

Swindon Strategic Economic Partnership
Policy Group

Notes of meeting held on
Friday 18th April 2008

Premier House, Swindon

In attendance:

Sue Watkins	W&S Learning & Skills Council
Jill Annal	Job Centre Plus
James Griffin	Swindon BC (Policy)
Peter Beech-Allen	GWE
Geoff Bartlett	Business Link
Ernesto Gomez	Swindon BC (Economic Development)
David Evans	Swindon BC (Economic Development)
Lynn Forrester	Swindon BC (Policy)
Peter Snowman	Swindon BC (Economic Development)

Apologies:

Alan Fletcher	Swindon Chamber
Amanda Timms	Nationwide
Pete Manley	South West RDA

1. Notes of Last Meeting, and matters arising

Accepted as an accurate record, with no matters arising. It was noted that Alan Fletcher has recently stood down from the Chamber of Commerce Council.

Action: DE to confirm AF's role in the group, and circulate an update.

2 Local Area Agreement I Update

- 2.1 PS updated the meeting on progress against resolving difficulties with the Government Office over measuring the delivery of the two indicators to which Performance Reward Grant is relevant.
- 2.2 Outcome 2 Indicator 1 – Achievement of NVQ Level II. This measure is now back on track and we are optimistic to achieve the stretch target
- 2.3 Outcome 4 Indicator 2 – Economic Activity Rates. This measure takes the decennial Census as its baseline, which was agreed with the GOSW at the outset. It now appears that that baseline is not appropriate so the indicator cannot be achieved. The group agreed that negotiations with the GOSW need to continue, and that it may be appropriate for the LAA Partnership Board to get directly involved.

Action: PS and JA to continue discussions with the GOSW to resolve the dispute.

- 2.4 DE asked whether we should carry on measuring non-PRG Performance Indicators, and it was recognised that some have more relevance than others. He also explained that there is a need to identify a set of local indicators to complement LAAl and LAAll PIs to enable the more effective measurement of the partnership's performance in relation to its own priorities (namely, Growth and Regeneration, Business Diversification, and Economic Inclusion & Skills).

Action: EG to summarise all Performance Indicators and circulate to the group, for prioritisation at the next meeting. Summary to include suggestions for additional local PIs.

3. Local Area Agreement II Update

PS informed the group of the latest situation in agreeing stretch targets for the two National Indicators, which will make up the Economic Development and Enterprise block of the LAAll, and which will have stretch targets.

- 3.1 NI 153: Benefit Claimants in the Area's Worst Performing Neighbourhoods
At a recent meeting with the GOSW it was suggested that all local areas should aim for a 1% reduction in the number of benefit claimants. JA informed the meeting both of which benefits are relevant to the indicator, and her strategy for achieving the stretch target. It was noted that 1% equates to approximately 120 people.

- 3.2 NI 164: Achievement of NVQ Level III qualifications
The GOSW has recently issued a proposal that stretch targets for this indicator should aim to bring local performance up to the UK average. Currently 44.9% of Swindon residents are qualified to NVQ III or above, compared to the national target of 56%. GOSW has proposed therefore an annual increase of 3%. It was noted that current achievement is around 0.6%, and it was agreed that the GOSW proposal seemed completely unrealistic.

Actions:

- i. PS & SW, and PS & JA to continue to negotiate with GOSW over the LAAll stretch targets**
- ii. JG to express the Group's concerns to GOSW over the timescale given for response to its proposal.**

- 3.3 JG updated the group on progress across the whole Strategic Partnership in confirming LAAll stretch targets, and noted that the ED&E block is making good progress in comparison to others.

4. Swindon Economic Assessment 2008

EG circulated a written update on the Economic Assessment. However, due to time constraints this item was not discussed.

Action: EG to organise separate meeting in advance of the next Policy Group meeting to discuss the Economic Assessment with interested partners.

5. Other recent policy guidance & consultations

5.1 Taking forward the Sub National Review of Economic Development & Regeneration

It was noted that the deadline for receipt of consultees' views on the SNR is mid June. Due to time constraints this item was deferred until the next meeting.

6. The Swindon Low Carbon Economy group

LF introduced this item, referring to the Draft Terms of Reference that she, DE and Amanda Timms had jointly produced for the Low Carbon Economy Group. The group's views were sought on the Terms of Reference and it was pointed out that if the group is to be successful, and if businesses are to take an involvement, it must be business focussed, ie. Creating business opportunities from reducing their carbon dependency.

The group thanked LF, AT and DE, accepted the Draft Terms of Reference, and recommended that it be considered by the Management Board at its next meeting.

Actions:

- i. **All to consider appropriate private sector nominations to sit on the group.**
- ii. **DE to submit to Management Board**