

Swindon Strategic Economic Partnership

Policy Group

Note of meeting held on Monday 9th March 2009

Premier House, Swindon

In Attendance:

Joanne Taylor-Stagg, Marriott Hotel and Swindon Chamber of Commerce (Chair)
David Evans, Swindon BC, Economic Development
Tiso Fiaola, Swindon BC, Economic Development
James Griffin, Swindon BC, Policy
Sherryl Bellfield, Halcrow
Tom Beaverman, Halcrow
Jill Annall, Job Centre Plus
Peter Beech Allen, GWE Business West

Apologies:

None

1. Purpose of the Meeting

DE gave an overview of the purpose of the Policy, pointing to the Priorities given to the group by the SSEP Management Board – attached. The membership and subject matter of the group is flexible, and DE asked the members to think about other people who might usefully contribute to the matter under discussion.

2. Impact of the Recession on Swindon

The group considered a paper compiled by TF, which sets out the limited up-to-date intelligence available to analyse the local impact of the recession. That intelligence is circulated on a monthly basis, drawing upon the monthly Job Seeker Allowance statistics any publicly announced major redundancies. The paper also summarises activities that the SSEP has introduced in response to the recession. JA pointed out the need for better communication to businesses of the support available.

The group recognised that Swindon businesses themselves are in the best place to provide intelligence on the recession, and that the group could usefully survey Swindon businesses with the following aims:

1. To identify which sectors and types/sizes of business are currently suffering, so that support can be targeted at those businesses.
2. To ascertain the severity of the difficulties
3. To identify how business support services can most effectively assist businesses.
4. To signpost businesses that are suffering to appropriate sources of assistance

PBA offered GWEs support to the group to turn the questionnaire into an electronic format.

It was agreed that the research would be distributed electronically by those partners with business contacts – ie Chamber, SSEP, FSB, Business Link – with respondents filling in the questionnaire on to a single form on the SSEP website.

It was also agreed that the research would be managed by DE/TF, should be introduced as soon as possible, and repeated on a monthly basis in order to provide trends.

A plan for the research project is attached.

Monthly findings from the research should be posted on the SSEP website in order to provide feedback for partners and businesses.

Actions:

- **DE/TF to draft up project plan and draft questionnaire to circulate for comment, by 13 March. All to respond to that consultation by Tuesday 17 March**
- **DE/TF to design electronic questionnaire for completion on SSEP website to go live by 1st April.**

3. 2009 Economic Assessment

DE explained that from 2010 the Borough Council will have a statutory duty to undertake the preparation and consultation on an Economic Assessment for the Borough. Aside from that the annual Economic Assessment is a vehicle to analyse the local economy, looking at trends and comparing with other, similar Boroughs. TF has commenced preparation of an Assessment for 2009, which will act as a dry run for the 2010 version. He is also engaged in discussions at the regional level over what the Assessment needs to include.

TF spoke briefly to a mock up of the 2009 Economic Assessment, and asked members to let him their views on the approach to be taken. The draft document will be prepared, ready for consultation, by the end of April.

Action:

- **All members to review mock up of the 2009 Economic Assessment and get back to TF with comments by Friday 13th March.**

4. Date of Next meeting:

Tuesday 14th April, 2.30 at Premier House

Project Plan to undertake research amongst businesses to inform support intervention during the current recession

Aim of the Research

To identify the needs Swindon businesses during the current recession, and to inform intervention by SSEP partners.

Objectives:

1. To identify which sectors and types/sizes of business are currently suffering, so that support can be targeted at those businesses.
2. To ascertain the severity of the difficulties
3. To identify how business support services can most effectively assist businesses.
4. To signpost businesses that are suffering to appropriate sources of assistance

Methodology:

Project will be sponsored by the SSEP Policy Group, and delivered by the Economic Development team of the Borough Council (led by Tiso Fiaola).

Activity	By when	Who
Project designed and initiated by Policy Group	9 Mar 09	
Questionnaire drafted along with Project plan & circulated to Policy Group	13 Mar 09	TF / DE
Policy Group to amend/approve questionnaire and plan	17 Mar 09	Policy Grp
Questionnaire to be drafted electronically and put on SSEP website	1 Apr 09	TF
Advertorial to be purchased in Advertiser	1 Apr 09	DE/TF
All partners (FSB, Chamber, Business Link, SSEP) to circulate email to databases asking them to take part in survey	3 Apr 09	Relevant partners
'Closure' of April questionnaire and analysis of results	13 Apr 09	TF

Findings to be reported to Policy Group meeting on 14th April, and posted on SSEP website.

