

Swindon Enterprise Group

Wednesday 28th February 2007
14.00-16.00

Basepoint Business Centre, Rivermead, West Swindon

MINUTES

1. Welcome

Chaired by Daphne Milner (DM) – GWE/Business Link

Attendees:

David Evans (DE) – Economic Development Directorate, SBC
Matt Spencer (MS) – Economic Development Directorate, SBC
Andrea Fitzgerald (AF) – Swindon College
Evelyn Little (EL) – Swindon College
Beverley Reynolds (BR) – Basepoint Manager
Jim Pettipher (JP) – Co-Operative Futures
Christina Howell (CH) – Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce
John Bennett (JB) – Young Enterprise South West
Peter Beech-Allen (PBA) – GWE
Simone Wilding (SWI) – SWERDA
Andy Reeve (AR) – Business Link
Mark Beard (MB) – Beard Construction
Graham Taylor (GT) – New College
Sue Watkins (SWA) – Learning & Skills Council

Apologies received from:

Tim Mason & Geoff Tate – SBC Youth Service
Mike Foyle – BMW Swindon Pressings Ltd
Phil Merrick – Swindon Innovation Centre
Marc Braddock – University of Bath in Swindon

2. Notes of Last Meeting

The minutes from the meeting on 23rd January 2007 were accepted.

3. Submission of a Swindon Bid to the UK Enterprising Town Competition

DE informed the group that the Enterprising Britain 2007 competition was launched on 29 January 2007. This competition will look for the town, place, city or area that will be named champion of UK enterprise.

This may be anything from a town that has introduced specific ways of reducing unemployment in the area, to an individual project which has gone back to basics and implemented an innovative enterprise strategy to overcome a challenge.

Enterprising Britain is run in two phases - a regional stage and a national competition. During the regional stage 12 regional winners will be selected from across the UK before going forward to the national final when the overall Enterprising Britain 2007 winner will be selected.

DE asked for a couple of volunteers to help prepare the bid. JP, CH and GT put their names forward.

Action: DE & MS to produce 1st draft of application form and present to the group.

4. Business Support Simplification Programme

SWI presented the RDA's Business Support Simplification Programme. The programme will review its current business support services and will provide clarity on provision of that support. The programme will also provide a synergy with Business Link, who will now act as the primary access channel.

Please see the attached presentation.

MB commented that Business Link service could be patchy and that the standard and consistency of the support that they provide could be improved. DM replied that Business Link is undertaking a programme to standardise the quality of their services. CH added that when the Enterprise Group produces the Enterprise Strategy, all support providers need to be included.

5. Swindon Skills & Employment Board

SWA gave an update on the Skills and Employment Board. She stated that the Swindon Strategic Economic Partnership (SSEP) has approved the project. Various issues need to be looked at including, unemployment, migrant workers and training. Membership may include employers, training providers, Learning and Skills Council, and the Chamber of Commerce. Perhaps the group should be formed as a sub-group of the Enterprise Partnership?

DE added that the Skills and Employment group needs to be led by employers' issues but should also include barriers to employment. CH added that the Chamber of Commerce are happy to help out with marketing the Skills and Employment group and that the Chamber of Commerce are planning a skills day in association with Swindon college. JB stated that every person around the table needs to look at their own "engaged" employers lists and SW added that a couple of workshops with local employers will be needed.

DM suggested that the skills and employment agenda could be seen as a sub-section of the Enterprise Partnership and be a regular item on the Enterprise Partnership agenda. MB added that this might be in conflict with the opinions of the

Swindon Strategic Economic Partnership who see skills and employment issues dealt with by a separate group.

Action: DE & SWA will look at the Economic Development Vision and see where the Skills and Employment Group should sit.

6. AOB

Action: SWA will provide MS & DE with a list of PHD programmes in the area, and they will circulate this information with the minutes.

Action: At the next meeting, MS/DE will provide information of start-ups rates in Swindon compared to other areas of the UK

7. Schedule of future meetings

The next meeting will be held at **(TBC)** at 10.00am on Tuesday 10th April.