

## **MINUTE EXTRACT**

### **BUSINESS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**24 JANUARY 2017**

#### **51 NOTICE OF MOTION: INWARD INVESTMENT**

Further to minute 35 (29/11/16), the Committee were requested to consider the following Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Phil Davies and seconded by Councillor Ann McLachlan which had been referred by the Mayor at the Council meeting on 17 October, 2016 (minute 67 (3) refers) to this Committee for consideration –

#### **INWARD INVESTMENT**

“This council recognises economic growth is key to realising the Wirral Plan and delivering a better life for Wirral’s residents.

Council also notes, despite the government’s lack of enthusiasm for their former Chancellor’s flagship regeneration policy The Northern Powerhouse, this authority remains committed to working closely with other authorities in the region to drive economic success.

Council acknowledges the success to date of the Liverpool City Region in growing the economy – currently worth nearly £29billion with output increasing by 8.4% in the five years up to 2014 - and recognises Wirral’s economic future is tied to the continued success of the City region.

Council further notes the benefit of having Wirral Council’s Leader serve as the portfolio holder for Economic Development across the City Region and the added profile and opportunity this brings forward for Wirral.

Council is proud of the work being done by Liverpool City Region firms who have secured the 2nd highest incidence of high-growth firms in the UK, and by trade and business networks supported by this authority to attract new investment to the Wirral, including Wirral Chamber of Commerce, Liverpool Local Enterprise Partnership and the Council’s Economic Development and Growth unit.

Council supports any opportunity to continue to develop Wirral and the City Region’s maturing relationship with China and Chinese businesses, especially in the key strategic growth industries of Advanced Manufacturing, Marine and Logistics and Clean Energy and Civil Nuclear Engineering.

Council welcomes the decision to partner with Liverpool Vision, Invest Liverpool, Wirral-based businesses and the local Chambers of Commerce to promote the borough and the wider City Region during a forthcoming joint trade mission to Kunming, Guiyang, Qingdao, Shanghai and Wirral’s twin city, Tianjin.

Council supports every effort to drive economic growth, foster stronger relationships with investors, and promote Wirral and the wider City Region as the most attractive investment partners for Chinese and South East Asian investors.”

In accordance with Standing Order 7 (6), Councillor Davies had been invited to attend the meeting in order for him to be given an opportunity to explain the Motion.

Councillor Davies elaborated on the content of the motion and the work being undertaken to increase inward investment. He had now been a number of times to China, including previously with the Leader of the Conservative Group and former leader of the Liberal Democrat Group. The latest delegation last October, of which he was a part, was the largest yet as it was undertaken as a Liverpool City Region visit, with other Leaders, nine or ten businesses, three from the Wirral, the local Chamber of Commerce and Liverpool Vision.

The delegation had visited six cities in China, Kunming, Guiyang, Qingdao, Shanghai, Beijing and Wirral’s twin city Tianjin. The scale of these cities was enormous, all with populations in the millions. Presentations were made by the LCR in all six cities and ‘match making’ sessions were also held with a variety of businesses. About 102 leads were being proactively followed up with a high proportion of interest in Wirral particularly in low carbon and offshore wind businesses.

Specific companies, such as a cable manufacturing company had expressed an interest in the opportunities regarding offshore wind and were in fact sending a delegation to Wirral in April / May as they were keen to set up a manufacturing operation. The government in Qingdao were keen to develop direct flights to Liverpool and were in discussions with the Operations Director of Liverpool John Lennon Airport. The three Wirral businesses had thought the visit had been a very useful investment of their time and twelve additional businesses had signed up to participate in a future delegation.

The Leader commented on the fact that the delegation had been a City Region wide one which had raised the profile of Wirral and the British Consulate had received good feedback following the visit.

In response to questions from the Committee, Councillor Davies’ comments included the following:

- With regard to timescales for investment, this varied with one company hopeful of investing in the next year and others which would take longer.
- Whilst acknowledging that the City Region had some of the best talent in the creative industries he was not aware of any proposed investment on this side but the delegation had visited an interesting creative industries quarter in Beijing. With regard to tourism the Liverpool John Lennon airport was exploring the possibility of a direct air route.
- Given the scale and size of the cities in China there was a need to promote Wirral as a part of the LCR as it needed to be seen in the context of a wider conurbation.

- With regard to recent funding announcements he welcomed any additional funding from the Government for the LCR but commented on the pace of devolution which the Government needed to speed up. There was a need to lobby for more power to the LCR and he found it frustrating that the Government did not appear to be giving it a higher priority. He had himself met Andrew Percy MP, Minister for the Northern Powerhouse, twice and also with Sajid David, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on his recent visit to the Wirral.
- There was a need for more ‘big ticket’ items such as HS2 into Liverpool and a HS3 from Liverpool to Hull.

Committee Members thanked the Leader for his comprehensive report and for all the work he was doing to try and bring investment into the borough.

It was moved by Councillor Mitchell and seconded by Councillor Abbey, that –

“The motion be supported.”

It was then moved as an amendment by Councillor Blakeley and seconded by Councillor Anderson, that –

“Paragraph 2 of the motion be amended to read:

‘Council also welcomes the Government’s commitment to its flagship regeneration policy, the Northern Powerhouse and would encourage the Council, along with all other authorities in the region to meet with the Minister for the Northern Powerhouse, Andrew Percy MP in order to explore all options to drive economic success.’”

The amendment was put and lost (5:10).

The motion was put and carried (10:5).

**Resolved (10:5) – That the motion be supported.**