

## Note of Meeting

### SWINDON STRATEGIC ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

THURSDAY, 25 JANUARY 2007

**Present:** Mr Rikki Hunt (Chair) (Hunt For It), Ms Jill Annal (Job Centre Plus), Mr Mark Beard (Beard Construction), Mr Peter Beech-Allen (GWE), Mr Mike Bowden (Swindon Town Football Club), Mr Bill Cotton (Director of Economic Development, Swindon Borough Council), Mr Peter James (New Swindon Company), Ms Sally Pettipher (Science Museum Swindon), Mr Andy Reeve (Business Link Berkshire and Wiltshire), Mr Steve Richards (South West RDA), Mr James Taljaard (Arts and Business South West), Mr Mark Waldron (Swindon Evening Advertiser), Ms Sue Watkins (Learning and Skills Council) and Councillor Philip Young (Lead Member, Swindon Borough Council).

Mr David Evans (Economic Development Manager, Swindon Borough Council).

**Apologies:** Mrs Celia Carrington (Group Director Environment and Leisure, Swindon Borough Council), Mr Mike Godfrey (Honda), Mr Neil Holt (Halcrow Ltd), Ms Caroline Lewis (Wiltshire and Swindon Economic Partnership), Mr Huw Lloyd Jones (Government Office South West) and Ms Daphne Milner (GWE / Business Link).

<b>1.</b>	<b>Minutes of the last meeting</b>	
	<p>The minutes of the meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2006 were agreed.</p> <p><u>Matters Arising</u> – Further to Minute 6, the Chair confirmed that the production of the Terms of Reference for the Employment and Skills Board were on hold until the Partnership's terms of reference and framework were established.</p>	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Establishing the Organisation - proposal for consideration</b>	
	<p>Bill Cotton presented suggested Terms of Reference for the Swindon Strategic Economic Partnership for discussion, including purpose, membership and governance.</p> <p>It was intended that the Partnership would be the strategic overarching body, with four sub-groups reporting to it focused upon Business Growth and Creation, Regenerating and Creating Places, Image and Culture, and Skills and Labour Market. It was agreed that the overarching partnership should comprise no more than 10-12 people (each with up to 2 designated alternates), and with at least half from the business community representing both medium and major-sized businesses. It was important that all sectors in Swindon were represented by the partnership structure, but that the level at which they were involved was key. It was agreed that the partnership would meet bi-monthly for first 6-9 months while being established. Mr Andy Read and Mr James Taljaard felt that their contributions may best be made in the appropriate Sub-Group.</p> <p><b>Agreed that –</b></p> <p>1) Bill Cotton circulate a revised terms of reference to Members of the Partnership for comments and for Members to advise their preferred level of involvement.</p>	<b>BC</b>

	2) Bill Cotton present an agreed structure and terms of reference to the next meeting for ratification.	<b>BC</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Partnership Delivery Plan 2007/08 - proposal for consideration</b>	
	<p>David Evans presented that first version of the Partnership Delivery Plan, setting out the work streams within the four key strands underpinning the Swindon Economic Development Vision and Framework. A key role for the partnership would be regular monitoring of how these strands were supporting the delivery of Local Area Agreement (LAA) outcomes, and it was agreed that in all areas clear and simple outcomes were required against which delivery of partnership aims could be measured.</p> <p>In relation to the strand 'Business Creation and Growth, it was agreed that a key purpose should be enabling medium sized businesses to scale up, as well as supporting business creation. Events would be held later in the year to attract businesses to become involved with the partnership, but prior to this, there should be clarification of the roles which businesses would be asked to play.</p> <p>It was recognised that the 'Regenerating and Creating Places' strand was concerned with drawing together the range of organisations currently fulfilling this role, and challenging in order to direct activity towards the shared vision and economic outcomes for Swindon.</p> <p>In relation to the 'Image and Culture' strand the role would be to co-ordinate and monitor activities and to build towards the borough being recognised as a national destination for business, culture and leisure.</p> <p>Sue Watkins confirmed that the Learning and Skills Council would play a key role in co-ordinating the 'Skills and Labour Market' strand, and with the inclusion of employer representation, this sub-group could become the formal 'Employment and Skills Board'.</p> <p>David Evans confirmed that the intention was for strong sub-groups to be established for each of the strands prior to the next partnership meeting.</p> <p><b>Agreed that</b> – David Evans report back to the next meeting with the next stage of the Partnership Delivery Plan.</p>	<b>DE</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Partnership Capacity Development - proposal for consideration</b>	
	<p>Bill Cotton advised that £50k had been offered by the South West Regional Development Agency (SWRDA) to build the capacity of the Partnership. This sum would need to be matched locally from Swindon Borough Council Economic Development Budgets and other Partner Contributions. Sue Watkins confirmed that the LSC could contribute £2k per annum and (some in kind) towards this target.</p> <p>The Partnership supported the suggested activities for the fund, in particular its use for communicating and engaging with local businesses and other organisations. Steve Richards (SWRDA) advised that there were opportunities for further funding during this year on the basis of individual businesses cases, although funding after 2008 would become more difficult.</p> <p><b>Agreed that</b> –</p> <p>1) The Director of Economic Development be delegated to negotiate with SWRDA and agree a Partnership Development Plan</p>	<b>BC</b>

