

Policy & Membership Action Group Meeting Notes – 26th Sep 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, Cheryl Sanderson – CTS Environmental Services

External attendees: Duncan Hoyland – Department for International Trade (DIT)

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

Executive Report

- Andrew (AD) briefly updated the group on the success of the Chamber Means Business event and the significant number of attendees who have provided positive feedback about the networking opportunities it presented
- AD highlighted that the Business Awards preparation was going very well and that all sponsors were in place for the event
- AD also mentioned a personal invitation lunch meeting that is planned with the Bank of England that is to take place on the 15th November
- AD stated that all three Chamber businesses continue to perform above expectation
- AD highlighted a briefing paper that has been prepared by Sheffield City Region (SCR) to address devolution plans given the recent outcome regarding Mayoral election. AD caveated that this may evolve to counteract any challenges brought by the present situation. He qualified that Barnsley & Rotherham Chamber continues to support the existing SCR deal, and reminded the group that there is no other deal available as stated by government. AD was resolute in that the whole devolution scenario is highly taxing on the business community and it is they who should be benefiting from the deal, however this is being undermined by the current situation with opposing local authorities. AD advised that the current situation would be discussed further at the next Rotherham Growth Board meeting
- AD advised of a meeting with HS2 to discuss the current situation and future plans taking place on the 17th November, and that all policy and transport forum members are welcome to join the meeting

Update on Legislation Issues

- MB highlighted that the new Pre-Action Protocol for Debt Claims goes live on the 1st October 2017. The new rules will require creditors to demonstrate compliance before instigating court proceedings to recover debts. They will apply to any business claiming a debt from an individual, including sole traders, but won’t apply to business-to-business debts – which remain governed by the Practice Direction for Pre-Action Conduct and Protocols (PDPAC)
- MB mentioned that Class 2 NIC’s for the self-employed were scheduled to be abolished with effect from March 2018 as part of the usual post Budget changes in tax & NI legislation. However, the Chancellor has already quietly announced (ahead of the Budget) that the abolition will not now come into effect until April 2019. The effect is not substantial – as the cost for owners/partners with net profits of more than £6,025 p.a. is only £148+ p.a. but it is something that has to remain as part of self-employment a little longer. Further information can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/abolition-of-class-2-national-insurance-contributions>

- MB noted that from the 1st October 2017, all new business start-ups have a legal obligation to provide a workplace pension as soon as they employ a member of staff (if earnings are above the threshold). The Pensions Regulator (TPR) has launched an online suite of information and tools to help start-ups comply with their auto-enrolment duties. This can be found at: <http://www.thepensionsregulator.gov.uk/press/instant-pensions-duties-start-for-new-businesses.aspx>
- MB highlighted the UK data protection bill coming into force referring to the European General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Individual data rights will be strengthened, though it is the Government's view that, as far as possible, existing lawful data processing should be allowed to continue. The Bill therefore assures specific UK businesses and organisations the vital data processing they undertake for legal or public interest reasons can continue uninterrupted. Further information can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/data-laws-to-be-made-fit-for-digital-age>. AD mentioned that there are still significant ramifications of the new GDPR rules and that the fear factor will increase for businesses up to May 2018
- Cheryl Sanderson (CS) mentioned that the Environment Agency proposes to have a new standard rules environmental permit to cover the a) the accumulation and disposal of radioactive materials and b) radioactive waste at sites with a radiation detection system. It is intended that the new standard rules permit will be an efficient way of regulating for both operators and the Environment Agency, as well as protecting the environment from pollution. Matt Travis (MT) mentioned that permit regulations are tightening up significantly and will have a marked impact on businesses. This is currently under consultation and members can submit their views at: <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/environmental-permitting/standard-rules-consultation-no-15/>

International Business Opportunities

Duncan Hoyland (DH) provided information regarding recent International Trade activities in the Sheffield City Region (SCR).

- DH updated the group on what DIT are currently offering local businesses
- DH mentioned that a new package of support is going to be available shortly for mid-size businesses with a minimum £5m turnover to support export development that will provide a tailored offering to suit their size of business and export objectives
- DH was mindful to mention the upcoming trade mission to Poland and the fantastic value the opportunity presents
- DH reminded the group about the Export for Growth funding, enabling SCR businesses to access match funding to explore overseas markets and that there is a preferential rate for South Yorkshire of 60% funding to 40% business contribution so very favorable for assisting local businesses to develop their export activities
- DH also reminded the group about the Horasis China event taking place in Sheffield 5th - 6th November, and that this is a great opportunity to encourage inward investment

Any Other Business

- AD advised that the Chamber Annual General Meeting will be taking place at Barnsley FC on the 23rd November, at which a new members meeting will take place beforehand. AD suggested moving the meeting date for the next policy meeting to coincide with this to ease attendance at the following events if forum members wished to stay on. This is intended to take place at the later time of 8.30am to reduce the length of continuous attendance for the whole set of events.
- MB mentioned that the Google Bus (Digital Garage) will be in Rotherham Town Centre on the morning of 6th October with a later visit to Tesco in Wath Upon Dearne
- Rotherham Launchpad will be holding an information event at Retail World, Parkgate Rotherham on Saturday 30th September

Date of the next meeting

8.30am Tuesday 23rd November 2017 at Barnsley Football Club, Grove Street, Barnsley S71 1ET.

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