

Coventry City Council
Minutes of the Meeting of Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3)
held at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 2 December 2020

Present:

Members: Councillor C Miks (Chair)
 Councillor G Hayre
 Councillor M Heaven
 Councillor T Jandu
 Councillor R Lancaster
 Councillor P Male
 Councillor E Ruane
 Councillor B Singh

Other Members (By Councillor J O'Boyle (Cabinet Member for Jobs and
Invitation): Regeneration)

Employees (by
Directorate):

Business, Investment and J Norton, S Weir, B Yorke
Culture

Law and Governance V Castree, G Holmes

Apologies Councillor R Ali

Public Business

14. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

15. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th November 2020 were agreed as a true record.

Further to minutes 10/20 headed 'Very Light Rail Progress Update' and minute 11/20 headed 'Coventry Local Air Quality Action Plan', the Chair indicated that she had received positive feedback from 4th November 2020 meeting on both of these agenda items. She thanked the Light Rail Manager for making her aware of a Broadcast on Very Light Rail.

Further to minute 11/20 headed 'Coventry Local Air Quality Action Plan', Members had requested that the Cabinet Report 'Coventry Local Air Quality Action Plan – Full Business Case' be circulated to the Board once it had been published and this was sent to Members on 25th November 2020.

The Chair thanked Councillor L Bigham for her contributions to the Business, Economy and Enterprise Board (3) during her time as a Member of the Board and wished her well in her new role as Chair of the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4).

16. **International Investment, Trade and Overseas Markets**

The Business, Economy and Enterprise Scrutiny Board (3) received a Briefing Note and Presentation of the Director of Business, Investment and Culture which provided an update on international investment, trade and overseas markets. The Constitution required the consideration of overseas reports (attached as Appendices 1 & 2 to the report) by Scrutiny.

The following points were raised in the presentation:

- **Germany Thuringia Visit Report**
 - o It was a partnership visit which took place in September 2019.
 - o The area was identified for relationship building as it was an area where automotive was a priority sector, had a mixture of Original Equipment Manufacturers and a long tail of SME suppliers and focussed on innovation.
 - o They had recently secured a successful investment from a Chinese Battery Manufacture
 - o A return delegation came to Coventry and discussions had continued virtually during COVID-19
- **MIPIM Asia / China Visit Report**
 - o This was a partnership visit and took place during November 2019.
 - o Programme allowed exploration across a range of sectors.
 - o Follow up activities had taken place including virtually during the pandemic.
 - o The Visit provided the first opportunity to engage with a market leader to secure information on a Gigafactory
- **General update**
 - o Foreign direct investment success includes the creation of around 13,000 new jobs
 - o Inward investment attraction is a key activity that sits within the Economic Development Service of Coventry City Council.
 - o International activity and representation, either direct or through working with partners is a key tool when promoting the City as an investment destination and generating inward investment leads.
 - o The Department of International Trade (DIT) secures UK and global prosperity by promoting and financing international trade and investment and championing free trade
 - o There were several challenges and considerations that will be monitored and influence international engagement activity in the short to medium term. These included: Coronavirus; Brexit/EU Transition and the US election outcome

- Update from Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce
 - o Export support and advice is provided to Coventry businesses in partnership through DIT advisors based at the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce
 - o 'Levelling up' was new support available from DIT
 - o The new Export Academy from the Department for International Trade (DIT) gave small and micro-businesses the chance to learn how to sell to customers around the world with confidence
 - o A number of new sector and specialist advisers had been recruited for the West Midlands region to assist businesses on critical issues in 2020 and beyond.
 - o DIT continued to work to raise awareness of the changes to be expected at the end of the Transition period in January 2021. Locally, Chamber of Commerce were actively engaging with businesses to help them prepare for whatever outcome faced in January.
 - o Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce had launched its new Customs Declaration Service. This was in anticipation of an expected increase in demand for customs declarations when the UK left the Single Market and Customs Union in January 2021

The Board questioned officers, received responses, and discussed the following issues:

- Further information would be circulated to the Board members regarding the creation of jobs outlined in section 3.2.1, including the names of the top 10 employers
- City of Culture was being promoted by the Inward Investment team as one of the headlines for the City
- When it was safe to travel again, it was expected that future relationships will be built virtually, as well as in person. The use of virtual meetings head of visits would enable delegations to arrive more informed
- There were good working relationships with both Coventry and Warwick Universities, and both were an asset to the region
- It was difficult to differentiate between the impact of COVID and Brexit on businesses. It was anticipated that 2021 would see a reduction of 2% in GDP if there was a no deal. It was likely to be the manufacturing sector which was hardest hit, which was a sector prevalent in Coventry and Warwickshire
- A pilot of the UK shared Prosperity Fund had been announced. The themes it would cover included skills, support for businesses and community infrastructure. Coventry were keen to take part in the pilot and would apply when able to do so – it was not anticipated more information would be available until the spring of 2021. Approaches were being made to Government to request the funding was frontloaded. Current European funding would run until mid-2023
- Japanese technology for virtual conferences was highlighted as an opportunity
- Opportunities to diversify the economy were being sought

Members requested that information documents sent to businesses and further information on the Foreign Direct Investment Successes, including sectoral breakdown, information on new and emerging sectors and the names of the top 10 employers specific to Coventry, be circulated to the Board.

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

- 1) Endorses the International Investment, Trade and Overseas Markets Report, the Germany Thuringia Visit Report and the MIPIM Asia / China Visit Report and in endorsing the reports, the Board confirms its continued support for the work being undertaken by the Economic Development Service to enhance Coventry's international profile, secure Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and support local companies to access new markets.**
- 2) Requests that a report on the impact of Brexit be submitted to the Board in six months-time.**

17. Work Programme 2020/2021

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

- 1) Notes the Board's Work Programme for the remainder of the Municipal Year 2020/2021.**
- 2) Requests that the following items be considered for future meetings of the Board:**
 - Two Friargate.**
 - The item on support for small businesses be broadened to include support to community interest companies and community centres, and to also include information on the level of wraparound support and nurture available for SMEs.**
 - Cycle Lanes - update.**
 - City Centre South – to include a focus on the retail crisis**
 - The Comprehensive Spending Review including changes to the Apprenticeship Levy.**
 - The 'Levelling Up' agenda.**
 - The Development of Civic Agreements by Coventry and Warwick Universities.**
 - An update on Gigafactories.**
 - City of Culture job creation.**
- 3) Recommends that an additional meeting of the Board be scheduled during the Municipal Year.**

18. 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 on public business.

(Meeting closed at 3.15 pm)