

Swindon Enterprise Group

Tuesday 5th February 2008

Beard Construction, Faraday Road, Dorcan

Present:

Mark Beard (MB) - Beard Construction (Chair)
Gerry Reilly (GR) – Federation of Small Businesses
Rob Harman (RH) – Morris Owen and Swindon Chamber of Commerce
John Bennett (JB) – Young Enterprise
Phil Merrick (PM) – Swindon Innovation Centre and Swindon Chamber
David Evans (DE) – Swindon Borough Council

Apologies:

Daphne Milner (DM) - GWE
Pete Manley (PM) - SWRDA
Peter Beech-Allen (PBA) - GWE
Roger Wilkins (RW) - Business Link
Emma Faramarzi (EF) – Federation of Small Businesses
Steve Causer (SC) – Swin City/Frequency

1) Introduction to new members

RH and GR were welcomed to their first Enterprise Group meeting.

2) Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

A note had been circulated since the last meeting setting out the types of business that attended the November launch. It was noted that many of the attendees were business support companies, rather than wealth creators.

Swindon Business News will shortly be publishing its list of the Top100 Swindon companies.

Action: DE to liaise with Sinclair Brown over taking space in the Swindon Business News February edition.

The meeting discussed the relative pros and cons of re-running the Swindon New Business Competition.

Action: DE to submit a report to the next meeting with a proposed way forward.

3) Progress on the Group's priorities:

3.1 Young People and Enterprise

JB gave an update of progress in organising the Enterprise Days events, the first of which is being planned for late April. The Sub Group met on 31st January and is now at detailed delivery stage. Three outstanding actions to be progressed:

- Engaging the Schools – JB leading with support from schools' reps.
- Booking the venue – DE/Matt Spencer to arrange
- Business involvement – JB coordinating. The event will need around 25 to 30 business people, mostly to provide specialist advice to the young people, but also to serve as dragons on the final Board. The Enterprise Group has a key role to play in identifying local business people to take part in the day.

Actions:

- **RH to contact South West Angels Investment Network to encourage one or two of their 'Angels' to take part.**
- **RH to liaise with the other Chamber Board members over their involvement**
- **DE to liaise with the Advertiser over its coverage and possible sponsorship.**

MB requested that participating companies be given the opportunity to display their own promotional literature.

- **Action: DE to ensure that tables are provided for businesses to display literature.**

4.2 Business Networks & Mentoring

DE introduced the background report, summarising the progress made by GWE on delivery of the project. Report noted.

4.3 Innovation

DE introduced the background report, summarising the progress made by GWE on delivery of the project. The Innovation event for businesses will be held on Thursday 27th March at STEAM.

The meeting discussed both projects and was keen to ensure that satisfactory progress is being made in delivering both.

Action: DE and PM to meet with the organiser of both the Mentoring and the Innovation projects at the earliest opportunity to emphasise the need to make good progress.

4) **Business Charter**

DE handed around the latest draft of the Charter, which is scheduled to be presented to Swindon Borough Council's Director's Team, and Cabinet during March. It was agreed that a launch event should be held during April to raise the profile of the initiative and to demonstrate business buy-in to the Charter. The meeting discussed the Charter and agreed that it has much merit. Following adoption by both the Council and local companies, the Charter should be reviewed annually.

5) **Relevance of the Group to SMEs**

MB asked GR and RH for their views of the relevance of the Enterprise Group. Both could see that the group is relevant to small business needs.

6) **Local Procurement**

DE explained that the Council is committed to encouraging local procurement, albeit it is restricted by legislation on giving preferential treatment to local suppliers. In February 2007 the Council organised an event for local suppliers to find out about Council

contracts, which was very well attended. It is DE's intention to repeat that event, perhaps in partnership with other large organisations.

Action: DE to propose a series of initiatives to the Management Board, which would include local procurement, as part of a programme to build a 'carbon-friendly' economy.

7) Swindon Innovation Centre

(PM declared a personal interest in this item)

DE introduced a report which sought a steer on the future of the Innovation Centre in Swindon, following the closure of the University of Bath's facility in June 2008. The Council organised a meeting in December of the key potential funding and operating partners. Whilst there was agreement amongst at that meeting that an Innovation Centre is needed in Swindon, a clear funding strategy could not be identified, particularly in the short term and prior to UWE investing in the Borough. The Enterprise Group noted the report and requested the Council to continue to seek funding for the project.

8) Any Other Business

- 8.1 DE mentioned that he is compiling a calendar of business events to augment the SSEPs website. Members were requested to inform him of any forthcoming business events of which they become aware.

Actions:

- **DE to add calendar of business events to SSEP website.**
- **All to inform DE of forthcoming business events, for inclusion on the website.**

- 8.2 A SSEP newsletter is shortly to be issued, summarising the projects and activities currently underway within the partnership.

Action: DE to ensure that the newsletter is forwarded to the Thames Valley Chamber, and to the FSB for distribution to their members.

9) Date of Next Meeting – Tuesday 4th March