

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

ECONOMY AND ENTERPRISE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

At a Special Meeting of the **Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in **Committee Room 2, County Hall, Durham** on **Friday 4 March 2016** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor R Crute (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Councillors E Adam, J Armstrong, A Batey, J Clare, B Kellett, J Maitland, H Nicholson and O Temple

Co-opted Members:

Mr T Batson

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Bell, J Cordon, M Davinson, T Henderson, A Patterson, P Stradling, S Zair and Mr I McLaren.

2 Substitute Members

No notification of Substitute Members had been received.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

4 Items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties

There were no items from Co-opted Members or Interested Parties.

5 Support provided to SMEs within County Durham

The Chairman introduced the Managing Director, Business Durham (BD), Dr Simon Goon, who was in attendance to give an update as regards support provided to Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) within County Durham (for copy see file of minutes).

The Managing Director, BD introduced colleagues who would help provide information for the Committee: Colin Bell, Regional Growth Manager for the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP); Joe Murray, Chief Executive of the CDC Enterprise Agency; and Ted Salmon, Regional Chairman of the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB). The Managing Director, BD explained that issues to be presented included: the importance of SMEs for the County Durham economy; an update on the activities of BD; information from the CDC Enterprise Agency; information from the NELEP; and the perspective from the FSB. Members were asked to note that the information to be presented today was looking at areas other than retail and leisure/tourism.

Members were reminded that the Gross Value Added (GVA) figure for County Durham was growing and had been quite quickly, as had the regional figure, and the county Durham figure was growing more quickly than the national figure. It was highlighted however, that the County Durham and North East figures had started at a lower baseline. Councillors were informed that information from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) showed that County Durham had approximately 12,000 businesses, noting a data-lag of around 5 months. Members noted approximately 87% of businesses in County Durham had fewer than 10 staff and 97% having fewer than 50 staff, highlighting that the majority were SMEs. It was added that figures showed there were around 190,700 jobs in County Durham, and a breakdown showed the largest proportion was in public administration, with the next largest sectors being: distribution and leisure; manufacturing; banking, finance and insurance; and construction.

The Managing Director, BD reminded the Committee of targets set by the County Durham Economic Partnership (CDEP) for 2030, namely:

- Employment Rate: to be maintained at 73%.
- Business Stock: to increase by 6,340 businesses.
- Household Disposable Income: to reach 103% of the regional average.
- GVA: to reach 87% of the regional average.
- Deprivation: to be at 64 areas ranked in the top 20% most deprived.

The Committee noted that the CDEP had developed a new Business and Enterprise Framework, looking at new sector segmentation, geographic clustering and competencies. Members learned that a new mapping exercise would look at business competencies and that this would be carried out via a web portal and would prove to be a powerful tool in terms of identifying needs. It was added that there could be a further update for Members at a future meeting in terms of this. Members were referred to a slide setting out the various elements in terms of business competencies, including: supply chain management; leadership, management and strategy; productivity; new markets; innovation; and access to finance. Members noted a slide highlighting some of the larger companies operating within the county, representing the range of employment sectors. Councillor B Kellett asked as regards the percentage of companies that operated as branch companies, as he felt that this could be seen as a fragility in our economy. The Managing Director, BD noted that with the exception of Northumbrian Water, all the large companies in the county were branch companies, and many of the medium sized companies were too, noting some local exceptions.

It was added that the majority of companies within the county were SMEs, though it was noted that large investments had been made by large companies in sites in the county, citing Caterpillar with around 1,200 jobs, Tallent Automotive with around 1,400 jobs, NSK AKS with around 700 jobs and Hitachi with around 750 jobs, once at full production. Councillors noted the economy in terms of branch companies was not as fragile as it was 10 years ago; however, the biggest threat may come from other branches within a company.

The Managing Director, BD noted that there was a need for a greater diversity in terms of the economy within County Durham to provide a better position in the face of any changes in the economy as a whole. Members were reminded of the county's strong manufacturing base, albeit with a slight affect from the slight reductions in the oil and gas industries. Members noted other strong sectors in the county included: the automotive industry and supply chain; chemicals and pharmaceuticals; business services; and food and drink, noting the county exported tacos to Mexico. The Managing Director, BD reminded Members of the high-tech industries including those associated with the space industry and light, such as PolyPhotonix and Thorn.

