

Policy & External Affairs Committee Notes – 16th May 2017

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

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

Apologies from: Andrew Denniff, Lisa Pogson, Matt Jackson, Simeon Leach

Executive Report

- Dominic Beck (DB) briefly updated the Committee on recent and upcoming activities the Chamber are involved with including plans for Chamber Means Business in September and preparation for the annual Business Awards
- DB referred to new patrons for the Chamber which are Allotts Accountants, Magna, RNN Group and Swinton Business
- DB confirmed that Shane Young is now confirmed as the Chamber Membership Manager, and that two new employees are joining, Vanessa Roberts and Sarah Hattersley who will support the membership function at the Chamber
- DB clarified Chamber finances and confirmed that all three Chamber businesses (Chamber of Commerce, Chamber Skills Solutions and REAL) have all returned healthy surpluses. CSS is doing exceptionally well and Export services are performing above current expectations though the Chamber remains guarded about future expectations due to the Brexit situation
- DB explained that a move to alternative premises was imminent and is expected to take place over the coming months, though the Chamber will remain on the same business park

General Election

- DB explained that following the declaration of a snap election by the current leadership party, British Chambers of Commerce have prepared a General Election Manifesto of their own to cover across parties
- DB mentioned that the Rotherham MP's breakfast event was coming up and was closely timed for the election so should engage well with businesses to get a feel of the current political climate
- Martyn Benson (MB) mentioned that the BCC Manifesto covered a critical point about public bodies using public money to introduce services that competes with the private sector, and these may not present value for public money

Update on Legislation Issues

- MB mentioned that Health and Safety legislation is still going through due process at Parliament, but should bring changes that support businesses. He highlighted that no other significant legislation is going through at present, though with the pending General Election if a change of leadership, the Power of Investigation Bill could change

International Business Opportunities

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

- DH updated the group on what international trade provisions were currently on offer for local businesses, which included the suite of services and support provided by the Department of International Trade (DIT)
- DH advised that various programs and trade missions will be online following the General Election, however due to Perda conditions leading up to the election nothing could be progressed yet
- DH highlighted 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 mentioned that inward investment opportunities would be fully supported by DIT, and is prepared to support wherever there is demand in the region to encourage UK visits, events, collaboration, etc. and boost local economies
- DH clarified that China is a strong growth area for inward investment, and reminded about the Horasis China event taking place in Sheffield 5-6 November, and will be hosted by Sheffield City Region LEP and the China Federation of Industrial Economics
- BL sought clarification on the size of the DIT team for support, and DH confirmed that there are 30 team members across the Yorkshire & Humber Region with 9 of those are focused on Sheffield City Region working in collaboration with the SCR Growth Hub
- CW queried what could be supported in terms of retail rather than manufacturing. DH stated that there was not a significant amount of support for retail outside standard services, however depending on market approaches there is a good level of support in certain areas such as e-export. CW suggested that luxury items would be in demand in places like China and as such the important element would be the logistics of getting those goods to that market and not just inspiring them to buy. CW stated that knowing how to physically deliver goods to market is becoming an area of concentration for various businesses. CW raised concerns about how the SCR Growth Hub might support his own business as he doesn't feel the offer is marketed in the right way
- CW and MT suggested that agencies providing support should approach businesses and ask the relevant questions to ascertain what they need and develop the mechanism to support their requirements as one size does not fit all

Any Other Business

BL mentioned that due to minor changes to responsibilities in roles at RIDO, it may reduce the availability of BL and MB for future meetings due to increased workload.

Date of the next meeting

Tuesday 26th September 2017 at Barnsley & Rotherham Chamber of Commerce, Rotherham.

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