

JOINT STRATEGIC ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE JOINT STRATEGIC ECONOMIC COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 1 APRIL 2015 AT COMMITTEE ROOM B - COUNCIL OFFICES, MONKTON PARK, CHIPPENHAM SN15 1ER.

Present:

Cllr Jane Scott OBE (Chairman), Cllr David Renard (Vice Chairman), Cllr John Thomson, Cllr Brian Mattock, Cllr Fleur de Rhé-Philipe, Cllr Garry Perkins, Mrs Nicky Alberry and Mr Neil Holt

Also Present:

Cllr Chris Caswill (WC)

1 **Apologies**

An apology was received from Mr Barry Dennington, Chairman of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP).

Apologies were also received from Dr Carlton Brand, Corporate Director, and Robin Townsend, Associate Director (Corporate Function and Procurement), of Wiltshire Council.

2 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations.

3 **Terms of Reference**

The terms of reference as approved by both local authorities were noted.

4 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman welcomed those present to the first public meeting of the Joint Strategic Economic Committee (JSEC), in particular those members of the public in attendance.

It was announced that as required by the government the SWLEP had prepared an assurance framework, which had been submitted to the Department for Business, Industry and Skills (BIS) for consideration.

5 **Public Participation**

The Chairman welcomed contributions from members of the public in attendance.

Councillor Chris Caswill, Chippenham Monkton Division, Wiltshire Council, made a statement welcoming the creation of the JSEC as a step toward more accountability and visibility for the procedures of the SWLEP, and urged consideration of the priorities to be assessed and concerns and hopes of the public about potential projects, raising in particular the issue of a possible Chippenham Link Road.

Councillor Caswill had also submitted seven questions, which had been included together with responses under Agenda Supplement 1, and as a supplementary requested the SWLEP website be very clear as to the status of those council officers working in partnership with the SWLEP, but who were not formally seconded. This was taken on board, although it was stated it was important that the involvement of the senior council officers with the Secretariat work of the SWLEP should be highlighted.

Mr Steve Perry asked a question about the level of democracy that the JSEC entailed, and whether the structure the counties had been instructed to operate within was satisfactory.

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman, Councillors Jane Scott and David Renard, responded that the local authorities provided accountability for the SWLEP, and that though the LEPs were a relatively new model of working for local authorities, it was the only way to obtain further infrastructure spending into the county and in a more joined-up fashion.

It was further added that the JSEC being set up showed the government recognised the concern about a lack of democratic accountability and was taking action. Furthermore, the SWLEP was presently the only LEP in the country which also had a Scrutiny body assessing its work, through the Joint Scrutiny of the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership Task Group.

6 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Commissioning Group

Isobel Brown, Director of Partnership and Programmes for the SWLEP, presented an update on behalf of the LEP Commissioning Board on updates to the government's Local Growth Fund (LGF). As detailed in the update report, the SWLEP secured an additional £11.5m in January 2015 to a total of £141m from the fund, and at 1.93% of the total funds allocated to date, well ahead of the planning estimates of what the SWLEP had expected to receive.

Details of the projects to be funded were provided as per the report update, and it was stated that mitigating measures were in place for those where concerns had previously developed, such as match funding being secured where finance gaps had been identified.

The LGF2 had secured funding for 3 projects as detailed in the update report, and these would start to be delivered from 2016 onwards.

Further to the Chairman's announcement on the creation and submission of an assurance framework for the SWLEP, it was also stated that a process for

future projects to be suggested by members of the public would be available in due course.

Mrs Nicky Alberry, Vice-Chairman of the SWLEP, also updated the Committee regarding work to refresh the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) to ensure a robust and up-to-date plan and a portfolio of projects with which to bid for funding, as it was anticipated that whatever the result of the upcoming General Election, LEPs would continue to be the main conduit for promoting local economic growth, with future rounds of funding allocations expected.

It was stated that a working party had been set up, to be chaired by Mrs Alberry and to report to the LEP Board in May 2015, and to include new members not involved in the initial SEP preparatory work, to look into refreshing the SEP, with a focus on sectors, employment skills, colleges and further building upon the priorities of the SWLEP. It was also requested that work be undertaken to look at key performance indicators

Resolved:

To note the report, and to add a standing item to future agendas to analyse Key Performance Indicators (KPI) in relation to the activities for the SWLEP.

