

# Swindon Enterprise Group

**Note of meeting held on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2008**

**Beard Construction, Faraday Road, Dorcan**

## **In Attendance:**

Daphne Milner, GWE (Chair)  
Gerry Reilly, FSB  
Roger Wilkins, Business Link  
Mark Beard, Beard Construction  
Stella  
Steve Causer, SwinCity  
Peter Beech-Allen, GWE  
David Evans, Swindon BC (minutes)

## **Apologies:**

Phil Merrick, John Bennett, Pete Manley, Rob Harman

### **1. Minutes of last meeting on 4 March 2008**

Approved as an accurate record.

### **2. Matters arising**

2.1 DE to write to GR to ask the FSB to adopt the Business Charter

3.4 PM to prepare item for the next meeting covering:

- EU Competitiveness Programme
- Recent Regional Innovation event

4 DE to drop GR a note asking the FSB for free year's membership for the top three New Business Competition finalists

4.1 DE to drop RH a note asking the Chamber for free year's membership for the top three New Business Competition finalists

### **3. Review of recent and ongoing projects:**

#### **i. Innovation workshop**

The workshop took place on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2008. PBA introduced the report saying that attendance was relatively poor – 14 attendees. Two likely causes for that; firstly because the initiative is breaking new ground and businesses are not accustomed to this kind of support; and secondly, poor support from amongst partners within the SSEP. Excellent feedback was received from the businesses that did attend.

MB felt that the Workshop did not offer good value for money.

#### **ii Enterprise Day**

DE reported that the first Enterprise Day, held on 25<sup>th</sup> April was overall a big success. Feedback from the participants – including the 47 students and the 20 businesses was generally good. A small group comprising the main organisers of the event will be meeting on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> to review the event, and to make recommendations on how to take the project forward.

DM and PBA commented that the event created a good platform for further work with young people on enterprise, although the subject should be built in earlier to their curriculum. In taking the project forward it is also important to engage the schools that did not attend on 25/4.

**Action: DE to feedback sub-group's review of the first Enterprise Day to the next meeting with recommendations on how to progress the initiative.**

**ii. Mentoring Programme**

PBA reported that GWE has so far recruited 5 mentors on to the programme, and he is confident to reach the agreed outputs by the end of May. The meeting discussed the difficulties in raising awareness of business support initiatives amongst small businesses.

**iii. Swindon Business Charter**

MB reported that this initiative has made good progress recently and that the Deputy Chief Executive of the Borough Council, Celia Carrington, is committed to implementing it. The Charter will be launched at a breakfast meeting of major businesses and SBC on 26<sup>th</sup> June at STEAM.

**Action: DE to extend an invitation to the Business Charter launch to the Enterprise Group.**

**iv. Swindon New Business Competition**

DE explained that he intends taking the project forward in partnership with the FSB, and that it will be rolled out during May with the intention of raising awareness of it during the Summer. It was felt that it is important to tie the competition in with Newsquest's business awards scheme.

**Action: DE to coordinate a working group comprising himself, SC, RW and GR to progress the project, including how to tie it in to the Newsquest's competition.**

**4. Agenda for 2008/09**

GR introduce the item, explaining some of the issues that small businesses face in Swindon. They include:

- Procurement, and the difficulties supplying to Swindon Borough Council and to other large organisations. Buy Wiltshire – the web based portal to public sector contracts in Wiltshire and Swindon – should be rebranded Buy Swindon.

- Community Radio. This provides an opportunity to engage the public in businesses and to promote Swindon companies.
- Networking. The FSB would benefit from a rolling events programme so that they have ample notice of forthcoming events.

The group then discussed:

- the need to increase the number of medium sized businesses. The *Beacon Companies* project brings together like-minded companies to share and resolve common problems, and would be worth introducing into Swindon.
- the need to encourage the growth of 10-30 people companies to the next level.
- how to extend the support available to 1 and 2 people companies, making existing support more relevant to businesses.
- The opportunities created for small businesses out of networking with other like-minded and similar businesses.
- The importance of innovation, particularly facing the demise of the Innovation Centre this Summer.
- The need to raise awareness of the quality of businesses in Swindon.

It was agreed that the list will be prioritised at the next meeting [**long list appended below**]

## **6. Date of Next Meeting**

**Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> June, 2.30 to 5.00 at GWE offices, Emlyn Square**

# Swindon Enterprise Group

## Long-list of Priorities for 2008/09

### Stimulating enterprise amongst Young People

- Continuing the Enterprise Days events
- Investigating the feasibility of a Young People's Enterprise Centre

### Encouraging innovation

- Continuing the Innovation Workshops
- Liaison with UWE over the provision of an Innovation Centre in its new campus

### Enhancing local supply chains, through local procurement by big organisations

- Meet the Buyer' event with Heads of Procurement from large organisations
- Making it easier for local businesses to supply to Swindon Borough Council (incl. through adaptation of the Buy Wiltshire website).

### Encouraging the growth of small/medium businesses (around 10-30 employees)

- Strengthening the Beacon Networks collaboration in Swindon

### Enabling networking and resource-sharing amongst micro and small businesses

- Supporting sectoral networks to stimulate peer learning and networking

### Raising awareness of the support available to start-ups and small businesses

- Working through Business Link increase the demand within Swindon for its services
- Swindon New Business Competition

### Raising awareness of the quality of businesses in Swindon