A REVIEW OF INWARD INVESTMENT

January 2013
TASK GROUP MEMBERSHIP

The task group consisted of the following members:

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Group would like to thank everyone who contributed to the review, in particular:

Dave Hill, Strategic Economic Development Team Manager, Warwickshire County Council
Torin Spence, Warwickshire County Council Work Based Learning and Apprenticeships Manager
Krishna Patel, Business Relationship Manager, Warwickshire College
Linsey Luke, Federation of Small Businesses
Aftab Gaffer, Rugby First
Alistair George, Director, George and Company Chartered Surveyors
Margaret Burnham, Centre Manager, Sir Frank Whittle Business Centre
Julie Crawshaw, Warwickshire County Council
Geraldine Fisher, Relationship Manager, Department for Work and Pensions

The Group also valued the contribution of local business owners who took time to speak to members and to the Economic Development Officer about their experiences as a business in the local area.

The Group would also like to thank all the officers involved for their invaluable support and contributions. Particular thanks are due to Adam Norburn, Anna Rose, John Dale, Sarah Fisher and Chryssa Burdett.
CHAIRMAN’S FOREWORD

This has been a very challenging Task Group that has stretched our abilities and imagination. It has however been a very enjoyable and rewarding task and I am confident that we have arrived at good decisions and recommendations.

We enjoyed the interactive experiences, especially the visit to the Sir Frank Whittle Business Centre. I think we learned a lot from this particular trip. We also realised the amount of misconception regarding difficulties in taking on apprentices and the possible extra costs that could be incurred. Our thanks must go to all the staff for their help and hospitality during our visit.

The select committee gave us a good insight into the requirements of local businesses and their concerns about the shortage of skilled workers. It soon became clear that whilst we have a lower than average unemployment rate, this was actually a disadvantage when it came to new businesses wishing to locate in Rugby. Our biggest challenge was in establishing where the gaps in employment requirements were and how schools and colleges were directing students towards those gaps. This is an area that could benefit from partnership working.

Encouraging new businesses to settle in Rugby will not be an easy task but we are now more aware of the difficulties and drawbacks that we face in the future growth of the Borough. It should be noted that we are actually doing quite well at the present time but we must not become complacent. As the Borough grows and the need for more investment becomes more important, especially with the implementation of the local retention of business rates, we must become more inventive and imaginative in our thinking. Rugby is a beautiful Borough and we have a good reputation within the business world, we need to use that and expand on it if we are to compete for top quality businesses to invest here in the future.

I must take this opportunity to thank all the officers, visitors and everyone who took part in the task group and for their valuable contributions to the whole review. I would particularly like to thank John Dale and Debbie Dawson, without their help we would not have such a successful review.

Carolyn Robbins
Chairman

Councillor Carolyn Robbins
Chairman
1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Task Group proposes the following recommendations to Cabinet:

**IMPROVEMENTS THAT COULD BE MADE QUICKLY AND AT LOW COST**

1. The Council should work with local agents to develop a showcase pack for potential investors in the town and wider Rugby area, based around a redesigned commercial property guide.

2. The Council should promote local land and development sites across the borough in a privately-funded sub-regional magazine.

3. The working group established in relation to the Rugby World Cup events in 2013 and 2015 should be fully supported by the Council to exploit economic development opportunities arising from the events.

**MODIFICATIONS OF EXISTING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

4. An interactive web-based version of the commercial property guide should be developed on the council’s website, and maintained as an up-to-date resource.

5. The Council should keep under regular review how neighbouring local authorities are responding to the additional powers in the Localism Act to grant discretionary business rate relief.

**SIGNIFICANT PROPOSALS WHICH WILL REQUIRE COMMITMENT OF TIME OR FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

6. To raise the profile of the borough, relevant award schemes should be identified and applications submitted on a quarterly basis.

7. More effective and formal partnership working between agencies should be encouraged to map and respond to employer skills needs across the county.

The task group also recommended that a copy of the final review report should be sent to Warwickshire County Council, highlighting in particular the review findings about the lack of awareness amongst employers about apprentice scheme opportunities and the financial incentives available, and the negative perceptions that exist about the potential burdens of taking on an apprentice.

