

Swindon Strategic Economic Partnership Management Board

Note of Meeting held on Thursday 17 April 2008 Civic Centre, Swindon

In Attendance: Mark Beard, Beard Construction
David Evans, Swindon Borough Council (minutes)
Rikki Hunt, Cipol Energy Ltd (Chairman)
Steve Richards, South West RDA
Robin Bailey, Nationwide
Dr Mike Pringle, Swindon Cultural Partnership
John Davies, Thring Townsend Lee & Pembertons
Bill Cotton, Swindon Borough Council
Gavin Calthrop, Swindon Borough Council

Apologies: Alan Fletcher, Swindon Chamber
Cllr Phil Young, Swindon Borough Council

1. Notes of last meeting

Approved as an accurate record of the meeting held on 21st February 2008.

Actions Outstanding:

- i. **DE to circulate SSEP submission on the RDA's Corporate Plan**
- ii. **DE to present report to the next meeting on Reducing Carbon Economy Group**
- iii. **BC to bring item on Visioning to next meeting**

2. Employment Land Availability

Lawrence Murphy presented a report on the availability of employment land in the Borough to meet the investment and expansion needs of businesses. The Board noted that sufficient land is allocated in the Local Plan to plan for the creation of 32,000 jobs over the period to 2026, although in the short term (ie. to 2011) there is likely to be a limited supply of large, serviced sites. It was recognised that there is a ready supply of town centre property, and previously developed sites, as well as smaller sites throughout the Borough. Furthermore a large site at Kingsdown would be brought forward for development should a major investor have such a demand.

The Board discussed the subject at length, and was concerned at the implications of the short term shortage on Swindon's capacity to attract major inward investors. It was recognised that the marketing messages created to attract Swindon need to be in line with the wider Vision, which will shortly be undertaken, and it was agreed that Rod Bluh and Gavin Jones be invited to the next meeting to discuss Swindon's future direction.

It was also recognised that the SSEP, through the Regeneration Group, has an important and pro-active role to play in influencing developers to bring forward that land.

Actions:

- i. **DE to invite Rod Bluh and Gavin Jones to the next meeting**
- ii. **PY and BC to consider how the Regeneration Group can take a proactive role in bringing forward employment land.**

3. Governance of the Partnership

DE presented a report, which set out 10 protocols to underpin how the partnership should operate. These covered:

- Ensuring Openness and Transparency
- Maintaining the Standards of SSEP members
- Awarding contracts

It was recognised that there needs to be a balance between the ability to deliver and accountability, and that the partnership has no legal status to spend monies on behalf of funding partners. The SSEP has been given a responsibility to direct monies toward projects and initiatives that are in accordance with funding partners' (notably the Borough Council) business plans.

The Board agreed to adopt the Protocols subject to amendment to point 8, which should be reworded to describe a more positive, enabling role.

Actions:

- i. **JD to provide a rewording of Point 8 in the Partnership Protocols.**
- ii. **DE to subsequently liaise with all Sub-Groups to ensure adherence to Protocols.**

4 Sub Group update

4.1 Cultural Partnership

MP circulated a draft Vision paper for the Cultural Partnership, which contains 10 themes and around 30 ideas. The Vision is intended to encourage the partnership to consider direction rather than process, in order to become more delivery focussed. The Vision will be refined and presented to an open meeting on 30th May, to which SSEP Board members would be welcome.

MB welcomed the document, saying that delivery of numerous small projects builds capacity and creates a platform to enable higher aspirations.

The Board accepted the Vision and acknowledged its own role in assisting MP to strengthen the Cultural Partnership's private sector representation.

Actions:

- i. **MP to circulate invites to the Board for the Cultural Partnership event on 30th May**
- ii. **All to consider appropriate business people to sit on the Cultural Partnership.**

4.2 Marketing Group

RB explained that the partnership needs to define and obtain consensus around what Swindon's product is ('the offer'), particularly in the context of the shortage of available large employment sites.

The website has moved forward; RWE and Nationwide are lending expertise to build something that is sustainable yet affordable.

Action: RB to report back to the June Board meeting

4.3 Employment and Skills Group

JD shared his frustrations over the process-driven nature of the group, which is currently dominated by the supply side of learning. As the sole private sector person on it there is a need to extend business representation, if only to enhance communications between the supply and demand sides. The E&S group recognises that there is confusion amongst businesses around the support available to them to invest in training, as well as a general apathy amongst many. A clearer definition on the support available may address some of that confusion.

Recent main projects are:

- Meeting with HR Directors in Swindon's Finance companies
- Ongoing bid to European Social Fund to enhance employer led learning.

GC suggested that John Gilbert, the Council's new Director of Education, would be a useful input to the group.

Actions:

- GC to provide JD with contact details of John Gilbert**
- All to consider potential business people to join the E&S group.**

4.4 Enterprise Group

MB summarised the group's recent activities:

- Innovation event was a poor investment of monies
- Mentoring programme was a poor investment
- Enterprise Days (25th April) looks like it will be a good investment
- The Borough Council needs to either commit fully to the Business Charter or drop it;

At the Enterprise Group's next meeting the FSB will be presenting a proposal for the group's agenda over the forthcoming year.

5. Performance Management

In light of the time constraints it was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting.

6. Major Employers Meeting

A note had been circulated to the Board earlier summarising the proposed attendance.

Action: AF to give verbal feedback on the project to the next meeting.

7. Wiltshire & Swindon Economic Forum

RH mentioned that the meeting of the forum had taken place in Devizes and that some useful issues were discussed between the Swindon and Wiltshire representatives.

8. Date of Next Meeting
Thursday 15 May 2008