

**At a meeting of the PROSPERITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE held in the CIVIC CENTRE on WEDNESDAY, 29<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, 2012 at 5.30 p.m.**

**Present:-**

Councillor Mordey in the Chair

Councillors Ellis, S. Foster, P. Gibson, Snowdon and Wilson.

**Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Ball, Bell, Gallagher and Howe.

**Minutes of the Last Meeting of the Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2012**

1. RESOLVED that the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2012 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest made.

**Skills and Employment Demand Study**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) providing a copy of the findings of the Sunderland Skills and Employment Demand Study 2011.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Andrew Perkin, Lead Policy Officer for Economy and Sustainability and Mr. David Ord, Policy Officer were in attendance and provided the Committee with a detailed presentation on the skills and demand study undertaken in 2011 which aimed to provide an overview of the current and future demand for employment, skills and labour in Sunderland's key sectors.

The presentation detailed employment patterns, growth prospects, skills shortages and skills gaps. The survey highlighted the issues to be resolved and the next steps.

The survey also set the national context, detailed Government initiatives and the challenges to be faced. It highlighted that a consultation draft Skills and Employment Strategy would be available in July 2012 and a final Skills and Employment Strategy in place from October 2012.

Members commented on the importance of apprenticeships and the need to make them easier for young people to access in order to secure employment.

Better information and careers advice for young people was also required together with better links between schools and businesses so that businesses can advise schools what they need and the schools can look to address this and provide young people with the skills businesses are looking for in their employees.

In response to Councillor Wilson, Mr. Perkin stated that future jobs would be in the 'green' economy and the need to develop "green skills" had been highlighted so that individuals were skilled up for industry. Transport for workers in general and particularly for shift workers was critical and measures were being put together to support and encourage as much sustainable transport as possible.

Mr. Ord added that it was accepted that there needed to be better information and closer links between schools and businesses due to the changes in how careers advice was going to be provided and that businesses needed to advise schools of the opportunities available. He informed the Committee that the Government was looking to set up Apprenticeship Hubs.

In referring to the information detailed in the presentation, the Chairman enquired what the impact on the City's joblessness would be if 19,000 people were recruited over the next two years.

Mr. Perkin stated that it was vital to maximise the opportunities for the people who live in Sunderland so that they were able to access as many of the jobs as possible. He added that many of the posts would be full-time and linked to those sectors that were expected to grow over the next two years.

In response to the Chairman, Mr. Perkin commented that the Council needed to use its role and strategic influence to eradicate behaviour from employers who were guilty of filtering out people from disadvantaged backgrounds and were preventing them from gaining employment and to address the barriers.

Councillor Wilson added that it was important to put measures in place to be able to cut the chain in a sense, where several generations in some families had not worked to try to get the next generation out to work.

Ms. Janet Johnson, Deputy Chief Executive commented that changes to benefits in the Welfare Reform Act would mean significant levels of benefits across the whole City being pulled back from Sunderland residents and may make the above situation worse and not better.

The Chairman thanked the Officers for the presentation and it was:-

2. RESOLVED that the information contained in the report and the presentation together with the discussion brought out during the meeting be received and noted.

### **New Wear Crossing – Update**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) advising that a progress report on the New Wear Crossing would be provided to the Committee and consideration given to the potential economic benefits for the City.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Ms. Janet Johnson, Deputy Chief Executive and Mr. David Abdy, Project Director for the New Wear Bridge were in attendance at the meeting.

Mr. Abdy provided a detailed presentation to the Committee on the current position with regard to the New Wear Crossing informing of the Sunderland Strategic Transport Corridor (SSTC) overview, the strategic objectives, programme phasing, overview of the New Wear Crossing, the benefits to the City and the delivery timetable.

Members welcomed the presentation.

In response to Members questions, Ms. Johnson advised that sites in the development would come forward in time through the development of the SSTC programme. Those that were significantly further advanced were the ones where developers have specific plans and some finance behind them and included the Grove site and the Deptford site. Remediation of the Vaux site was underway, the site having been reclaimed and preparations were being made to put in temporary footpaths. Billboards would be put back up over the period of renovation as this was a source of funding. The development of the 26 acres site would take time and there would be a need however, to board the development as work was started to realign the road. Officers were doing all they could to take up opportunities as they present themselves. Work had also started on the Former Glassworks site.

In response to Councillor Wilson, Mr. Abdy confirmed that Officers were engaging with the major bus companies who had all offered support, were aware of the development proposals and the need to maintain public transport to existing businesses as the scheme develops.

In response to Councillor Snowdon, Mr. Abdy advised that they would be working with the Highways Agency so as not to add to the A19 traffic problems or the traffic congestion at Wessington Way.

The Chairman enquired whether any thought had been given to a name for the New Wear Bridge.

Mr. Abdy advised that a consultation exercise would be undertaken to choose a name for the New Wear Bridge and it would not be too long before the start date for the consultation period was known.

The Chairman thanked the Officers for the presentation and commented that exciting times lay ahead for the City for the next few years in terms of developments. The New Wear Bridge would provide a catalyst to this development in the City.

3. RESOLVED that the information contained in the report and the presentation, together with the discussion brought out at the meeting be received and noted.

### **Sub-National Economic Development and the North East Local Enterprise Board**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) confirming arrangements for a special meeting of the Committee on Sub-National Economic Development and the role of the North Eastern Local Enterprise Board.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer reported that a special meeting of the Committee had been arranged for Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> March commencing at 1.30 p.m. in the Council Chamber at the Civic Centre to which all Members of the Council had been invited.

Mr. Diamond advised that a detailed programme for the event was currently being developed and highlighted the speakers who had confirmed to date which included:-

- Gill Southern MBE, Director of Wessington Cryogenics;
- Angela O'Donoghue, Principal of Sunderland College;
- Dr. Gill Bentley, University of Birmingham;
- Vince Taylor, Head of Strategy and Performance, Sunderland City Council.

Mr. Diamond advised that Councillor Paul Watson, Leader of the Council had agreed to introduce the event.

The Chairman added that the Programme for the event would include a question and answer session at the end of the meeting.

4. RESOLVED that the arrangements for the special meeting of the Committee on Tuesday, 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2012 be received and noted.

### **Policy Review – Visit to the University of Sunderland**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) confirming arrangements for a proposed visit on Monday, 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2012 to the University of Sunderland as part of the evidence gathering process for the Committee's policy review into Aim 1 of the Economic Masterplan.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Jim Diamond, Scrutiny Officer circulated a copy of the proposed itinerary for the visit to the University of Sunderland.

5. RESOLVED that the arrangements for the visit be confirmed as detailed in the itinerary.

### **Work Programme 2011-2012**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) appending the current work programme of the Committee's work during the 2011-12 Council year for the Committee's information.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

6. RESOLVED that the information contained within the Work Programme be received and noted.

### **Forward Plan – Key Decisions for the Period 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2012 – 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2012**

The Chief Executive submitted a report (copy circulated) to provide Members with an opportunity to consider those items on the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2012 to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2012 which related to the Prosperity and Economic Development Committee.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

7. RESOLVED that the contents of the Executive's Forward Plan for the period 1<sup>st</sup> March, 2012 to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2012 be received and noted.

The Chairman then closed the meeting having thanked everyone for their attendance and contribution to the meeting.

(Signed) M. MORDEY,  
Chairman.