

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)
held at 10.00 am on Wednesday, 16 December 2015

Present:

Members: Councillor R Lakha (Chair)
Councillor L Bigham
Councillor J Birdi
Councillor G Crookes
Councillor K Mulhall
Councillor M Mutton
Councillor H Sweet

Other Members: Councillor R Brown (Deputy Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Employment)
Councillor K Maton (Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Employment)

Employees: M Checkley, Place Directorate
G Holmes, Resources Directorate
M Salmon, Resources Directorate
D Shiner, People Directorate
P Singh, Place Directorate
R Young, Place Directorate

Apologies: There were no apologies

Public Business

22. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests declared.

23. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th November 2015 were agreed and signed as a true record. There were no matters arising.

24. Update on Sustainability Team Activities, Challenges and Opportunities

The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) received a briefing note of the Executive Director of Place that provided Members with an update on the activities, challenges and opportunities of the Sustainability Teams.

The Briefing Note outlined the activities and achievements of the Fuel Poverty Team; Energy Management Team; Low Carbon Team; and Business Sustain Team, and highlighted the changes to National Policies and Schemes in the past 12 months and the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Coventry had been recognised as number one in the league table of English cities for reducing citywide carbon emissions. Each resident's carbon footprint had dropped by almost a third from 6.9 tonnes to 4.9 tonnes between 2008 and 2013, and the Authority had reduced the council's carbon emissions by 27% in five years. The City was number one in the Knauf local authority energy index for effective energy management within the council and the wider city, and was a finalist in the Energy and Environment Awards in two categories: environmental leadership and communications campaigns in May 2015 and a finalist in Business Green Leaders Awards for employee engagement campaign in July 2015. Coventry was also the winner of Gold Green Apple Award for Environmental Best Practice in November 2015. However, despite these successes they were the sixth highest level of fuel poverty in England with 15.9% of homes fuel poor and some areas 43%.

The Board questioned officers and discussed the following issues:

- More detail on the work of the Teams
- The current position with Heatline, connectivity to Friargate, capacity and Coventry University
- Pre-paid meters and links to fuel poverty.
- Details on the scheme in Nottingham where the council have set up their own energy supply company to address the issue of the tariffs for pre-paid meters.

The Board requested that the Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Employment include information on how the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) is supporting businesses in carbon reduction, when he reports on the work of the LEP at the meeting of the Board on 27th January 2016. The Board also requested information on the consultation with OfGem on the reforms on pre-payment meters, if timescales allow.

Members congratulated the Sustainability Teams on their achievements and the awards they had received and supported the continuation of this valuable work.

RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3):

- 1) Notes the achievements, challenges and opportunities.**
- 2) The following recommendations be forwarded to the Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Employment:**

The Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Employment is requested to:

- i) Agree that the Council forges closer links to Public Health and Clinical Commissioning Groups to tackle fuel poverty.**
- ii) Investigate the possible support that can be given to residents in fuel poverty, to help them install energy efficiency measures, where they are unable to contribute to the cost.**

- iii) **Ensure that future development in the city centre is capable of connection to the existing Heatline infrastructure.**
- iv) **Explore the feasibility of setting up a local authority owned energy supply company, similar to RobinHood Energy owned by Nottingham City Council.**
- v) **Inform the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) on progress on these recommendations in the next Municipal Year.**

25. Delivering the Jobs and Growth Strategy - Half Year Progress Report (April 2015 - September 2015)

The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) received a report of the Executive Director of Place that summarised the progress made to deliver the Jobs and Growth Strategy for Coventry in the past six months from April 1st 2015 to September 30th 2015.

The Jobs and Growth Strategy for Coventry was endorsed by the Council in May 2014 and supported the vision and priorities of the Council's Plan – Coventry Open for Business: Globally connected and locally committed. It articulates how the council will use its resources to make Coventry a city open for business and growth, providing jobs and prosperity for local people

The Jobs and Growth Strategy is in its second year of delivery. The news is very positive, with performance measures on track to meet the targets set for the year.

The following key achievements were highlighted:-

- The Economy and Jobs service, part of the City Centre and Development Division, has directly contributed to creating 1,670 new jobs opportunities within Coventry against a target of 1,000 set for the year.
- £322 million pounds of business investment has also been secured for the benefit of the City. The Council's services have already supported 205 businesses to grow and develop.
- The number of people engaging with the Council's Employment Team is far exceeding target set. In the past 6 months over 3,500 people have accessed employment support 827 people who have engaged with the services provided have progressed into work. This is a significant achievement. The majority of these individuals are engaging through the Council's city centre Job Shop located in Bull Yard.

The Board questioned officers and discussed the following issues:

- Job Seeker Allowance Claimants and alternative benefits
- Zero hour contracts – agencies and employers offering zero hour contract employment
- Sector forecasting and data collection
- Employer hub - forges links with and offers advice to companies around recruitment practices, to link skills with jobs

- Graduate retention – University spin-outs
- Business start up support for young people, including support available through Annie Bettman Foundation charity

The Board noted the decision taken by the Cabinet Member for Business, Enterprise and Employment at his meeting on 8th December 2015 (his minute 46/15 refers) as follows:

- (1) Endorses the progress made by the Jobs and Growth Strategy for Coventry between April - September 2015.
- (2) Requests that officers arrange an informal meeting with key Councillors to consider a number of issues, including implications of changes to the Business Growth Service and the West Midlands Combined Authority, and to set an agenda to establish what Coventry needs to secure future growth and development.
- (3) Future reports to include details of transport and broadband links (connectivity).
- (4) Officers be requested to provide an up to date Briefing Note for all members in relation to the current situation regarding Superfast Broadband coverage in the City.

RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) endorses the progress made by the Jobs and Growth Strategy for Coventry between April - September 2015.

26. **Outstanding Issues**

Outstanding Issues were picked up in the Board's Work Programme.

27. **Work Programme 2015/2016**

The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) considered the Work Programme 2015/2016 and discussed the scheduling of proposed for consideration at future meetings of the Board.

RESOLVED that the Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) notes the Work Programme 2015/2016.

28. **Any other items of public business which the Chair decides to take as matters of urgency because of the special circumstances involved**

There were no other items of public business

(Meeting closed at 12.25 pm)