

Swindon Business Charter

Note of meeting held on Tuesday 6th January 2009

Civic Offices, Swindon

In Attendance:

Chris Green, Etherlive
Heydar Faramarzi, Emnico Technologies
Carol Heneghan, The New Swindon Company
Celia Carrington, SBC Deputy Chief Executive
Bill Cotton, SBC Economic Development
Phil Thomas, SBC Regulatory Services
David Evans, Swindon BC, Economic Development (minutes)

Apologies:

Mark Beard, Beard Construction
Rikki Hunt, Chair SSEP

1. Background and Discussion

CC outlined the background to the Charter. The document has been sent out to all registered businesses in Swindon (6,500), and that follow up discussions have been held with many of those recipients. To date 83 businesses have signed up to the Charter. As well as steering the project the members of this group might be ambassadors for the Charter.

Signatory businesses might become a local network in their own right, with enhanced communication with the Council, and creating business opportunities between themselves.

The Charter has a useful role in strengthening businesses' affinity with Swindon.

Signing up to the Charter should strengthen the individual relationship between a business and the Council, as well as improving the Council's relationship with all businesses. It is important that the Charter does not try to duplicate the Chamber of Commerce, FSB or other membership organisations.

There are three 'layers' of benefit to business:

1. a better service from the Council
2. sharing issues in order to create a better business environment in Swindon
3. creating business to business opportunities out of the network

We need to raise awareness of the Charter, particularly amongst signatories, through a regular bulletin or newsletter.

We need to communicate better how SBC has improved as a result of the Charter, and also what businesses have done since signing up. There are big opportunities for businesses to learn from good practice within other organisations in Swindon.

2. Actions Arising

- 1. Communicate directly with signatories to highlight:**
 - i. areas that the Council has improved in relation to dealing with business**
 - ii. case studies of good practice amongst signatories**
- 2. PT to encourage those businesses to whom we act as Home Authority to sign up.**
- 3. Need to measure the effectiveness of the Charter:**
 - Against individual targets within the Charter document**
 - Obtain the views of those businesses that have signed up so far**
 - Repeating the survey of snapshot views of the Council taken from businesses at the launch**
- 4. Need to better define the benefits of signing up to the Charter. All to consider what are, or could be, the benefits to the Council and to businesses**
- 5. Business Charter signatories to be asked to nominate a Council officer for the business excellence award and Council to consider an award for business along the same lines.**