

## **Policy & Membership Action Group Meeting Notes – 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2017**

**Group Attendees:** Clive Watkinson (Chair) – JC Snell, Andrew Denniff – BR Chamber, Adrian Platts – BR Chamber, Martyn Benson – Rotherham Investment & Development Office (RIDO), Bob Langley – RIDO, Matt Travis – Enzygo

**Apologies from:** Dominic Beck, Lisa Pogson, Tim O’Connell, Chris Harpin, Martin Beasley

### **Executive Report**

- Andrew (AD) briefly updated the group on current progress of the Chamber and highlighted the positive AGM that is due to take place following the meeting and that all three Chamber businesses continue to perform beyond expectation
- AD highlighted that Paul Jagger had been invited by Sheffield City Region (SCR) to get more involved with the organisation to positively reinforce support for businesses across the region as a regional Chair of SCR Chambers of Commerce
- AD also mentioned the Annual Christmas dinner event coming up in December and that there are limited spaces available due to a positive response

### **Devolution**

- AD highlighted that the Devolution activities for SCR continue and reiterated that the key issue that remains is that there is no other deal for SCR other than the one already agreed which Sajid Javid confirmed Barnsley and Doncaster had agreed to
- At present, there are elements of funds from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and additional skills funding for adults that has been put on hold until a resolution is reached. AD clarified that had the process gone to the agreed plan, funding would have been available to access now instead of being lost back into central government funds
- AD also pointed out that a big challenge now is that SCR is being forced to take a back seat with infrastructure funding while other key regions move forward which is embarrassing for them as they were an early planner and adopter of development activities and should be shining beacon for the rest of the UK like Manchester
- CW pointed out that the perception of how SCR are dealing with significant issues is highly likely to be doing severe damage to the SCR economy and its reputation. Martyn Benson (MB) indicated that Rotherham is calculated to be losing £6m per annum because of non-decision.
- Matt Travis (MT) clarified that current infrastructure and transport arrangements are preventing the improvement of productivity of the region and the devolution issues are making this situation significantly worse
- CW concluded that as a region we look incompetent on a national stage and it is embarrassing for local areas of the region who want to make the current offer work. AD stated that there is no other deal on the table, however if there was then the region would have to seriously consider it, but that deal isn’t there

### **Update on Legislation Issues**

MB highlighted that due to the current focus on Brexit negotiations and the rapidly depleting time to get a deal done, less focus is being placed on legislative changes as these are largely affected by the outcome of any agreements. Anything already in place continues to progress and hopefully there will be more to update on during the spring.

## **Budget**

- MB mentioned that there were no significant shocks in the budget and highlighted that given our current position with Europe and economy some areas were notably untouched though it is suspected that interest rates may gradually rise into 2018
- AD highlighted that the growth forecast was certainly not a surprise and given the current state of the nation was realistic
- CW was mindful to mention the issue of tax for diesel cars from a transport perspective, however the arrangements will only affect those purchasing new cars

## **Expression of Interest – PMAG Chairperson**

- MT expressed an interest in the available role of Chair of the Policy Group since Matt Jackson had made the decision to step down. No other expressions of interest were presented, and CW agreed to continue to Chair the group on a temporary basis until MT was comfortable to take up the role later in in the spring

## **AOB**

- CW mentioned that there are opportunities for Barnsley Town Centre to develop, however incentives need to be put in place to achieve the right retail mix
- MT mentioned that as part of the regeneration of Barnsley, there are significant opportunities to incorporate charging points at various locations and the opportunity should be taken sooner rather than later given the increasing trends in consumer purchasing of electric/hybrid vehicles

## **Date of the next meeting**

20<sup>th</sup> March - Barnsley & Rotherham Chamber, Rotherham

**If you would like to get involved with the Committee please call the Chamber on 01709 386200**