions.

6. Honda & Supply Chain Coordinating Steering Group Update

The Business & Economy Manager, Economy Growth and Place submitted a report updating on the activity of the Honda & Supply Chain Coordinating Steering Group and responded to Members' questions in respect of:

- An overview of the suppliers and stakeholders involved in the work of the Steering and Task Groups.
- That there were around 100 people involved in supporting the recovery programme with the majority of work focused on the Honda workforce and the workforce of suppliers.
- The national and local collaboration on economic recovery work and financial and mental wellbeing of employees and their families.
- Planning to reduce potential pressure on public services through partnership working and who were still busy dealing with Covid.
- Training and career advice available to those facing redundancy and the support the Council added to this process.
- Planned virtual events being planned to support people facing redundancy.
- Work with the Department for International Trade and other organisations to help Honda suppliers find new contract opportunities and where necessary to diversify.
- The site was owned by Honda and work by the Planning Department to

- continue its use as employment land and to maximise its potential.
- That conversations with employers was through a tailored approach depending on a company's needs.
- The use of £200,000 approved by Council to support work on Honda, £100,000 of which had been used to gain matched funding from the European Union for the start-up support training programme and supplier diversification work, and potential use of the remaining monies.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

(Councillor Kevin Parry made a non prejudicial declaration of interest in respect of this item as he was employed by Honda.)

7. Apprenticeship Task Group

The Committee considered (a) a report of the Head of Skills, Employment and Lifelong Learning setting out proposed Terms of Reference for the work of the Apprenticeship Task Group, and (b) proposed recommendations for the Task Group to consider forwarded to Members by the Chairs of the Growing the Economy and Children's Health, Social Care and Education Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Members' considered the report and officer responses to questions in respect of the following issues:

- The proposed membership of the Task Group which would be employer led.
- The work of the Task Group to increase the number of apprenticeships through a collaborative approach and support for smaller employers.
- The promotion of apprenticeships during the National Apprenticeship Week.
- The use Government Kick-Start Scheme as an alternative or in support of apprenticeships.

Resolved – That the report be noted and the Terms of Reference for the Apprenticeship Task Group, as set out in the Appendix to the report, be approved.

8. Work Programme 2020/21

The Committee considered a report by the Chief Legal Officer setting out the Committee's proposed Work Programme for the Municipal Year 2020/21.

Resolved – (1) That the report be noted and Work Programme for the current Municipal Year be approved.

(2) That a report reviewing of Employment Land within the Local Plan be submitted to the Committee in November 2020.