1.1 Alignment with the Corporate Strategy

The review relates to the following corporate priority:

Establish an environment that will attract new businesses into the borough and enable existing businesses to flourish.
2. OBJECTIVES

2.1 Background

On 19 March, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board placed a review of inward investment in the overview and scrutiny work programme, on the recommendation of the work programme workshop held in February 2012. The review topic had been suggested both by Leadership and Operations Team and by Customer and Partnerships Committee.

The level of investment in any country is largely determined by national economic policy. Nevertheless, there are many ways in which local councils can influence the level of inward investment into their own particular areas. The review looked at what can be done to promote economic growth and attract businesses into the borough, particularly in the context of a new scheme being introduced from April 2013 enabling local authorities to retain a proportion of any growth in their business rate base.

A draft one page strategy for the review was agreed by Customer and Partnerships Committee on 21 June 2012, and several amendments were made by the task group at their first meeting on 3 September 2012.

2.2 The One-Page Strategy

The one-page strategy is the name given to the scoping document for the review. It defines the task and the improvements being aimed for and how these are going to be achieved. The review's one-page strategy is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the broad topic area?</th>
<th>Inward Investment</th>
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<tr>
<td>What is the specific topic area?</td>
<td>The review will focus on the council’s policy in relation to the retention of business rates by local authorities, which is being proposed in the first phase of the Local Government Resource Review. It will consider:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• how the council might retain current business and encourage economic growth in the borough</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• the council’s policy for providing relief to businesses in support of inward investment and spending any income earned from growth in local business rates;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• what other income sources there might be to support economic growth.</td>
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Inward investment is about encouraging businesses to relocate and invest in the area. Local authorities can support local economic growth through the planning system, investment in local infrastructure, ensuring access to education and training, building strong relationships with businesses and through the way they exercise their regulatory powers in relation to local businesses. These are all areas the review may wish to consider in the context of encouraging economic growth in the borough to maximise income.
What is the ambition of the review?
Rugby will have a clear policy in relation to the retention of business rates and be successful in supporting economic growth to maximise the new income opportunities. Rugby will be effectively marketed as an attractive location for businesses and the Council will work well with partners to attract more businesses to the borough.

How well do we perform at the moment?
The task group will begin by considering:
- number of companies in the borough
- an analysis of the borough’s rateable value tax base, and recent trends
- comparative performance data against other Warwickshire authorities on inward investment
- details of recent planning decisions relating to new businesses
- evidence and comparative data on inward investment in other local authority areas.

Supporting documents for the task group to consider include:
- Rugby Borough Council Core Strategy (chapter 8) – specifically land allocations for commercial uses
- Economic Development Action Plan
- Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership 5-year Strategy
- Warwickshire Investment Partnership Annual Report 2010/11
- The Portas Review: An independent review into the future of our high streets

Who shall we consult about the current service and about how we can improve it?
Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (Inward Investment task group lead)
Warwickshire Investment Partnership (arm of Warwickshire County Council)
Chamber of Commerce
Federation of Small Businesses
Coventry and Warwickshire Institute of Directors
Local commercial agents
Rugby BID / Town Centre Company
Warwickshire County Council work-based learning and apprenticeship team
Warwickshire College
Economy, Development and Culture Portfolio Holder

What other help do we need?
Support from the Head of Resources, Economic Development Officer, Revenues Manager and the Forward Planning team.

The task group will need to understand the Government’s proposals for business rate retention in the Local Government Resource Review.

The review may also make use of any relevant evidence gathered as part of Warwickshire County Council’s recent scrutiny review (August 2011) on supporting the local economy, and take into account the findings of Rugby Borough Council’s review of the town centre economy (2010).

How long should it take?
The review will commence in September 2012 and conclude by the end of January 2013.