	SWRDA and agree a Partnership Development Plan. 2) The Partnership receive a regular report on expenditure.	<b>BC</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Swindon Enterprise Group - verbal update</b>	
	David Evans reported on the first meeting of the Swindon Enterprise Group, which had taken place earlier this week. The initial meeting had been focused on role and terms of reference. A workshop would be held next month to focus on the needs of start up businesses, priorities for the Group and a gap analysis of current activities. Mark Beard agreed to become involved with and support the work of the Swindon Enterprise Group.	<b>MB</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>Swindon China Proposal - proposal for consideration</b>	
	Bill Cotton informed the Partnership of a proposal for a China Partnership Initiative, based around Shenzhen in Guangdong Province, which would enable Swindon businesses to expand in China and facilitate Chinese investment in Swindon. The link proposed was a partnership in conjunction with Bath and North East Somerset Council and the University of Bath. The paper advised on the organisational structure for such an initiative, key facts on Shenzhen, and the advantages and disadvantages of a joint bid.  The Partnership recognised the benefits of joining with Bath for this initiative. <b>Agreed that –</b> 1) The Partnership supports the creation of a China Partnership Initiative. 2) The China Partnership Initiative be added to the agenda for the Swindon Enterprise Group and links be made to the Bath Enterprise Group. SWRDA and the Shenzhen authorities to establish the partnership.	<b>BC</b> <b>DE</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>Business Charter Proposal - proposal for consideration</b>	
	The Partnership received a proposal for a Swindon Business Charter, to enhance communication between the Borough Council and businesses, and to provide a vehicle to engage the business community on how it does business with the Council.  It was agreed it was important to engage with businesses on what type of 'offer' and services the Borough Council should provide to the business community, and to support businesses to do more for the local community. It was suggested that a survey style approach via the Enterprise Group could provide a benchmark against which to measure progress, but there was some concern this might not encourage the constructive dialogue and partnership working with business, which it was hoped would be at the heart of the Charter. <b>Agreed that –</b> The Partnership supports the preparation by the Borough Council of a Swindon Business Charter, and Bill Cotton present a draft framework to the next meeting.	<b>BC</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>Regional Update - presentation</b>	
	David Evans reported on the most recent meeting of the Strategic Economic Partnerships' Forum with the South West Regional Development Agency. The Forum would be meeting 3-4 times a year and aimed to improve co-ordination between economic partnerships and regional agencies, sharing good practice, and enabling SEP input to policy development. At the last	

	<p>meeting, it had been agreed that there would be a Chair's Forum for each regional SEP for policy led debate, and a supported executive forum for policy discussion and delivery. In addition, SWRDA had agreed to hold an annual stakeholders meeting in each of the sub-regions with local business representatives.</p> <p>The Partnership recognised that this was an opportunity to influence as well as respond to policy, such as the Regional Spatial Strategy. It also gave opportunity for Swindon businesses to understand where funding was being provided for developments in other parts of the South West, and to engage where there are skills shortages in those areas, to benefit the Swindon economy via regional funding decisions.</p> <p><b>Agreed that</b> – The Partnership receive regular updates on the work of the Strategic Economic Partnerships Forum.</p>	<b>DE</b>
<b>9.</b>	<b>Digital City Seminar - verbal update</b>	
	<p>Bill Cotton advised that a Digital City Seminar had been held on 9<sup>th</sup> January, attended by 70 people, to discuss how digital technology could support Local Area Agreement (LAA) delivery. It was established that there was a need to address both a 'top down view', for example a strategy for establishing the infrastructure required for a Wireless City, and the need to consider a 'bottom up view', for example what digital technology can be used for in schools. As a result of the seminar, a Digital Forum is being established to draw up the strategy, and identify the issues that could be addressed through digital technology. In addition, a technical board is being established to understand what technology is available and what it can deliver. A website would be set up in the next 4 weeks and Bill Cotton agreed to send a link to all Partnership members.</p>	<b>BC</b>
<b>10.</b>	<b>Swindon Hoteliers Dinner - 22 February 2007 - for information</b>	
	<p>David Evans advised that an Hoteliers Dinner had been planned for 22<sup>nd</sup> February, but now might not go ahead. The dinner was being organised by the Swindon Hoteliers' Forum, and would provide an excellent opportunity to celebrate Swindon business. He would circulate details to members of the Partnership of any future events of this nature. It was agreed this was not a matter for the Partnership directly, but that if local businesses were to be involved it was important that it was marketed and priced appropriately.</p>	<b>DE</b>
<b>11.</b>	<b>Future dates for information</b>	
	<p>It was noted that meetings of the Partnership had been scheduled for 29 March, 24 May, 26 July, 27 September and 29 November 2007.</p>	
<b>12.</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
	<p>It was agreed that the Partnership agenda should include a standing update on the work of the South West Regional Development Agency.</p>	<b>SR</b>

