

ECONOMY AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 16 JUNE 2014

PRESENT:- Councillors Junab Ali, Roderick Bluh, Wayne Crabbe, Mark Dempsey, Mary Friend, Mary Martin (Chair), Kevin Parry, Nicky Sewell and Steve Wakefield

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors .

1. Appointment of Vice-Chair

Resolved:

That Councillor Wayne Crabbe be Vice-Chair of the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2014-15 Municipal Year.

2. 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.

3. Public Question Time

No public questions were received during the meeting.

4. Economic and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee received a presentation from the Overview and Scrutiny Officer about the role of the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee were also provided with an information pack containing a number of Plans and Strategies relevant to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The main issues raised during the presentation included:

- The role of the Committee in relation to Overview and Scrutiny
- The remit of the Committee
- Cabinet Member portfolios aligned to the Committee
- Topics reviewed by the former Economic, Environmental and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- Joint Scrutiny of Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)

Members, in discussing the Cabinet Member Portfolios, asked for further clarification about the responsibilities of Portfolio holders relevant to the Committee.

Resolved:

1. That the presentation be noted
2. That the Scrutiny Officer circulates a list of the Cabinet Member Portfolio responsibilities relevant to this Committee.

5. Employment and Business Development

The Committee received presentations from the Head of Economy and Skills about Swindon's Economic Status and from the Chief Executive of Forward Swindon about Inward Investment and Business retention and Expansion in Swindon.

1. Swindon Economic Status

The Head of Economy and Skills explained that Swindon had a diverse economy which was private sector led. For every 1 job in the public sector there were 4 private sector jobs, which was very close to the highest ratio in the country. It was noted that due to this make-up of jobs, Swindon was generally hit early by economic downturns, but was able to stage a strong recovery earlier than other towns and cities in the country. There were also a high proportion of UK headquarters and foreign-owned businesses based in Swindon. The main issues raised during the presentation included:

- Industry in Swindon by number of businesses
- Trends in the number of enterprises compared to the number of units
- Percentage of businesses by number of employees in Swindon
- Variation in number of businesses by major grouping level
- Percentage of labour market in employment and self-employment in Swindon
- Self-employment trends
- Percentage of part-time and full-time employment
- The reduction in the number of people employed in administration and secretarial roles
- The time that people were on Job Seekers Allowance during 2013 – split between age groups and compared to the whole labour market
- Reasons for economic inactivity
- Qualifications in Swindon as a percentage of the labour market
- Percentage of the labour market with NVQ Level 4 and above compared to the percentage for Great Britain

Members made the following comments and raised a number of issues in relation to the content of the presentation:

- Small and medium sized enterprises made the most impact on the employment market
- It was noted that it had been a very tough time for business between August 2013 and May 2014 as the number of businesses, based on major grouping of type of business, had been in decline
- Concern that the construction industry was not attracting the same number of young people as in previous years.
- 18-24 year olds were most affected by the downturn in employment, however this area was starting to improve particularly the number of young people being employed in engineering
- Concern at the advice, guidance and lack of awareness of employment streams available to young people along with a reduction in the teaching at schools of relevant and practical skills necessary to

enter the construction industry

- There was a reduction in early retirement as people continued to work into the later years
- The call for qualifications from employers was increasing resulting in a rise in the number of people studying for degrees at university
- Technology was having a large impact on administrative and secretarial roles
- Swindon was the largest town in the country without a university, a possible reason why individuals with NVQ1, 2, 3 and 4 qualifications as a percentage of the labour market fall slightly behind the national figures

2. Inward Investment and Business retention and Expansion in Swindon.

The Chief Executive, Forward Swindon reported that there were exciting opportunities for the future of Swindon. He reported that Forward Swindon was leading plans for its growth and regeneration and that Swindon is set to continue to prosper. Forward Swindon produced a five year Business Plan in October 2010, and the Company updated its detailed delivery plan each year with the Council.

He explained that Forward Swindon was a company set up by the Council in 2010 to deliver and facilitate economic growth and regeneration in Swindon. It was a limited company, funded by the Council, but operated independently with a private sector dominated Board. The staff included specialists in economic growth and inward investment, property development, senior business management, marketing and communications, and project management, with a mix of backgrounds in the private and public sector. The main issues raised during the presentation included:

- Performance for the 2013/14 year – including how the company performed against targets set by the company Board.
- Comparisons between office space taken up and commercial/industrial space taken up in 2013/14 against targets
- Investment secured for the private and public sector during 2013/14
- Comparisons of Jobs created and safeguarded between the construction industry and non-construction industry

Members made the following comments and raised a number of issues in relation to the content of the presentation:

- Concern at the shortage of good quality commercial property space available.
- There was a need for good quality sites to be made available, particularly eco business parks on the edge of town
- Investigation needed into the most appropriate use of redundant sites in town
- Suggestion that Forward Swindon, in addition to targeting the top 100 companies for employment opportunities in Swindon, they could expand this to the top 250-500 companies
- Potential need for additional marketing of Swindon as a recent survey demonstrated that business outside of Swindon did not understand the

town in its current context of industrial heritage and innovation

Resolved:

That the Head of Economy and Skills and the Chief Executive, Forward Swindon be thanked for their very informative presentations.

6. Work Programme 2014/15

The Committee received a report from the Overview and Scrutiny Officer setting out details of suggested topics for the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2014/15.

There were three Cabinet Members whose portfolios were relevant to the work of this Committee and members were encouraged to suggest additional topics and issues that the Committee could investigate over the coming year with the aim of producing evidence based recommendations intended to provide service improvements for Cabinet and external agencies and bodies to consider.