What will be the outcome?
Recommendations to Cabinet on measures to support local businesses and encourage local economic growth.
3. METHODOLOGY

The task group built a strong evidence base to support its conclusions, drawing on a variety of sources. This included:

- Briefings and presentations from the Head of Resources, the Revenues Manager, the Economic Development Officer and the Development Strategy Manager on the
  o local retention of business rates
  o business rate administration in Rugby
  o the council’s Economic Strategy
  o planning policy and practice relating to commercial developments
- Oral evidence from the Strategic Economic Development Team Manager at Warwickshire County Council on future plans for economic growth at the county and sub-regional (CW LEP) level.
- Comparative data from the Audit Commission and official labour market statistics (‘nomis’) on economic development
- Benchmarking data for Warwickshire authorities from Warwickshire Investment Partnership on key economic indicators
- Information and examples of good practice from the LGA local growth campaign
- Updates from the Head of Resources on the proposals to pool business rates with other local authorities in Coventry and Warwickshire.

The task group held a select committee meeting on 24 October 2012 at the Town Hall, the purpose of which was to bring together those with expertise and insight on inward investment. The following attended the meeting:

- Torin Spence, Warwickshire County Council Work Based Learning and Apprenticeships Manager
- Krishna Patel, Business Relationship Manager, Warwickshire College
- Linsey Luke, Federation of Small Businesses
- Aftab Gaffer, Rugby First
- Alistair George, Director, George and Company Chartered Surveyors
- Cllr Professor Mark Williams, WMG, University of Warwick

Some of those attending the meeting also provided written submissions to the task group in advance of the meeting.

Task group members also visited the Sir Frank Whittle Business Centre and met with the centre manager and the Warwickshire County Council officer with responsibility for all of the business centres. They also spoke with some of the business owners who are based at the centre.

To obtain feedback from local businesses, the task group commissioned a short survey which was placed on the council website and promoted to the membership of local business organisations. It was also circulated in hard copy at a ‘meet the buyer’ event organised by the council and partners. Disappointingly, only one response was received. The Economic Development Officer contacted a number of larger employers on behalf of the task group to obtain direct feedback regarding skills gaps. These were: Precision Laser, Cemex, Nationwide Windows, DK Packing, Bretherton Solicitors and Perry Appleton Group.
4. FINDINGS

4.1 BUSINESS RATES

4.1.1 Local retention of business rates

The Local Government Finance Act 2012 introduces a local business rates retention scheme from April 2013. The detail of the proposals and the council’s approach in response to the new policy evolved during the course of the review, and the task group received regular updates from the Head of Resources.

The thrust of the policy is to return to greater local influence over funding and spending, the aim being to:
- incentivise councils to encourage economic growth
- provide greater certainty about future funding; and
- offer councils greater autonomy and flexibility.

Once underway the scheme will allow councils to keep a proportion of 50% of the additional funds they generate. However, there is a complex framework underpinning this. Government will assess a baseline funding level for each council and only a proportion of growth in business rate income above that level will be retained. Any amount of business rates collected by councils that rise over the set baseline will be paid into a central tariff. This central pot will be used to pay out top-ups to those authorities whose business rates fall below their own set baseline figure. Government will also set a figure for the percentage level of increase in revenue local authorities may keep, with any growth above this collected by Government as a levy. This levy has now been set at a maximum of 50%, so all councils will be able to keep at least 50% of 50% (i.e. 25%) of the growth that they generate. Funding from the levy will be passed back to local authorities who have lost income, such as through big businesses moving out of their area.

It was reported to the task group that, for Rugby, each 0.5% increase in the borough’s business rate base equates to a potential funding increase of around £80,000 per annum. However, it is also the case that in order to retain the current level of income received by the council, the council’s business rate growth will need to increase at least in line with inflation.

Included within the Government’s policy regarding the local retention of business rates is the stated intention that business rates paid in respect of new renewable energy projects will be retained entirely by local authorities.

4.1.2 Pooling business rates

Councils have the option to pool business rates with other councils in order to mitigate the risk of loss of income due to the closure of a major business in their area, or to retain income within the area which might otherwise be taken away by the Government in the form of a levy. Even in a pooling arrangement, however, individual councils still retain 25% of any growth in their business rates and the pooling only applies to any growth above this level.
Prior to the start of the review Cabinet had taken a decision that Rugby should express an interest in being included in a wider business rate pooling arrangement being considered for Warwickshire (and subsequently extended to include Coventry). Officers had been given delegated authority to pull out of any pooling arrangement, once actual funding allocations from the Government were known in early December 2012, should this show that the council would be in some way disadvantaged by pooling with other councils. The initial expression of interest for a Coventry and Warwickshire Business Rates Pool was submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government on 27 July 2012.