# SWRDA / Strategic Economic Partnerships Forum

- SEP Chairs' Forum

- Quarterly meeting between SEP Chairs (with support from managers) and senior RDA staff, incl. Chair and Chief Executive to discuss policy issues

- SEP Executives' Forum

- Quarterly meeting between SEP Partnership managers and senior RDA staff to discuss operational issues

# SWRDA / Strategic Economic Partnerships Forum

- Meetings on 10 & 11 January 2007
- South Devon College, Paignton
- Attended by Rikki Hunt and David Evans

# Agenda Items

- Executive:
  - 1. Local Government White Paper
  - 2. Economic Inclusion
  - 3. ‘From SRPs to SEPs’
- Board:
  - 4. SEP / SWERDA Working Relationships
  - 5. The South West Great Debates
  - 6. The Leitch Review of Skills
  - 7. Changes to EU Funding Programmes

# 1. Local Government White Paper

Huw Lloyd Jones, GOSW

- Changing relationship between local authorities and Central Government
- The role of LAAs in setting a new performance framework
- The need for effective, accountable and responsive local government
- Stronger cities and City regions

## 2. Economic Inclusion

Sandra Rothwell, SWRDA

- Economic inclusion part of delivering Sustainable Communities and Sustainable Development
- Need to integrate deprived communities within the wider economic system
- Embedded in the Regional Economic Strategy and SWRDA Corporate Plan

# 3. SEP/SWRDA Working Relationships

Forum Discussion

- Context:
  - Changing policy environment (LAAs, Local Govt White Paper, Regional Spatial & Economic Strategies, etc)
  - Recognise the need to change working relationship between RDA, other regional bodies and local partners
  - Need to enhance coordination of policy and delivery

# SEP/SWRDA Working Relationships

- **SEP Chairs' Forum (3/4 times per year)**
  - to improve communications and partnership between the key regional bodies and the sub regions. It will provide focus for high level regional consultation, communications and exchange.
- **SEP Executives' Forum (4/5 times per year)**
  - to support, advise and deliver the decisions of the SEP Chair's Forum
- **Annual Regional focus meeting with each SEP**

# 5. South West Great Debates

Simon Hooton, SWRDA



[www.swdebates.info](http://www.swdebates.info)

# FIVE ISSUES

- securing economic growth within environmental limits
- a growing, ageing and more diverse population
- energy challenges
- competitive threats and opportunities from globalisation
- regional leadership

# DEBATES TIMETABLE

Environmental limits	Sept 06	9 - 15 months
Energy	Jan 07	9 - 12 months
Population change	Mar 07	9 - 12 months
Globalisation	May 07	9 - 12 months
Regional leadership	Jul 07	9 - 12 months

[www.swdebates.info](http://www.swdebates.info)

# Leitch Review of Skills

Juliet Williams, SWRDA

Prosperity for all in the  
Global Economy –  
World Class Skills

December 2006

# The Leitch Review

- “The UK must urgently raise achievements at all levels of skills ...become a world leader in skills by 2020. This means doubling attainment at most levels of skill.”
- Focus needs to be on ‘economically valuable skills’.

# Leitch Review:

## Main recommendations:

- **Increase people's aspirations and awareness of the value of skills to them and their families**
- **Increased employer engagement and investment in skills (incl. reform, relicence and empower Sector Skills Councils (SSC))**
- **Route all public funding for adult vocational skills in England, apart from community learning, through Train to Gain and Learner Accounts by 2010.**

# 7. Changes to EU Funding Programmes

Phil McVey, SWRDA

EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL FUNDS

2007 – 2013

Convergence  
Competitiveness  
and Employment

# South West Competitiveness Programme 2007-2013

1. Increasing productivity through innovation, research and development
2. Reduce intra regional disparities
3. Reduce the levels of worklessness
4. Reducing carbon emissions, moving towards a low carbon economy

# Priorities for Swindon

**Overall budget: £120m**

**Although the competitiveness programme is region wide, the limited budget will probably be targeted at:**

- **Region wide initiatives**
- **Areas of greatest need**