

ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 5 JULY 2012

PRESENT:- Councillors Peter Heaton-Jones (Chair), Mark Dempsey (Vice-Chair), Junab Ali, Mike Bawden, Wayne Crabbe, Toby Elliott, Emma Faramarzi, Mary Friend, Richard Hurley, Julian Price, James Robbins and Steve Wakefield

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Nicky Sewell.

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 Emma Faramarzi made a non-prejudicial declaration of interest in her capacity as Chair of the Federation of Small Businesses and a member of the Influence Board (formerly Swindon Strategic Economic Partnership).

2. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd March 2012, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3. Public Question Time

No public questions were received during the meeting.

4. Work Programme - Cabinet Priorities 2012/13

Councillor Garry Perkins, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture, Councillor Dale Heenan, Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability and Richard Fisher, on behalf of Councillor Fionuala Foley (Cabinet Member for Streetsmart and Corporate Services) presented the following priority areas from within their portfolios for consideration by this Committee for inclusion within their work programme for 2012/2013:-

Councillor Garry Perkins (Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Culture):-

Consultation with residents on –

- Town Centre master plan – consultation to commence at the end of July undertaken by Forward Swindon.
- Economic Strategy – this would be going to Cabinet in September.
- Core Strategy – this would be going to Cabinet in October.

Regeneration – a cross party Forward Swindon Commissioning Board had been set up in order to provide a clear direction from the Council as to what was required from Forward Swindon. A number of regeneration projects were now underway, including:

- Union Square
- College Site – demolition was now underway and development would

- commence on the site as soon as it was cleared by September
- Station Forecourt – this was due to be completed by the end of July
- Oasis development – this would be completed by 2014/15.

Mechanics Institute – consideration was being given to bringing the building back to being structurally sound and meetings would be set up with organisations such as English Heritage and the National lottery to explore potential sources of funding. The council had recovered some of the costs associated with works carried out on the building and the case to recover the remainder of costs had been registered.

Councillor Dale Heenan (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Sustainability):-

- Strategic Planning – an eight week consultation period for the Core Strategy.
- Neighbourhood Plans – in line with the Core Strategy, consultation would take place with local communities.
- Economic Strategy.
- Countryside issues – perception of Swindon informed on the way into the town. Councillor Heenan confirmed that the transport strategy was not part of his portfolio and that this fell within the remit of the Cabinet Member for Leisure and Strategic Transport.
- Renewable Energy – the development of an energy strategy.
- IT Programme – especially in the way the Council engages with communities and businesses.
- Business Rates – opportunity to lessen restrictions on planning red tape in order to encourage businesses into the town and therefore create jobs.

Richard Fisher (on behalf of Councillor Foley, Cabinet Member for Streetsmart and Corporate Services):-

- Recycling – increasing the rate from 50% to 60%
- Waste to energy schemes – what happens to the waste that does not go to landfill.
- Waste and recycling strategy adopted in 2006 – role for a wider discussion on waste overall.

Resolved – That Councillor Garry Perkins, Councillor Dale Heenan and Richard Fisher be thanked for attending the meeting.

5. Work Programme - Forward Swindon

Ian Piper (Chief Executive of Forward Swindon) and Paddy Bradley (Head of Commissioning, Economy and Attainment) briefly explained the role of Forward Swindon in delivering economic development and regeneration in Swindon and

presented Forward Swindon's Annual Delivery Plan for 2012/13. Three priorities had been agreed for 2012/13 for which milestone targets had been set and which would be monitored through the Shareholder Commissioning Board:

- Bringing more new businesses to Swindon
- Support existing businesses in the town to succeed, grow and remain
- Delivering regeneration and growth projects that support the overarching goal.

In response to queries from Members of the Committee, Mr Piper confirmed that Honda and other companies were working together to explore how Swindon could become a leader in the use of hydrogen technology and that there was a facility on their web site to enable potential businesses to search for available premises within Swindon. He added that he recognised the need to promote this web site more widely, in particular to existing businesses in the town.

Resolved – That Mr Piper and Mr Bradley be thanked for attending the meeting.

6. Work Programme 2012/13

Members of the Economic, Environmental and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the following work programme for the 2012/13 Municipal Year, taking into account the suggestions from relevant Cabinet Members, the suggestions of Members of the Committee and the results of the annual work programme exercise:

September 6th

- Final Town Centre Regeneration Report – report to be agreed and fed into the Town Centre Master Plan consultation process.
- Economic Strategy Consultation
- Inward Investment

September 26th (additional meeting)

- Core Strategy Consultation
- Additional Inward Investment item if required

December 13th

- Receive final Inward Investment report
- Recycling/Waste to Energy/Waste Management
- Review work programme

In addition to the above, a further meeting of the Mechanics Advisory Group would be set up to agree a way forward and the Scrutiny Officer agreed to find out more about business rates and the transport strategy to ascertain whether it would be feasible for the Committee to engage with these topics at future meetings.

A task group, comprising Councillor Wayne Crabbe and Councillor Julian Price would also be established to look at the issue of houses unfit for habitation.

Resolved – That Members of the Economic, Environmental and Sustainability

Overview and Scrutiny Committee agree the above work programme for the 2012/13 Municipal Year.

7. Inward Investment Briefing Paper

Members of the Committee reviewed the Inward Investment briefing paper which outlined the progress made by this Committee on Inward Investment last year. The Chair added that work on Inward Investment would be completed by the end of this calendar year with further evidence being presented at the September meeting.

Resolved – (1) That Members of the Economic, Environmental and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the Inward Investment briefing paper.

(2) That further evidence be presented at the next meeting of this Committee with a final report on Inward Investment produced by the end of this calendar year.