It was reported to the task group in October that Cabinet had approved a report outlining the arrangements and financial benefits for all local authorities in Coventry and Warwickshire to join a pool. The proposal was submitted to the DCLG by 9 November 2012 and was subject to the approval of the department. At the conclusion of the review the DCLG had confirmed their acceptance of the pooling application.

The pool will become effective for one year from 1 April 2013, and there will be an opportunity to review the arrangements half way through the year to ensure they are working and that the anticipated benefits are forthcoming.

The pool will determine how any income gained will be redistributed within the Coventry and Warwickshire area. A memorandum of understanding will be needed to establish the governance arrangements and determine how any income will be redistributed, with the expectation that a proportion of any growth would be reinvested to support economic growth in the area.

The financial benefits of the pooling arrangement were estimated to be around £150-£200,000 per annum. Since this initial evaluation the Government has set a maximum for the levy that can be taken from any authority at 50%. Previously it had been calculated that the Council was likely to incur a levy on its growth in excess of 86%. The Council will therefore be able to retain a larger proportion of its growth and the financial benefits of being in a pool will be correspondingly reduced. However, it is still advantageous for the Council to remain in the Coventry and Warwickshire Pool but the financial benefits are now estimated to be around £100,000 per annum.

4.1.3 Business rates – current position

The task group were informed about the current business rates arrangements and the administration around their collection.

National Non-Domestic Rates in their current form were introduced in 1990. Prior to this the rates from businesses were collected and retained locally.

All properties that are non-domestic have a ‘rateable value’ attributed to them by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA). The Council has a duty to report all new builds, extensions or demolitions to the VOA. Some properties such as churches and parks are exempt from rating. Business rates are charged in zones, with properties in the town centre charged a higher rate. These rates are set nationally and are the same for all town centres.
The total rateable value in Rugby (September 2012) is £102,509,171 and there are 2,983 assessments. These include wider business activities, such as trafficmaster sites, advertising rights and valet services in car parks. The rateable value broadly represents the yearly rent a property could be let for on the open market and the rateable values are reassessed every 5 years.

The Government calculates a rating multiplier and this is used to calculate how much each ratepayer will have to pay. This is currently 45.8p in the pound. Throughout the 5 year period, the multiplier goes up by the rate of inflation.

4.1.4 Business rate relief

There are several reductions that can be allowed and the most common are listed below:

- Empty properties – there is no charge for the first three months that a property is empty and this extends to six months for industrial properties. After that rates are due in full, except where properties have a rateable value of less than £2,600. There are further exemptions such as listed buildings and properties owned by a charity or part of a business in Administration.

- Small Business Rate Relief – Nationally, businesses currently receive 100% relief, if their rateable value is under £6,000 and it is their only business. It was announced in the Autumn Statement in December 2012 that the doubling of rate relief (from 50% to 100%) for small businesses would be extended to April 2014. The percentage reduces for all those properties with between £6,000 and £12,000 RV by 2% per £120 RV.

- Charities, Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) and rural – There is a mandatory 80% relief for all registered charities and CASCs. Certain businesses in rural areas are entitled to 50% relief.

- Discretionary Rate Relief – the council can give discretionary relief to charities and non profit making organisations. Part of this relief has to be funded by the local authority.

Rugby Borough Council has a policy, in some cases, of topping up the mandatory relief to registered charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs to 100%, but not all authorities do this. The council funds 75% of this top-up and Government funds the remainder. These cases are all assessed individually. Generally, national charities do not get the additional discretionary rate relief but local charities are treated more favourably.

The Localism Act 2011 gives councils wider discretion to reduce the business rates of any local ratepayer. This could be considered on an individual basis, for example where a case of extreme hardship can be demonstrated. However, unlike the current arrangements for additional discretionary rate relief, any increased discretionary relief given would be at a direct cost to the council. Central government will continue to part fund discretionary reliefs in the same circumstances and to the same degree as in previous years.