Members were referred to a slide setting out the aims of BD in terms of growing the private sector and supporting this by: increasing business survival; increasing business start up; increasing businesses attracted; and increasing jobs, both new and safeguarded. It was added that it was also an aim, working in partnership, to raise economic aspirations. Members noted that both the Future Business Magnates (FBM) programme and NetPark had celebrated their 10 year anniversaries, both being excellent successes.

The Managing Director, BD explained that Business Durham operated with 3 teams: a business space team; business development team; and an innovation and high growth team. It was noted that the business space team managed the business space portfolio, capital development and also the NetPark property. Councillors learned that the business development team worked in terms of: enterprise; SME engagement; strategic company engagement; and partnership groups such as the Business and Skills Enterprise sub-group, Social Value Task Force and Business Education Board. It was added that the innovation and high growth team focussed on: the innovation community (NetPark product); inward investment; and sector strategy and development, for example the Manufacturing Task Force.

Mr T Batson asked how BD would advise a business that wished to expand. The Managing Director noted that BD was not a strategy consultant; however, they could direct a business to the relevant partners who would be able to help. An example given was an engineering company that required a new CNC machine and when looking at shift patterns and usage of the machine it may be possible to be more productive and competitive, helping offset the cost of the equipment. Mr T Batson asked if advice could be given in terms of legislation, such as dealing with the Environment Agency. The Managing Director, BD explained that BD could not advise, however, could highlight changes in regulation in order to allow businesses time to be able to factor in such changes. Members noted that, where possible, BD would direct businesses to sector specific support or relevant agencies such as the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB).

The Managing Director, BD explained that support offered had 3 elements: context; time; and who. It was added that context meant support given to a business that was specific and relevant to that business, tailored and personal. It was noted that timing was also important as was the need to ensure support was by the right people, whether that be local or national experts, and BD could lever-in such support. It was added that it was important to have a credibility of trust with employers and that those businesses in Durham that worked with BD and partners were very generous with their time.

The Committee were reminded that in terms of enterprise, it was important that BD helped to “inspire people today for tomorrow’s economy” and to help ensure that the next generation of business leaders were inspired with the spirit of entrepreneurship. Members were familiar with the FBM programme that helped to inspire young people, however, it was added that there were other activities involving Further and Higher Education Colleges. Councillors also learned of the Durham City Incubator to encourage businesses to stay in County Durham, working with Durham University. It was noted that while BD did not provide start-up support, it worked in tandem with the Enterprise Agencies in order to offer this. Councillors noted that there was an “enterprise journey” with a slide showing how this operated, moving from the business animation as previously described through to: pre-start; start-up; post start-up 0-1 years; and business development 1-3 years plus. It was noted that the first 2-3 years of a business was a delicate stage and that BD would be there to support at the front and back end of that journey. It was added that for businesses that needed tailored support there were appropriate networks established, such as NetPark Net, to give this support.

The Chairman thanked the Managing Director, Business Durham and asked the Chief Executive, CDC Enterprise Agency (EA), Mr J Murray to speak in relation of the support offered by his organisation.

The Chief Executive, CDC EA explained the context of the enterprise agency movement, which had begun in the early 1980s. Members were reminded that there had been 6 EAs covering the 7 District Councils in existence at that time: Derwentside; Chester-le-Street and Durham; Sedgfield and Shildon; Teesdale; and Weardale. It was explained that the EAs had been a response to the widespread change to the coal, rail and steel industries in the County and had focused on tackling unemployment and developing skills. The Chief Executive, CDC EA noted there were now 4 EAs in the County: CDC EA at Chester-le-Street; Derwentside EA at Consett; the East Durham Business Service at Peterlee; and the South Durham EA at Bishop Auckland. Members noted that EAs had initially been set up nationally and supported by Local Authorities (LAs), though now they were self-sufficient.

The Chief Executive, CDC EA noted the role of the CDC EA, which was broadly similar to that of all the County Durham EAs, to contribute to improving the economy of County Durham by: an increase in the entrepreneurial activity in the County; and an increase in the prosperity and volume of its business stock. Similar to BD, it was noted that should the CDC EA have a query it could not deal with directly, they would not turn the business away, rather they would help signpost to the relevant partners and other agencies that could provide the relevant support or service.

