

Inward Investment Committee

2.30pm, 17th January 2008,

The New Swindon Company offices

Minutes

Present

James Lockhart (JL) –Whitmarsh Lockhart **(Chair)**

Barry Lingard (BL) – Barry Lingard Associates/Swindon Chamber

Carol Heneghan (CH) – Marketing Manager, New Swindon Company

Matt Spencer (MS) – Economic Projects Officer, Swindon Borough Council

Bill Cotton (BC) – Director of Economic and Cultural Development, Swindon
Borough Council

Dave Potter (DP) – Director of Planning and Transport Strategy

1) Welcome and Apologies

JL welcomed the members of the group.

Apologies had been received from Lawrence Murphy (LM), Peter James (PJ) and George Humphreys (GH)

2) Membership of the Inward Investment Committee (IIC)

The IIC consists of BC, PJ, BL, MS, LM and DP. GH will be included as appropriate.

3) Confirmation of the Membership of the 'Greeting Committee'

The Greeting Committee exists to meet and greet inward investors. The committee consists of - diary permitting and also depending on the enquiry – Bill Cotton, Dave Potter, Rod Bluh, Gavin Jones and Councillor Philip Young. If the committee is required to meet an inward investor then an email will be sent to the committee's members asking if they are free. A venue must be found that has easy parking and provides easy access.

Action: MS to produce membership list of the Greeting Committee, including emails and telephone numbers

4) Property Agents Meeting

JL informed the group that representatives from all four of Swindon's main property agents (Loveday and Loveday, King Sturge, Alder King and Whitmarsh Lockhart) met on 9th January and that the meeting generated an enthusiastic response among its attendees. The attendees were more than happy to include any future Swindon branding on their corporate literature. JL confirmed that he would call another meeting of this group.

5) Current Enquiries

i. HQ Office Requirement (HQOR) 30,000ft²

JL confirmed that (HQOR) are either going to create a new headquarters in Manchester, Leeds or Swindon. However, the company is worried about the availability of staff in Swindon for call centre, IT, sales and administrative positions and they also feel that Swindon is expensive for housing and employment, with Swindon's near-zero rate of unemployment actually being a disadvantage. A decision is due by the end of February, with the company moving to their new location early 2009 (in anticipation of a company-wide implementation of a new IT system in April 2009). JL added that a 26,000 sq ft floor in the Tri-Centre will be available soon, which could possibly be of interest to (HQOR)

ii. Dyson School of Design Innovation

BC informed the group that the Council is still awaiting Dyson's decision. Site surveys have already been conducted at North Star and the Property Services Team can dispose of the site quickly.

iii. German Company Warehouse requirement

JL informed the group that he had received an enquiry for a 150,000 sq ft warehouse. JL submitted details of Keypoint but the manufacturer couldn't take the risk of the premises not being ready to move into by July so they are unlikely to move to Swindon.

iv. Vodafone

BC confirmed that Rod Bluh is trying to speak to Vodafone's Property Director. Possible options for a potential relocation include Windmill Hill and Union Square.

- v. *Nissin UK*
JL informed the group that Nissin want to expand their South Marston operations but the presence of an oak tree is impeding this process. The group agreed that Nissin should be able to make a financial contribution to the Community Forest to alleviate the loss of the oak tree.
- vi. *Mercury Square*
BC informed the group that he has received contact from an Innovation Centre-based company called Mercury Square. They currently have 2/3 people working for them but they may need 50-70 people if their planned business expansion takes shape.
- vii. *Horseworld*
BC informed the group that Horseworld are looking at establishing a large-scale tourist attraction in the area.

6) Marketing Group

- i. *Budget Update*
CH informed the group that the Marketing Plan went to the NSC Board and will now go to the SSEP Board in February. In order to deliver the Marketing Plan, the Marketing Group is looking for substantial, long-term funding in the region of £250,000 per annum. There needs to be an agreement on the necessary processes and then the Marketing Group can look at the sources of the funding.
- ii. *Property Week feature 6th June (Thames Valley)*
CH informed the group that Bath, Swindon and Bristol are advertising in the South West edition of Property Week (due at the end of February) but that Swindon should also be looking at advertising in the Thames Valley edition on the 6th June. JL will circulate contact names for the feature and the Marketing Group could take this forward.

Action: JL will circulate contact names to CH

7) Michael Shirley – Embassy Contact

JL informed the group that Michael Shirley has contact with senior people from various embassies in London. These contacts regularly get calls from colleagues in their own countries who ask for names of towns that

they can recommend to inward investors. JL suggested that the Marketing Group could follow this up.

8) Any other Business

CH showed the group an article from the Swindon Advertiser, which mentions that travel costs to Swindon (particularly rail costs) inhibit inward investment. The Marketing Group needs to understand potential barriers to inward investment and how to overcome them.

9) Date of Next meeting

2pm, 21st February 2008, at the New Swindon Company