Rate bills can be served on newly built premises provided they are reasonably complete. Business rates do not apply once buildings have been demolished, and
developers sometimes demolish or allow charities to use the premises in order to avoid paying rates.

4.1.5 Business rate collection in Rugby

Business rates are normally collected over 10 monthly payments. During 2011/12 Rugby collected in £36,661,412. This was paid directly to the Government in full and the council received back a grant of £4,045,475. Warwickshire County Council also received a grant, which amounted £102,500,000 (reflecting the income from the five Warwickshire district and borough councils).

Over the past five years, the following amounts have been collected:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>£36,708,563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>£36,079,998</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008/09</td>
<td>£35,106,721</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007/08</td>
<td>£34,512,516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/07</td>
<td>£35,095,338</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rugby Borough Council collected 98.9% of the charge in 2011/12 and continues to collect the remainder in subsequent years. This figure had fallen from the usual rate of around 99.4% due to the impact of the current economic climate. It is anticipated this figure will rise again when the financial situation improves. This authority has a practice of vigorously collecting business rates but not all authorities do so with the same level of commitment. In Rugby empty properties are currently visited every three months to check for any occupancy but it is planned to increase the frequency of visits.

The Council’s effectiveness in collecting rates was endorsed by external parties. Rugby First commented in their written submission:

“It appears to take an inordinate amount of time for the rates office in Birmingham to catch up with the reality on the ground… We would commend the RBC’s Non Domestic Rates department for their dedication and ability to chase things down. We employ them to collect our BID levy and they have performed admirably”.

The Federation of Small Businesses added: “the council have actively promoted SBRR to the local businesses and have a good take up. We see this as a positive step to support small businesses”.

4.2 ECONOMIC STRATEGY AND PLANNING PROVISION

4.2.1 Context

The task group considered a range of statistical indicators relating to economic development, comparing Rugby with nearest statistical neighbours, other local authorities within Warwickshire and national averages. This included business starts and closures in the borough, average weekly earnings, employment rate, percentage of Jobseekers Allowance claimants and qualifications of local residents.
Overall the data demonstrates that Rugby is an average local authority area – performing very much in the middle both within the county and when compared with statistical neighbours on all of these indicators. Data provided by Warwickshire Investment Partnership on the level of inward investment placed Rugby consistently 3rd or 4th amongst the five Warwickshire districts and boroughs over the past 4 years for the net number of new businesses.

The task group were informed that inward investment is influenced by three key factors:
- labour supply (including appropriate skill levels)
- location (both of customers and competition)
- availability of land or property (at an agreeable rate).

In terms of location, Rugby is clearly very well situated for transport links. Labour supply and availability of land and property, as well as the council’s proactive role in economic development, are explored in more detail below.

### 4.2.2 Land and Property

The area that Rugby Borough Council can most influence is the availability of land, property and appropriate development sites through the planning system. The Council has a duty not only to allocate business land, but also to deliver jobs. The allocation of land for commercial use is a key priority of the council’s development planning document, the Core Strategy. Not all local authorities have produced such a document.

The Council’s economic strategy is articulated within the Core Strategy. This is informed by a strong evidence base.

#### 4.2.2.1 Core Strategy

The council’s vision is to “develop the prosperity of the Borough of Rugby and raise its importance as an economic engine within the sub-region”. The vision acknowledges that future development in Rugby should encourage the existing business base to grow organically, whilst also shaping and promoting diversity amongst the sectors represented and types of employment they support.