In terms of the support offered by the CDC EA, the Chief Executive noted that around 60-70% was in support of business start-ups, helping in terms of coaching, mentoring, business advice and training.

It was added that businesses would have an individual business advisor assigned and that they would help turn an idea into a reality, looking at business plans, funding, marketing and help in validating an individual's idea. Members were informed that mentoring included support from experts with real world business experience and that training ranged from informal "how to" sessions through to formal accreditation.

The Chief Executive, CDC EA added that it was important for new businesses to network and there were several ways they could do this including: the Dewentside Business Network; "Mumpreneur"; and Enterprise Clubs. Another issue that was important in the support of new businesses was that of accommodation and there was office space available at 3 locations: MILE House; Consett Innovation Centre; and Steel House. It was explained that there was more demand for small office spaces and therefore larger spaces were being subdivided to help. Members noted that the support in this regard was also to try and help local businesses stay local.

The Committee noted that challenges that faced the CDC EA included levels of engagement. Members noted that there were 1,500-2,000 enquires a year, which filtered down to 400-500 starts but to generate more starts there was a need to "fill the funnel" and therefore there was a need to generate more enquires by pre-animation work and encouragement, for example activities such as the FBM as previously mentioned. It was noted that there needed to be clarity as regards where EAs fitted in to the overall scheme in terms of business support, and that there was a need to end an over-dependency on the public sector, with the demise of many agencies nationally and with EAs delivering many LA and Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) programmes. It was added that other challenges included commercialisation, access to information and sustainability of businesses. Members noted that while there was a shift towards accessing information via the internet, in terms of business support often people need to have a conversation and meet face-to-face to help provide assurance and bolster confidence. The Chief Executive, CDC EA concluded by noting that EAs needed to position themselves to best meet the needs of the community and that this included supporting residents in terms of their ideas and boost confidence, not just businesses.

Mr T Batson noted the comments in terms of overdependence on the public sector and asked as regards this perception. The Chief Executive, CDC EA explained it was meant in terms of support to individuals and that work was ongoing with many partners, such as DCC and Cestria Homes to name a couple, in terms of Welfare Reform and the anti-poverty agenda, as well as working to ensure there were opportunities for people, for example helping identify options such as self-employment for people who had recently been declared "fit to work" following periods of being unable to work.

Councillor E Adam noted the positive work being undertaken and asked whether the disparity between the numbers of enquires and business starts was down to funding or another reason. The Chief Executive, CDC EA noted that CDC EA themselves did not provide funding, but could help in signposting where it may be available. It was explained that grants were not as available as in the past, though loans were readily available. It was added that in borrowing the money rather than being given, this made people more focussed and committed in terms of their business. It was added that in some cases credit checks were a barrier in terms of accessing loans. Councillor E Adam asked whether poor credit ratings were forcing people to accept loans at a poor APR.

The Chief Executive, CDC EA noted that issues such as CCJs could prevent access to funding, however there was scope for people, even with a poor credit rating, to be able to access some form of loan in most cases. The Managing Director, BD added that working with Credit Unions was an excellent way of helping people manage their debts and improve their credit ratings.

The Chief Executive, CDC EA added that not all people that accessed services via the CDC EA would become self-employed; rather around 50% would do so, with approximately 40% getting a job and with the remaining 10% moving on to further education.

Councillor J Maitland asked as regards “Enterprise Zones”, meaning areas with incentives in terms of Council Tax and Business Rates. The Chief Executive, CDC EA noted that there was a national scheme in terms of business rates that could help save businesses around £4,000-5,000. The Managing Director, BD explained that there were currently no active enterprise zones, however, with a “Round 2” in terms of Enterprise Zones via the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP) an area at Hawthorn in the east of the County would go live in April 2017, offering business rate relief for 5 years, up to 2021/22. It was added that there was work ongoing with the NELEP in developing services at Hawthorn. The Chairman noted that there was a balance for the Authority in terms of incentives offered and collection of business rates. The Managing Director, BD noted that BD worked with the Business Rates Team at the Council and they had been very good and very helpful, for example in not re-rating properties.

