



Membership

Name of Member	Organisation	Attendance
David Andrews (DA)	VisitWiltshire	
Daniel Rhind-Tutt (DR-T)	Salisbury & District Chamber	
Layla Burrows (LB)	Innovate UK	Apologies
Sally Cook (SC)	DWP	✓ -joined at 10.30am
Kathryn Crossweller (KC)	Chippenham Chamber	
Jim Davison (JD)	MakeUK	
Lorna Howarth (LH)	KTN Innovate UK	Apologies
Chris Parsons (CP)	Cities & Local Growth Unit Representatives	
Ruth Lambert (RL)	Federation of Small Business, FSB	Apologies
Awaiting replacement	DIT	
Robin McGowan (RMcG)	Salisbury BID	Apologies
Tim Major (TM)	Thames Valley Chamber	Apologies
Chris Farr (CF)	CLA	✓
Phil Mills (PM)	SWMAS	✓
Mandy Paterson (MP)	Inspire by Wessex Chamber	✓
Kez Garner (KG)	Trowbridge Chamber	✓
Dee Temple-Multon (DT-M) / Darren Brindley (DB)	BusinessWest	✓✓
Beverley Waters (BW)	ICAEW	✓
Katie Davis (KD)	NFU	
SWLEP: attendance will be dependent on topics discussed		
Tim Burghes (TB)	SWLEP Comms	✓
Rob Creer (RB)	SWLEP	✓
Ian Lloyd (IL)	SWLEP	



Alison North (AN)	SWLEP Director and Chair of BING	✓
Laura Arlott (LA)	SWLEP	
Debby Skellern (DS)	SWLEP CEO	✓
Chris Stevens (CS)	SWLEP	✓
Swindon Borough Council: attendance will be dependent on topics discussed		
Dave Dewart	Swindon Borough Council	Apologies
Wiltshire Council: attendance will be dependent on topics discussed		
Rory Bowen (RB)	Wiltshire Council	✓
Rachel Finlay (RFi)		Apologies
Russell Frith (RF)		✓ - left at 10.55am
Victoria Moloney (VM)		
David Perrett (DP)		

Guest(s)	Stephen Hay (SH) – Swindon Borough Council representing Dave Dewart
Chair	Debby Skellern (DS)
Minutes	Deborah House (DKH)
Venue	Via video / teleconference call
Start time	10am
Finish Time	11.30am

1.0	Welcome and Introductions	Date
	The meeting opened at 10.02am. AN welcomed attendees to the meeting and apologies were noted.	
2.0	Minutes of meeting on 14 June 2023 and matters arising	
	<p>The minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2023 were read and approved.</p> <p>Matter Arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Katie Davis to contact Paddy Bradley direct for offline discussion on how to become involved in the Rural Economy Study. <i>Update: although it was uncertain whether this Matter had actually been dealt with, DS did advise the meeting that the rural analysis was active and progressing through the LEP Network.</i> 	



	The other Matter Arising was completed.	
3.0	Results of the Survey	
	<p>Thanks were given to those members who had responded to the survey in September. Some messages were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • members would like to return to face-to-face meetings; • requests had been made for workshops and volunteers and ideas were sought; • themed meetings; and • a need to re-engage with previous members whose attendance had dropped away. 	
4.0	The Autumn Statement: 110 business support measures	
	<p>BING representatives discussed the recent business support measures announced as part of the Autumn Statement and responses from their membership. Roundtable feedback included the following:</p> <p>Wiltshire Council welcomed the focus on net zero, life sciences, and advanced manufacturing. In contrast, the skills agenda was more complex. Planning reform would remove some barriers to investment in infrastructure. Government was also reducing Local Authority commitment to housing numbers. The Council was waiting to see how and when funding would come through the pipeline.</p> <p>What has been the response from your membership base regarding the increase to minimum wage and the additional cost to companies?</p> <p>The ICAEW held small discussion groups with SMEs across the regions and the biggest concern appeared to be the rise in the National Minimum Wage. There was acceptance that with the cost-of-living crisis, lower paid workers did need this, but there were concerns on how businesses would fund it. Many SMEs had been trying to give their workers extras beforehand to compensate, for example, by providing hot breakfasts, but raw material prices had increased significantly, and profit margins had decreased. Most small businesses worked with accountants or bookkeepers and these professionals were part of the business information network and could sign post to support. Keeping professional organisations updated would be useful.</p> <p>The National Minimum Wage increase was regarded a bridge too far for many and the changes to National Insurance would not make any meaningful impact. Businesses with large cash reserves were benefiting from low interest rates and investment but those already under pressure could not get help from banks or lenders. This was nothing new, but it was now acute. There was some easing on resources, but employee demands continued to be high.</p> <p>In the hospitality sector business rate decreases may offset the increase in wages, but this only applied to that sector. Complaints were being received about business</p>	



rates reform being postponed, as these high rates led to problems occupying town centres properties.

Investment Zones

Swindon and Wiltshire had again missed out on an investment zone as the area was considered as performing relatively well. Wiltshire Council had submitted expressions of interest for investment zones in the past, but the county was not seen as being at threat of recession nor as an opportunity for growth. The question was raised as to whether there should be a collective lobbying piece by BING to Government to demonstrate that widespread opportunities existed. The shared agenda would be across political divides demonstrating thinking outside administrative and county boundaries.

Action 1: to consider the collective lobbying piece and take forward.

What did a small business want?

