

ECONOMY AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 December, 2012

PRESENT: Councillor Richards (Chairman), Councillors, Hawkett, Lambert, Miss Lewis, Monger, Mordue, Patrick (in place of Mrs Davies), Mrs Phipps, Poll, Strachan, Stuchbury and Tyndall. Councillor Edmonds attended also.

1. **APOLOGIES:** Councillors Mrs Davies, Mrs Glover, M Smith and Mrs Renshell.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting on 4 September 2012 be approved as a correct record

3. THE SOUTH EAST MIDLANDS LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (SEMLEP)

Dr Ann Limb and Hilary Chipping of SEMLEP attended for this item.

Following meetings of the Economy Scrutiny Committee in January, 2012, it had been agreed that a series of specific themes should be explored further, providing an opportunity for Members to meet and discuss issues of mutual interest with external speakers.

The meeting on 4 September had represented a continuation of the theme 'What businesses want or need'. At that meeting Members had heard presentations from the Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP) and Bucks Business First (BBF). At that meeting it was agreed that the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) should be invited to present to Members.

In June 2010, the coalition Government invited areas to bid to form Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), following the abolition of the Regional Development Agencies and changes to the national business support infrastructure.

SEMLEP had been established in May 2011, one of 39 Local Enterprise Partnerships across the country, with the vision;

"By March 2015, the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership aspires to be one of the most innovative, successful and high performing local enterprise partnerships in England, as measured in overall terms, by growth in Gross Value Added per head relative to other LEPs and as demonstrated by the effective collective leadership provided by local authority and private sector partners."

Essentially, the role of LEPs is to enable Local Authorities and business representatives collectively to:

- Shape, inform and be informed by, the real needs of business;
- Develop private-sector led commercial business cases in response to national funding opportunities;
- Provide a mechanism for businesses and local authorities to lobby for an appropriate share of national resources;
- To harness the collective experience and insight of business and local authorities to focus priorities;
- To provide sustained and joined-up lobbying for business critical infrastructure (e.g. East/West Rail);
- To bring together views on how best to use funding proposals to support jobs, employment growth, skills and training and infrastructure.

SEMLEP's key objectives and some recent achievements were reported as set out below.

Objective 1: To ensure that the SEMLEP Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone successfully delivers its initial targets for new jobs and businesses by March 2013.

The Enterprise Zone was designated in July 2011. Good progress had been made throughout last year, including:

- Funding of £10m secured for the development of Castle Rail Station. It was expected that the new station would open in April 2014.
- Development had started on a number of sites - the new Carlsberg bottling plant would bring £65m of private investment and deliver 60 new jobs in 2013.
- An Innovation Centre, to be constructed in the St Peter's area later in 2013, had secured £7.5m investment and would support around 55 small businesses
- New student accommodation for the University of Northampton would be completed on the St John's site by January 2014, providing 464 rooms.
- Two contractors had been appointed to undertake a skills assessment across the Enterprise Zone funded by £100k from the Skills Funding Agency.

Objective 2: To attract new overseas business into the South East Midlands through accelerated delivery of all SEMLEP local authorities inward investment plans

- A single point of enquiry has been established for potential investors coming through UKTI and looking for locations in the SEMLEP area. AVDC is represented on the Officer steering group working with UKTI to help raise the profile of our area, sector and other unique strengths and handle enquiries.

- The Chairman had attended our Global Assistive Medical Technologies Business Summit on 4th September, when 150 academics, overseas businesses and Paralympic associations visited Stoke Mandeville Stadium.
- Working with the SEMLEP UKTI contacts, AVDC managed to secure a visit of the Rt Hon David Willetts MP, Secretary of State for Universities and Science, to the formal opening of Intel and McAfee's new global engineering centre for Cyber Security (one of four globally) in November. McAfee is also an active steering Board member Aylesbury's University Technical Centre for ICT and construction, alongside CISCO and ESRI.
- In 2011/12 SEMLEP was 6th amongst LEPs in securing 29 projects with an associated 1,090 jobs. The Board of SEMLEP heard in July 2012 that 29 enquiries had been received: 8 electronics and software, 9 from life sciences and healthcare, 7 from energy and environment, 4 from advanced engineering and 1 financial.

Objective 3: To facilitate investment in key new physical infrastructure to unlock short and medium term development across SEMLEP

- £18.7m of Growing Places Fund resources had been made available to SEMLEP in February 2012 to allocate to projects that would unlock development potential and deliver jobs. Seven projects were approved in principle including £4.4m of this fund allocated to support **Silverstone** and £1m allocated to support **East West Rail**. The seven projects would deliver a combined total of around 12,800 jobs and 7,200 homes over the next 10 years
- In July the Government announced that the electrified East West rail route linking Oxford, Milton Keynes, Aylesbury and Bedford would be delivered by Network Rail at a cost of around £500m with local authorities committed to contributing £30m to £50m
- Four transport projects within the SEMLEP area had received funding through the Government's Pinch Point initiative designed to remove bottlenecks on major roads and deliver economic benefits. These were the A43/A5 at Towcester, Junctions 9 and 10 on the M40 near Bicester and the Black Cat roundabout on the A1
- In the second wave of potential '**City Deals**', Milton Keynes had been invited to work with SEMLEP to put forward a bid to use innovative ways of delivering jobs and economic benefits for residents and businesses in Milton Keynes and the rest of the South East Midlands
- SEMLEP had been chosen by the Government as one of 4 'growth' LEPs

nationally to pilot innovative ways of working with business and government to unlock local barriers to growth SEMLEP met with the relevant Ministers and Departments on 21st November. Under both the City Deal and the pilot Growth LEP discussions, AVDC have put forward three projects receiving consideration, including the Eastern Link Road.