Councillor J Clare noted mention of pre and post start-up support and asked was there some overlap in terms of the help provided by BD and the EAs, training being provided by the EAs and colleges, and competition in terms of DCC business premises. Councillor J Clare also recalled a previous presentation by the FSB in terms of the complexity of the support for businesses and therefore there was a need to address overlapping areas and simplify the process. The Chief Executive, CDC EA noted that often EAs delivered programmes on behalf of other agencies, including LAs and while clients ultimately did not care who offered support it was important to EAs to retain their profiles and help clients navigate the support services that were available. The Managing Director, BD noted that it was not competitive, rather there was a choice for clients and that each organisation helped to signpost to each other where appropriate, for example EAs usually have smaller accommodation on offer and can direct to BD who can offer larger units that may be more suitable to certain ideas and businesses.

Councillor O Temple noted that there was a general perception that EAs had simply gone away rather than having undergone a metamorphosis and asked what was being done in terms of informing people in terms of what EAs were doing and providing. The Chief Executive, CDC EA noted that there was still the same number of clients accessing the service as had done in the past, however, in terms of communicating what was on offer there was a presence on the internet and social media. It was added that in many cases people did not have a perception of “what came before” in terms of the early days of the EAs back in the 1980s.

Mr T Batson noted that those that walked in the door, so to speak, were in the knowledge that the EAs existed and asked what was done to help advertise the existence of the EAs to those not in the know.

Mr T Batson also asked as regards enterprise zones for County Durham. It was reiterated that there were currently no enterprise zones and that the one for Hawthorn would go live in 2017.

Councillor A Batey recalled in the past that support was offered to small businesses via Government Office North East (GONE) and the Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) which was complex and difficult to deal with when trying to start a new business. Councillor A Batey added that there was a need to help support the networks, and found the “mumprenuer” idea very interesting, suggesting that further promotion of this via the “Mums in Durham” Facebook page could help to generate more interest, noting from experience how such networks can be vital in supporting newly formed businesses.

The Chief Executive, CDC EA noted there was access to those social media channels as described, however, there was a need to help people and businesses become robust and able to support themselves to some extent. It was added that it was a capacity issue also in terms of supporting those 30% of businesses that did access the CDC EA as a priority.

Councillor H Nicholson noted that the South Durham EA was highly regarded and embedded within the local communities in the area and that there had been a recent photograph with over 100 people showing the numbers of people being supported. It was added that Councillor H Nicholson thought that there needed to be a taper in terms of business rates and also activities to bring in further cutting-edge technology businesses to the County. Councillor J Clare noted a comment in terms of the numbers of clients being “steady” and asked what could be done in terms of “animation” to attract more enquires, asking where we sought our market.

The Managing Director, BD noted that all people were potential clients: school leavers; retired people; the unemployed; as long as they had an idea, however, how to target and help those people was not straightforward. Members were reminded that these business start-ups represented a very personal and important decision in people’s lives and that therefore it was essential to support people in making it work. It was added that BD worked with Durham University, the FSB, Durham Creatives (highlighting “e-entrepreneurs”), FBM and FBM+ and in helping with events such as an upcoming Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) event at the GALA Theatre on 23 March. It was explained that films such as “The Social Network” and “The Imitation Game” were used as the hook to help encourage young people to look at what opportunities there were in the STEM fields. Members noted that another element of work was to collect and share good news stories, as sharing successes can help to increase confidence and it was highlighted that there was an active presence on social media, especially on Twitter.

The Managing Director, BD highlighted that BD had an important role in helping to promote County Durham as “a place where business is done” and it was essential to give good specific examples and these were promoted well using good quality web commentaries, an example being a “house that County Durham built”, which showcased the businesses involved in familiar household products and services. It was added that by showing these example people can be inspired and think “if they can do it, then I can do it too”.

Members were referred to a diagram showing a supposed typical life cycle of a business, with a neat sinusoidal curve showing an initial period of negative business gain while a company invested in research and setting up, followed by growth and maturity.

The Managing Director, BD noted that in reality it was very rarely as simple as this, with the picture often being much more complex.