There was much discussion on how BING members engaged with small businesses which were very busy in the day to day running of their companies with little bandwidth for anything else. All of the organisations in BING delivered a lot to SMEs, but communication channels had to be easy for them to use, such as the Whatsapp group in Trowbridge, a network for each town could be rolled out. There was an active referral network via organisations like the Growth Hub. We did have the framework but there was a need to keep the messaging live.

Action 2: Undertake collective, targeted communication and information exchange with professional organisations in the area

Which organisations were engaged with work on the National Grid?

National Grid connections and timelines were an issue which had been recognised nationally with reforms forthcoming over the medium to long term; how and when this would help to address the issues faced in the area remained to be seen and would not address immediate connection and capacity issues. Lots of work amongst partners and the Western Gateway to keep this issue high on the agenda. Wiltshire Council had held meetings with SSEN and had taken part in several workshops on the grid.

Work was underway by Swindon Borough Council to develop Local Area Energy Plans working with the South West Net Zero Hub and using the Local Energy Net Zero Accelerator (LENZA) tool. SBC would engage with Wiltshire Council on this work.

Rural England Prosperity Fund

The meeting was advised that demand for Wiltshire Council's Rural England Prosperity Fund had outstripped supply, but the Council had gathered significant learning from the process and viewed this as a pilot scheme. Successful applicants would be used as case studies to demonstrate how businesses could be supported in the county. £1.75m had been allocated for Round 2, applications for which were due to open soon.



	<p>Action 3: RB to feedback the date when Stage 2 would go live.</p> <p>Action 4: Attendees were asked to feedback which other organisations they felt would be good additions to invite to join BING.</p>	
5.0	Business Intelligence Report Economy Analysis	
	<p>RC presented to the meeting on the format, frequency and types of information contained in the Growth Hub’s Business Intelligence Report which was submitted to Government every month.</p> <p>In addition, the presentation gave an overview of business support activity delivered by the Swindon and Wiltshire Growth Hub including feedback of a recent tailored business start-up workshop to a cohort of workers from Cooper Tires facing redundancy.</p> <p>The presentation can be accessed by following the link below.</p> <p>https://static.swlep.co.uk/swlep/docs/default-source/sub-groups/business-development/brog/2023/14-dec/bing-bi-slides-14122024-v2.pdf?sfvrsn=ef743133_3</p>	
6.0	Salisbury Economy Analysis	
	<p>CS presented to the meeting of the recent analysis undertaken on the Salisbury economy which included a breakdown of business by type, size and sectors in and around the city. Using a variety of sources, the analysis demonstrated the health of the businesses, which were likely to grow, wage trends and skills required.</p> <p>The presentation can be accessed by following the link below.</p> <p>https://static.swlep.co.uk/swlep/docs/default-source/sub-groups/business-development/brog/2023/14-dec/salisbury-economic-information-bing-dec-2023-1.pdf?sfvrsn=90ede6b8_3</p>	
7.0	Swindon Borough Council Local Plan Review emerging evidence base	
	<p>Stephen Hay presented an overview of the current work underway to build a better Swindon. The Local Plan was being updated through to 2043 with a view to submission to government in June 2025. Broad themes included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a focus on the urban area; • Plan period and associated vision; • a focus on public transport, cycling and walking; • zero carbon with the environment at the centre of the plan; • new markets and viability for urban housing delivery, showing current housing pipeline and in particular that for the New Eastern Villages; • more focus on the circular and green economy including employment land trends and site assessments based on a whole carbon lifecycle approach for policy development; and 	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • retail and leisure needs for a future town centre <p>The presentation can be accessed by following the link below.</p> <p>https://static.swlep.co.uk/swlep/docs/default-source/sub-groups/business-development/brog/2023/14-dec/sbc-bing-141223.pdf?sfvrsn=89e4228d_3</p> <p>The question was raised as to what the key priorities were for employment land and business space and whether there were risks or pinch points.</p> <p>In response SH stated that they would look at changing sites and its use for employment land as the Plan developed; in particular, considering the future wider logistics demands along the M4 corridor where different skill sets would be required with more emphasis on automation. Swindon Borough Council would like to undertake more joint working with Wiltshire Council, particularly around Junction 16, because of their joint interest in the development of the area with both Local Authorities having responsibility for the Junction. A vision-led approach to transport planning would be undertaken with targets set to ‘predict and provide’ and support the delivery of ‘building a better Swindon 2043’.</p> <p>The town had suffered from the loss of office space to residential use and there was the need for better quality employment land and business space. A digital plan driven by GIS would sit behind the local plan and would help to integrate land use with communities. The plan set out housing provision requirements to meet various scenarios. Icen Projects had been appointed to assist with the consultation exercise.</p>	
8.0	Updates from members of the Group	
	No additional information was shared.	
9.0	AOB and Items proposed for future meetings	
	<p>SH advised the meeting that former Honda site, which had been purchased by Panattoni, had now received full approval from Swindon Borough Council for its employment space.</p> <p>Items proposed for future meetings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience Salisbury • Institute of Technology update • Automation as a discussion topic • Swindon Initiative: Swindon Commission. • Further discussion /consideration on how to achieve actions 1 and 2 <p>Attendees were thanked for their contributions to the debate for the items.</p>	
	Date and time of next meeting	
	Indicative dates for 2024:	



	w/c 26 February w/c 10 June w/c 16 September w/c 9 December	
	Meeting closed at 11.20am	

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