Objective 4: To facilitate investment in key digital infrastructure to accelerate development across SEMLEP

- A report of NGA coverage across SEMLEP, issues and opportunities had been discussed at the November 2012 Board.

Objective 5: To work with the secondary, further, higher, voluntary and community, and private sector education and training providers across SEMLEP to ensure skills outcomes match business and social enterprise needs

- Work had been undertaken by SEMLEP on the skills needs for the Northampton Enterprise Zone. Workshops have been held to identify how to progress the skills agenda, identifying sector needs across SEMLEP.

Objective 6: To support all SEMLEP local authorities to deliver their economic development plans and related activities designed to stimulate growth, engage with business and enhance SEMLEP's reputation in its showcase sectors

Members were generally supportive of the direction of the work being carried. However, there were a number of issues concerning which Members expressed a view on or commented generally, including the following:-

- Members expressed an interest on knowing more about City Deals and how they were expected to work. It was suggested that this be the subject of a later report to this Committee
- Members were interested to note SEMLEP's commitment to support economic development in the Silverstone area but were advised that there was a real need to address Silverstone's master plan to assess plans and requirements for jobs, health, skills, housing and access.
- Members briefly discussed the merits/disadvantages of AVDC belonging to more than one LEP. It was agreed that it would be advantageous to discuss this fully at a later meeting.
- Having heard of the success of the Northampton Waterside Enterprise Zone, Members asked for more information on the possibilities of forming other Enterprise Zones within the SEMLEP area.

- Members were pleased to note the work that SEMLEP was carrying out with UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) and asked that more information be made available on UKTI's aims and objectives and the impact on businesses in the Vale.
- Reference was made to the accessibility of money available via EU funding with regard to the voluntary sector. Members agreed that more information was required to enable effective engagement with the voluntary sector to help them access this funding.
- Members indicated that it would be helpful if a further progress report on the activity/research taking place in relation to the provision of high speed broadband could be brought to a future meeting of this Committee.

Having thanked their guests for their informative presentation, Members then discussed the most appropriate way forward in the light of the information given at this meeting and agreed that the issues highlighted would be addressed as part of the consideration to be given to the Committee's work programme referred to in Minute 4.

RESOLVED –

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Economic Development be advised of the following views expressed by this Committee in response to the presentation on the activities of SEMLEP:-
 - (a) That a report should be prepared for a future meeting of this Committee on AVDC's involvement in, and the activities of SEMLEP and BTVLEP, and how the Council can maximise its unique membership of both in all areas.
 - (b) That further reports be prepared for future meetings of this Committee on:-

City Deals, Silverstone Masterplan, Enterprise Zones, UKTI, the means whereby the Voluntary Sector could access EU funding and the progress/activity in relation to the provision of high speed broadband across the Vale.

4. ECONOMY AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – WORK PROGRAMME

Following Council's request to invigorate AVDC's scrutiny activities, three new Scrutiny Committees had been formed that better represented the Council's Corporate Plan aspirations.

The new Committees had taken parts of the, now disbanded, Communities Scrutiny Committee work programme, and these had been amalgamated into new work programmes that reflected the terms of reference of each of the new Committees.

Members were now asked to consider items for inclusion on a work programme for the next 12 – 18 months after taking into account the Terms of Reference of the Economy and Business Development Committee and the prioritisation guide attached to the report. Following debate it was:-

RESOLVED –

That the work programme be updated following consideration of the inclusion of the following topics:-

- Broadband delivery including information on G4 introduction, presentations from outside partners, including the Independent Networks Cooperative Association (INCA) and a report on the upgrading of rural masts.
- Economic Development Strategy refresh and progress update including information on grants and business startup help
- Silverstone Masterplan and other major employment sites.
- The inclusion of a report from the Cabinet Member for Civic Amenities on the outcome of discussions with Bucks County Council on the activities of the enforcement officers who enforced the on-street parking contract managed by the County Council.
- Town Centre review plus Aylesbury, Buckingham and Winslow parking strategy. This to include investigations on free parking revenue loss and the potential to offset this by the generation of further trade, a ticket exchange scheme with local traders. Representatives of large stores to be invited to the discussion.
- Refresh and update of Olympic legacy programme, including assisted living/telehealth.
- Rural economy, look at implications of planning rules, impact on the economy, diversification uses, needs (ie Broadband etc), size and value. Discussions to include input from the Bucks Rural Affairs Group (BRAG).
- Skills provision, update on latest findings and comparison with review held March 2009. Bring in Aylesbury College, Aylesbury Training Group and a user (ARLA?)
- Home Working – quantify their input to the economy – include information on Home Hubs and Entrepreneurial activity.
- Small/Medium sized businesses – start up provision, obstacles in the way of growth etc. Bring in companies to present to the Committee. Compare with

previous review (September/November/December 2006) and report of March 2012.

- Markets – update on usage and plans for the future.
- Innovation Centre – update on usage, future plans and funding arrangements including strategic overview and approach with partners such as AVE, Aylesbury College, AEIC etc.