It was explained that how BD helped businesses cope with this was via networking, and this was an element the Managing Director, BD thought was key in supporting businesses. Members noted that some help for businesses which was not “business support” included: “Durham 2sday” a fortnightly networking event; NetPark Net; the satellite applications Catapult; and supporting the various business parks in the county, such as at Aycliffe, Peterlee and the Drum Business Park at Chester-le-Street.

Members noted that there were many programmes and organisations regionally that BD could act as a gateway to, including the North East Combined Authority (NECA), UK Trade and Investment, and the CPI. It was added that as the Business Growth Service no longer existed, the Managing Director, BD believed there was an opportunity for the NELEP to step up and fill this gap and felt it was actually more fit-for-purpose in this regard. The Managing Director, BD reiterated that it was important for people to be able to network effectively and that having a “little black book” and knowing people within business was an essential element to any company.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Executive, CDC EA and asked the Business Growth Director, NELEP, Colin Bell to speak in relation to the NELEP Growth Hub.

The Business Growth Director, NELEP explained that the role of the Growth Hub was to build an ecosystem that would allow businesses to grow and thrive. It was added that growth hubs were an idea that came about over the last 3-4 years from the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), with 39 growth hubs operating across the country, with some very different models in place, for example Manchester had a large number of staff and operated as a delivery organisation in addition. It was noted other growth hubs operated a more brokerage role and in the NELEP a “virtual/telephone” based model was adopted in order to be sustainable. It was explained that it had been clear from the Government’s comprehensive spending review (CSR) that they would draw back from business support, and that while there was extra support in terms of growth hubs, it was effectively removal of £200 million of funding and replacing it with around £12 million. It was added that therefore the NELEP and partners would need to work efficiently to be able to meet the aim of more and better jobs for the North East. Councillors noted that it was important to exploit the North East’s headroom in terms of growth and that there was a need for bigger businesses and more of them, for example encouraging businesses to have their headquarters within the region. It was added that another element would be to aim to grow microbusinesses into small businesses and small businesses into medium businesses, vital as there was a large number of these smaller businesses in the North East.

The Committee noted that when people looked for business support it could be daunting and confusing. The Business Growth Director, NELEP explained that its aim is to simplify this and it was therefore important to understand how to navigate, noting there were approximately 216 providers of business support in the North East.

Members were referred to a funnel diagram showing “Attention, Interest, Desire, Action” from the top to the bottom of the funnel. It was explained that the growth hub was at the top of this funnel, encouraging and inspiring people to generate more enquiries and then to connect those people to the relevant support for them.

The Business Growth Director, NELEP explained that the decision to operate a virtual model had been made as business support was often best via “word of mouth” and that today this meant online, with the usual first step for a decision being via an internet search engine.

It was added that in looking at the ecosystem, it had been determined that there was a need for a form of diagnostic at the frontend of the process, in order to identify the relevant skills and competencies required. It was highlighted that sometime there could be over-diagnosis and that there could be “paralysis by diagnosis” and that by providing a leaner journey could help more people move forward.

Councillors noted that the growth hubs “provided the glue” to many elements of business support, including: informal support such as peer-to-peer support; micro-intermediaries, such as local accountants or business coaches; linking to North East businesses; and the more formal business support provision.

The Business Growth Director, NELEP explained that there was “no wrong door” in terms of where people would look for business support, with digital and telephone being the main channels, and that by raising awareness with providers a landscape would be developed in terms of helping each other, with an increased trust between providers, though it was noted that County Durham was ahead of the curve regionally.

Mr T Batson noted that businesses would be willing to access support depending upon how easy it was to “open those doors”, for example cost, with the fear of the unknown being an issue and therefore building confidence with businesses would be vitally important. The Business Growth Director, NELEP agreed that businesses would need to see a tangible “bottom line” in the benefits of seeking support to grow. It was noted that, in the past, the lack of investment was a reason why the public sector had filled the gap and that also, in the past, the risk when funding was available was actually the time a business would need to invest. It was added that more recently as funding was via loans rather than grants then businesses would look for value for money in any support and therefore it would be for providers to be able to sell the tangible benefits of the support they offer in terms of growth. It was added that it was a role of the growth hub to be able to tell the stories of the successes to help encourage more businesses to grow and build. The Managing Director, BD added that business, at one level, was investing money in order to make more money and therefore an essential part of helping to encourage growth was to build up a “trust network” allowing businesses to identify who to go to in terms of support and help, and also who not to go to.

