

NOTES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP MEETING

30 November 2006

Present: Simone Wilding (SWERDA), Sue Watkins (LSC), Gill Annal (Job Centre Plus), Sally Petipher (Science Museum Swindon), Peter Beech Allen (GWE), Andy Reeve (Business Link), Mark Waldron (Newsquest), Peter Andrews (New Swindon Company), Mark Beard (Beard Construction), Ron Humphreys (University of Bath), Celia Carrington (SBC), Rikki Hunt (Huntfort), Bill Cotton (SBC), David Evans (SBC), Mike Godfrey (Honda), Cllr Roderick Bluh (SBC)

Action

1 Apologies received from:
Huw Lloyd Jones - GOSW, Neil Holt – Halcrow, Steve Richards-SWRDA, Caroline Lewis - WSPR

2 Selection of new Chairman

Rikki Hunt accepted the nomination as Chairman as an interim measure until a proper procedure is in place.

MB requested more rigour from the meetings, particularly in relation to the provision of the secretariat (including action focused notes, timely minutes and agenda). He also requested that the meetings start earlier.

Action: Progress mechanisms to provide effective secretariat and report to next meeting. BC

Action: Proposal for Partnership Structure to be presented at next meeting. BC

3 Notes of last meeting on 28 September 2006

Notes accepted as accurate. All actions completed or under-way

4 Update on University of Bath in Swindon proposed new campus (Ron Humphreys, Special Projects Manager, University of Bath)

Ron gave a status report on the University's proposed new campus at Commonhead and an overview of the activities of the existing Oakfield campus.

The University is aiming to submit a planning application for the

new campus in Spring 2007, and is still aiming for occupation in 2010, recognising that there are complicated issues to resolve, including the impact on the natural environment, archaeology, land ownership / release, campus area and potentially restrictive covenants. A masterplan has been received from the development consortium but the University was not consulted in its preparation. The negotiations with the developers are complex and any agreement will need the approval of its Council.

At the existing Oakfield campus the University now offers 2 undergraduate degree programmes (BSc Hons Social Work; BA Hons Early Childhood Studies) and 12 foundation degrees in association with other colleges in Swindon. Also provide CPD for local companies including financial market risk analysis for senior management at Nationwide. The Business Innovation Centre continues to turn out successful, high tech, high growth businesses (such as SiConnect and Air Semiconductors) backed by Venture Capital.

The core of the University activity at Commonhead will comprise the School for Health which will link to the adjacent Great Western Hospital, and the Institute for Integrated Industrial Innovation (i4). In order to facilitate these developments, the University has recruited a new Director of the School for Health, Professor Ken Judge and sought funding support for i4 from HEFCE, SWRDA, GOSW, EPSRC and DTI OSI. Collectively they have referred the University to existing funding streams.

The local business community has a valuable role to play by supporting the university and providing bursaries and scholarships to Swindon young people.

PA welcomed the success of the University and offered his support to the new campus.

CC said the Borough Council is happy to support I4 coming to Swindon, and suggested that the new Director of the School for Health Faculty might meet with the Chief Executive of the Joint Primary Care Trust.

On behalf of the ED&E partnership RH expressed his support for the University's proposed development, and thanked Ron for attending the meeting.

5 Economic Development Vision and Framework

BC reported that SBC's Cabinet, having been well received by business consultees, has considered the 'Vision' proposition. The Committee agreed to adopt the Proposition and progress the drafting of a full Economic Development Strategy, subject to an amendment adding construction to the list of Priority sectors

He then focused on the delivery aspects of the Strategy and outlined the proposed mechanisms for delivery of each of the four quarters of the Framework, namely:

- o Business Creation and Growth (see item below)
- o Regenerating and Creating Places
- o Image and Culture
- o Skills and Labour Market (see item below).

MB emphasised that the Partnership needs to keep an emphasis on business growth, cutting across each of the quarters.

RB stressed the importance of the climate change agenda, and that the strategy needs a specific focus on embedding this aspect in all of the partnership's work.

BC

Action: Add detail to the proposed delivery framework and present a further paper to the Partnership at its next meeting having taken on board the above comments.

6 Employment and Skills Board

SW explained the changes that have recently taken place at the Learning & Skills Council, including the move towards a regional infrastructure, which has abolished the local, sub regional boards. She proposed that a board be reintroduced for Swindon in order to re-establish the link between the LSC and the local business community, which would be charged with delivering the skills and labour market aspects of the Economic Development Strategy, including relevant LAA objectives.

The partnership discussed the proposal and agreed to set up the Employment & Skills Board, with the conditions that it is action focused, embraces a wide skill and education agenda and that the ED&E Partnership is the sponsor.

Action: Produce a Terms of Reference for the proposed Employment & Skills Board

SW

7 Swindon Enterprise Group

DE presented a paper, which presented an overview of the business climate in Swindon, and proposed the setting up of an Enterprise Group to coordinate the activities of business support organisations. The Partnership agreed to the setting up of the Group.

Action: Circulate further information on the proposed group, with a view to holding the first meeting in the New Year.

DE

8 Swindon Digital City

BC introduced a proposal to set up a Digital forum in Swindon to press ahead with the provision and exploitation of digital infrastructure, which meets the needs of Swindon businesses and residents. A forum meeting is currently being arranged for January, to be held at University of Bath, Okus Campus which representatives of the community and businesses have been invited.

PBA suggested that Wired West should be invited to the forum event, and emphasised that the initial focus should be on engaging groups that can express the actual needs of Swindon communities.

9 Wichelstowe development update

CC presented a summary of proposed population growth around Swindon, referring specifically to the Southern Development Area, named Wichelstowe.

10 Any other Business

1. SP explained that the Science Museum Swindon has been selected by DEFRA as a case study in its approach to safeguarding and enhancing the environment.
2. The South West Regional Development Agency has reviewed its support for Economic Development Partnerships in the region. At present it supports the Wiltshire and Swindon Economic Partnership financially. From April 2007 the proposal is to split this group and for Swindon to be supported directly. This recognises the need to assert Swindon as a major growth area in the South West. SWERDA is proposing capacity support of up to £50,000 per year for the Partnership – based on the

submission of a Partnership Development Plan.

Action: Partnership Development Plan to be drafted for discussion and resolution at the next meeting prior to submission to the South West RDA. BC

Proposed dates of future meetings BC
Action: BC to circulate dates of meetings in 2007