

ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 1 APRIL 2014

PRESENT:- Councillors Mark Dempsey, Junab Ali, Wayne Crabbe, Mark Edwards, Toby Elliott, Emma Faramarzi (Chair), Mary Friend, Julian Price, Steve Wakefield, Fay Howard, Maureen Penny and David Wood

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Roderick Bluh.

22. Declarations of Interest

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

23. Minutes

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2013 be confirmed and signed as a correct record, subject to minute 21 (4) be amended to read Swindon 175 Task Group in place of GWR 175 Task Group.

24. Public Question Time

No public questions were received during the meeting.

25. Transport Policy and Strategy

The Committee considered the report of the Cabinet Member for Highways, Strategic Transport and Leisure and the Board Director Service Delivery about the framework within which transport policy and strategy in Swindon is determined.

The report described the role and function of the Local Transport Plan, The Local Plan and the Swindon Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) (including the Local Transport Body and Strategic Economic Plan) and the Town centre Masterplan.

Officers responded to members' specific questions and observations on the following:

- Need for use of rail throughout the Borough especially in the eastern villages
- Investment needed for additional rail stations in the Borough
- References made by a Member to the rapid transport system in Bristol and the impact in the City
- The cost of a new station had reduced in recent years along with the cost of light rail
- The Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership was bidding for £280m with Swindon's proportion being £130m which was focusing on strategic investment sites at Wichelstowe, the New Eastern Villages to the east of the A419 and the town centre.
- Concern at the effect of accidents on the M4 on traffic entering and leaving

Swindon

- Problems with Swindon infrastructure had been determined by the development of the town over many years
- Concern that the Council's commitment to a new bus exchange could be a 'white elephant' as many towns and cities no longer had a main bus terminal
- There was a need to develop a Transport Master Plan for Swindon with a set of priority projects and the creation of 'shovel ready' plans to take advantage of future infrastructure investment from Central Government
- Communication issues with Councillors to be re-examined
- The costs of feasibility plans and the need to demonstrate value for money

The Chair thanked the officers for their time and responses given to questions from the Committee.

Resolved:

1. That this Committee recommends that this Council develops a Transport Master Plan for Swindon with a set of priority projects and the creation of 'shovel ready' plans for these projects to take advantage of future infrastructure investment from Central Government.
2. That officers be asked to prepare a report for the next meeting detailing the work of the Local Enterprise Partnerships Local Transport Body and how it would develop a programme of major transport schemes (including how it would prioritise, consult, use medium/long term shelf plans).
3. That this Committee notes that Councillors are the elected representatives of our communities and should be kept fully informed on works in or affecting their wards.
4. That this Committee recommends that Communication between the Council and Councillors be re-examined.

26. Task Group Updates

The Committee received updates from the following Task Groups:

a) Swindon 175 Task Group

Ian Surtees, Income Generation Manager, LLC&TS spoke about the 175th anniversary celebrations to mark the birth of New Swindon in 2016 and highlighted the following event suggestions:

- To endeavour to relocate the King George V steam locomotive and City of Truro steam locomotive both currently housed at the Nation Railway Museum in York to Swindon
- Exhibitions and merchandise to celebrate the year
- Business partnerships to celebrate the year
- Innovation lectures
- Celebration Beer
- Celebratory walk of history
- Festival of food
- Great Western Enterprise will to work alongside the Task Group on

- plans for the celebrations
- Possible Royal visit

Ian explained that in order for the above to be realised it was important that the Task Group was resurrected.

The Committee supported the need for the Task Group to meet again and to be involved in the co-ordination of the events detailed above, in particular the possibility of a Royal visit bearing in mind the strong connections between Swindon and the Royal Family.

It was suggested that volunteers would be sought for the Task Group following the Local Elections in May 2014 along with representatives from the business community. Councillors Wakefield, Howard and Crabbe expressed an interest in serving on the Task Group.

The Chair thanked Ian for attending the meeting and wished him well for the 175th anniversary celebrations.

Resolved:

That the Scrutiny Officer be asked to contact the political groups to seek volunteers to serve on the Task Group.

b) Council's Approach to Business Rates Task Group

The Chair spoke about a meeting held on 30 January 2014 with the Head of Revenues and Benefits, Andy Stevens, Head of Economy and Attainment, Paddy Bradley and Alan Wylde from Commissioning, Growth and Regeneration about the Councils approach to business rates.

The Chair explained that she was currently writing a report of the meeting and would circulate this to the Committee in due course.

c) Meeting with Forward Swindon

The Chair reported that a number of Members had a very positive visit to Forward Swindon on 31 January 2014.

The following issues were raised during the visit:

- Bridging the gap between the private and public sector
- The need for new buildings to attract business
- Involvement with work in the eastern villages
- Attracting new business to Swindon
- The need for modern businesses in the town centre
- Main junctions leading into Swindon including the motorway junctions
- The development of the University Technical College
- Housing for middle to top management

The Chair thanked those who attended the visit and suggested that Forward Swindon were very happy to arrange further visits if Members were interested.