The Business Growth Director, NELEP added that alongside business support, the growth hub supported innovation and skills development. It was added that there were around 450 businesses registered on the NELEP Growth Hub and there was a list of 216 providers of support. It was added that as there was over 760 events being held within the region, it was important for businesses to know what was happening and be able to access this information.

It was explained that it had been noted by users that they did not want a log-in profile and then to search content, rather they preferred content to be offered at the front-end, grouped into themes.

Councillors noted that in addition, should there be a question this could be shared within the community, providing peer support and advice from people with real world experience. Members learned that the growth hub aggregated partners content, set out information on campaigns on topics such as exporting (Government) and start-ups (EAs) and the forum style used appeared to be a more successful method of providing a user-friendly question and answer model.

The Committee noted that gaps that had been identified included: supporting the transition from start-up to growth; equipping leaders with the skills required to survive and thrive; supporting commercialisation of ideas, research and design and technology; pre and post finance support; support for potential growth businesses, including manufacturing; tailored diagnosis and signposting; and tailored growth support for areas of Smart Specialisation. The Managing Director, BD added that County Durham was blessed with excellent partnerships, with many organisations coming together including: CBI, EEF (North), FSB, North East Automotive Alliance and the County Durham Manufacturing and Engineering Network. It was added that the FSB was an excellent example of how a small fee in terms of membership could equate to a substantial level of excellent support offering value to businesses.

The Chairman thanked the Business Growth Director, NELEP and asked the Regional Chairman of the FSB, Ted Salmon to speak in relation to his organisation.

The Regional Chairman, FSB explained that the North East region of the FSB covered the "geographic" north east, with over 140,000 of the 150,000 businesses within this area being classed as SMEs or micro-businesses. It was added that these businesses contributed between £29-35 billion to the regional economy annually and represented employment of around 330,000 people. It was explained that the five universities in the region help generate around 400-500 new enterprises each year. Members watched a brief video setting out the role of the FSB, and what its members could expect in terms of advice, financial expertise, support and a power voice in lobbying Government. Councillors noted that the FSB had been established over 40 years ago and was a non-profit organisation run for the benefit of its members. Members were reminded that the FSB was not affiliated with any political party and lobbied both in Westminster and Brussels and to highlight the issues affecting small businesses. It was added that in the North East there were four branches, with over 3,500 members, including 800 in manufacturing, and around 1,500 from business in rural areas.

The Committee learned greater detail of what the FSB could offer in terms of advice and support, namely: tax investigation protection; legal protection scheme; employment protection; health and safety advice; online legal documents; financial health check; care; insurance; energy. It was added that in terms of finance, there was a number of elements where FSB members could be assisted in relation to: workplace pensions; business banking; card payment processing; card payment terminals; fuel cards; and independent financial services. The Regional Chairman, FSB added that support offered by the FSB included advice and help with: business continuity / free planning service; business leads, print and mail, telecoms; vehicle services, lobbying and networking.

Members noted a second video highlighting support offered to FSB members and the positive outcomes achieved by lobbying Government.

The Chairman thanked the Regional Chairman, FSB and asked Members for any questions.

Councillor J Armstrong noted issues such as the NECA and the upcoming EU Referendum and asked what surety there was in continued access to EU funding and added he felt that people would look more and more to the NELEP in terms of support. The Regional Chairman, FSB noted that the FSB had no corporate view in terms of the EU Referendum, however added that there was a need for true information on what the EU means, what it meant in terms of the North East, and whether a potential exit from the EU would mean there would be more or less for the North East. Councillor H Nicholson noted the levels of export to the EU from our region and agreed that there needed to be correct, factual information made available.

The Managing Director, BD thanked the Regional Chairman, FSB and concluded by noting the websites of the North East Growth hub, Business Durham and the Government's www.gov.uk as well as the many other organisations helping to support businesses in the County such as: EAs; Membership Bodies; Networking Groups; Business Park Communities; Business Neighbours; and Universities.

The Chairman thanked all the speakers for their attendance and the useful information they provided for Members.

Resolved:

That the Economy and Enterprise Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the information provided in the report and presentation detailing the support currently provided to SMEs in the County.