7 Planning Update - Commencement of Preparation of New Joint Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Wiltshire and Swindon

Alistair Cunningham (Associate Director, Economic Development and Planning, Wiltshire Council, and member of the SWLEP Secretariat) and Richard Bell (Head of Planning, Regulatory Services, Heritage and Libraries, Swindon Borough Council) presented an update on the preparation of the New Joint Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Wiltshire and Swindon.

It was stated both authorities have a history of collaborative working in relation to strategic planning including preparation of joint development plans for Minerals and Waste matters, and with cross boundary strategic planning matters during preparation of each authorities' Development Plans. Both plans have been adopted by their respective authorities, however both accepted a need for an early review to extend the plan periods beyond 2026 as part of the Inspectors' determination of the soundness of both plans.

The first step in the review process would be the preparation of a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) in co-operation with neighbouring authorities. This data would have significant cross over with the Functional Economic Market Areas (FEMA) which form the basis upon which local economic policy should be applied, and it was suggested the work be undertaken together, with the SWLEP Board funding the additional work.

The Committee discussed the proposal for delivery of the SHMA within 12 months, which would be subject to preparation begin arranged within the next 8-12 weeks, and noted the conclusion that neither authority had the resources to undertake the work on such a timescale in house. Appointing consultants to

undertaken the work would however also provide the benefit of an independent analysis. The importance of all affected local authorities to work closely together and to engage the business and development communities was also emphasised.

In response to queries about the work starting immediately but the LEP Board not being able to formally approve the request from the JSEC until May 2015, it was stated the monies could be pushed forward in anticipation of approval, given the positive indications from the Board should the JSEC be minded to recommend it.

Resolved:

To request the SWLEP Board to fund additional work leading to the identification of Functional Economic Market Areas as part of the SHMA project.

8 European Funding Update - Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWLEP) European Structural & Investment Funds (ESIF) - Progress report for Joint Strategic Economic Committee (JSEC)

Paddy Bradley (Head of Economy and Skills, Swindon Borough Council and member of the SWLEP Secretariat), presented an update on the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), a largely revenue focused investment fund of which the SWLEP received an allocation of £41m, to be focused across four themes as detailed in the report. All ESIF monies at the least being matched by either public or private means, the total investments would amount to around £88m between 2015-2023.

The Committee was informed the ways in which the SWLEP aimed to utilise the ESIF monies, and the manner in which project calls were commissioned and scoped in agreement with government departments and a shadow ESIF committee, which once all ESIF operational programmes were agreed between the government the European Commission, would become a sub-committee of the National Programme Committee. Its role is to ensure ESIF investments are locally relevant, though the final decisions will be made by the government departments acting as the managing authorities.

The Committee discussed the update and the stream of funding available, seeking details around any technical assistance available to local authorities to support the ESIF, and concerns regarding monies being provided in Euros and the impact from calculating on exchange rates on an annual basis. It was stated other funding streams had been significantly affected by exchange rate issues, and it would be looked into further and an update provided to the Committee.

It was also raised that the LEP would need to decide who the members of the ESIF Committee should be once it exits shadow form, and whether one of the SWLEP Members should be the Chairman. It was agreed to see what other authorities were doing before making a decision what approach to support.

Resolved

To note the update and request further information as detailed in the the minutes.

9 Project Update - Porton Science Park

Alistair Cunningham (Associate Director, Economic Development and Planning, Wiltshire Council and member of the SWLEP Secretariat) presented a project update regarding the Porton Science Park since the £4m commitment through the Growth Deal, and a further £2.6m provided by Wiltshire Council, and bidding for further ESIF funds.

Outline planning permission had already been granted for 355,502 sq ft of research and development accommodation, with detailed planning permission for the first phase of development. The support and evolution of the established science base and research activity at Porton and the surrounding area were long-standing goals for all partners and a key strategic priority of the SWLEP,

The Committee was informed a call would shortly be invited for projects seeking European Capital Funding via the ESIF as discussed in the previous agenda item. It was anticipated that the call would seek bids for between £2-3m, with funding confirmed by the summer of 2015.

It was confirmed there would be an open tender application to deliver the incubation centre and grow on space once funding was confirmed. , It was also stated that it was expected that the bid for funding would remain eligible if preliminary work was begun once the application was submitted.

Resolved

To note the update and request further updates as matters progressed.

10 Forward Work Plan

The proposed Forward Work Programme was noted.

11 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 18 June 2015. It was agreed to change its location to Swindon if possible.

(Duration of meeting: 9.30 - 10.30 am)

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