The following suggestions were put forward for inclusion in the 2014/15 work programme along with potential meeting dates:

- Youth unemployment – to complete the review from 2013/14 and produce recommendations arising from discussions and interviews with business and young unemployed people
- Transport Policy and Strategy – to receive a report detailing the work of the Local Enterprise Partnership Local Transport Body and how it would develop a programme of major transport schemes.
- Higher Education Skills and City Deal – The importance of education and attaining skills relevant to the work place environment. Possible joint scrutiny with Education, Health and the Caring Services O &S Committee
- Swindon 175 – to receive regular updates on the work of the working group
- Town Centre Regeneration and the Economic Strategy – regular update reports and Question and Answer session with the Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and Skills
- Forward Swindon – How Swindon manages its reputation and promotion
- Mechanics Institute – to receive regular updates from the Working Group
- Strategic Property Portfolio - Question and Answer session with the Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and Skills
- Capacity Building – to consider further the promotion and development of community based alternatives to traditional public services. Also a Question and Answer session with the Cabinet Member for Communities and Volunteering
- Localities and devolution
- Employment Land review
- One Swindon Hub – Question and Answer session with the Cabinet Member for Finance

The Scrutiny Officer was asked to prepare a draft work programme, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, based on the suggestions detailed above.

Resolved:

1. That the Scrutiny Officer be asked to prepare a draft Work Programme for 2014/15 in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair based on the discussions and suggestions made at the meeting.
2. That the Scrutiny Officer be asked to circulate the draft Work Programme, attached at Appendix A to these minutes, to Members of the Committee for further comment, with any amendments to be agreed with the Chair and Vice-Chair.

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Economy and Regeneration Work Programme 2014-2015

Terms of Reference of the Committee

To fulfil all the functions of an Overview and Scrutiny Committee as they relate to:-

- The review, scrutiny and development of policy recommendations
- The management of performance
- The monitoring of progress against corporate priorities
- The formulation of advice for the Cabinet, Council and other partners and stakeholders

To have specific responsibility for (but not limited to) the scrutiny of:-

- The performance of services promoting economic development and enterprise and environmental sustainability against agreed local and national performance indicators
- Regeneration
- Economic and Cultural development
- One Swindon Hub
- Localities
- Volunteering
- Strategy and Research

Reports for noting

Reports with a recommendation “to note the report” will be included in a separate section at the back of the Agenda and will not be heard at the committee meeting, unless specifically requested by a Member of the Committee.

Review of the Work Programme

The work programme will be reviewed at every meeting of the Economy and Regeneration Overview & Scrutiny Committee to ensure that it remains relevant, to ensure that Members and Officers have sufficient capacity to deliver the work programme and to include any additional items on the work programme, if appropriate.

Contact details

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16th June 2014 <i>Please provide reports by 2nd June 2014</i>		
Item	Objectives	Witnesses
Induction	Introduction from Scrutiny Officer as to the remit of the Committee.	Scrutiny Officer
Economic Report	To receive a report from the Head of Commissioning, Economy and Attainment which highlights economic performance data for Swindon using existing public data sets and other sources.	Paddy Bradley
Work Programme discussion	To set the work programme for the forthcoming municipal year and agree Task and Finish Groups and Membership on to those groups.	All

17th September 2014 <i>Please provide reports by 3rd September 2014</i>		
Item	Objectives	Witnesses
Transport Policy and Strategy	To receive a report from the Chair of the Task Group detailing evidence and any recommendations to be referred to Cabinet.	Chair of Task Group
Swindon 175 Group	To receive a report from Members of this Group to update the Committee on the current work streams.	Councillor Steve Wakefield
Town Centre Regeneration	To provide an update report to the Committee on the status of the Town Centre Regeneration, to include the Mechanics Institute.	Cabinet Member for Economy, Regeneration and Skills Paddy Bradley Ian Piper, Forward Swindon

19th November 2014 <i>Please provide reports by 5th November 2014</i>		
Item	Objectives	Witnesses
Higher Education and Skills	To receive a report from the Chair of the Task Group detailing evidence and any recommendations to be referred to Cabinet.	Chair of the Task Group

25th February 2015 <i>Please provide reports by 11th February 2015</i>		
Item	Objectives	Witnesses
Economic Report	To receive a report from the Head of Commissioning, Economy and Attainment which highlights economic performance data for Swindon using existing public data sets and other sources.	Paddy Bradley
Strategic Property	To receive a report from the Chair of the Task Group detailing evidence and any recommendations to be referred to Cabinet.	Chair of the Task Group

20th April 2015 <i>Please provide reports by 6th April 2015</i>		
Item	Objectives	Witnesses
Capacity Building	To receive a report from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Volunteering on the portfolio responsibility of Capacity Building to enable the Committee to fully scrutinise and understand the role of localities and moving public services in to the communities.	Cabinet Member for Communities and Volunteering Relevant SBC Officers
One Swindon Transformation Hub	To receive a report from the Cabinet Member for Finance on the One Swindon Transformation Hub	Cabinet Member for Finance Relevant SBC Officer

TASK GROUPS

Transport Policy and Strategy	To follow up recommendations from the meeting of the Economic, Environmental and Sustainability O&S Committee on the 1 st April 2014, looking particularly at the development of a Transport Master Plan for Swindon and the work of the LEP Local Transport Body and how it would develop a programme of major transport schemes. To report to the Committee on the 17th September 2014.
Higher Education and Skills	To examine the status of Higher Education in the Borough, including details of the City Deal. Looking at University Provision and Apprenticeship schemes to help deliver better skills for the young people of Swindon. To report to the Committee on the 19th November 2014.
Strategic Property	To examine the Employment Land Review and the re-use of redundant buildings and the requirement for new business parks. To report to the Committee on the 25th February 2015.

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