Key points from the strategy include:

- Rugby has a healthy economy with low unemployment and steady growth in new employment development. (At the time that the Core Strategy was written approximately 43,000 people were employed within the Borough.)
- The period 2006 to 2020 will see the Borough’s economy grow by a predicted rate of 12%. For the West Midlands this figure is 13%.
- Existing employment land should be protected, and any redevelopment of existing sites should incorporate at least 20% as employment land.
- Further diversity of Rugby’s economic base will be encouraged.
- There is a need to provide employment land for more small to medium-sized enterprises.
- The Borough needs to provide more B1 (offices, research and development, light industry) floor space. (The provision of such floor space will help in diversifying the economic base of the Borough).
• There is potential for over-reliance on storage and distribution if more B1 floor space is not achieved.
• Rugby should maintain and improve a job density of 48 jobs per ha.
• By 2027 distribution, transport and communications is predicted to be the most prominent employment section, providing approximately 14,500 jobs
• The next largest sector will be non-marketed services (ie. public administration, health, social care etc.), highlighting that there will generally be an increase in demand for office floor space to support these sectors.
• Predicted sector growth will also see a continued demand for the supply of B2 land to serve the Borough’s significant manufacturing and construction industries up to 2027.

Overall, the strategy recognises that Rugby has a healthy economy in terms of an existing business base, unemployment and also gradual commercial growth. It concludes that the steady increase in employment within the logistic sector in the area indicates a need to ensure that any future development recognises the importance of that sector, yet also ensures diversity in the borough’s employment offer.

4.2.2.2 Business Growth Forecasts – Core Strategy allocations

Outlined below is the economic growth forecast through the allocation of land in the Core Strategy:

• The Core Strategy allocates 108 ha of employment land, to be delivered between 2006 and 2020.
• This allocation assumes a job density of 48 jobs per ha. This figure does not include the Ryton (former Peugeot site) or Ansty Regional Investment Sites.
• There will be a ‘rolling reservoir’ of delivery of 36 ha every 5 years.
• 67 ha of this allocation will be delivered through the two urban extensions – the Mast Site and the Gateway site. This land forms the medium to long term commercial growth.

The production of the Core Strategy already appears to be paying dividends. During the course of the review, a news item on BBC Midlands Today highlighted major developments in Rugby, which were bucking national trends. Though development of employment land is phased for completion behind housing development on the Gateway site, there is evidence of a good level of interest from developers in the employment land since it began to be marketed.

Due to market conditions, development in recent years has been largely limited to speculative built commercial properties. There was no development / completion of employment floorspace in 2010/11 and 2009/10. In 2008/09 15568 sqm of office space (B1) was developed. The task group were provided with a list of major sites that are either in the process of development or have planning permission and are expected to be built by the end of 2013. These amounted to a total of 337,685 sqm net of predicted completions.

4.2.2.3 Availability of appropriate land and property

It was suggested in some of the evidence presented to the task group that one of the main barriers to inward investment in the borough is the lack of the right type of
property, causing companies to locate elsewhere. There is a particular need for good quality and adaptable industrial units that can be split or expanded to suit changing business needs.

There is a perceived shortage of smaller industrial units (between 800 and 2,000 sq ft) and modern offices in Rugby. Once small businesses have been established they need space and facilities to grow and expand. Compartmentalisation of old industrial units is too expensive to be a viable option for such businesses. There is also an issue over the size of units available in the town – many are too large for the types of retailers who would be looking to locate in the town.

By comparison, it was suggested that Daventry offers more suitable accommodation to medium-sized businesses. However, a large proportion of smaller industrial units are owned by Daventry District Council, meaning they are able to control rents and discretionary rate relief. Rugby Borough Council is not similarly 'capital rich'.

That said, evidence from the Sir Frank Whittle Business Centre stated that they had found "no evidence of the Rugby area not providing the space required", reporting that most of their vacating businesses had relocated in the Rugby area. It was suggested that a gap analysis of the premises available and the demand for commercial property was needed to provide more robust evidence on this point. However, this would require commissioned research, at a cost to the council. The findings could only capture a snapshot in time, and it was unclear that the council would be in a position to take any positive action to address the findings.

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**Case Study – Sir Frank Whittle Business Centre**

The Sir Frank Whittle Business Centre (SFWBC) opened in May 1994 and has accommodated 127 companies in that time. The centre is made up of 42 light industrial units ranging from 148sq ft to 718 sq ft, with the rent level starting at £50 per week for the smallest unit. The variety of unit sizes enables companies to up or downsize as required. The units can be extended by installing a mezzanine floor (at the companies own expense).

There are shared kitchen and toilet facilities and a small offloading area. Companies rent a basic shell and install their own equipment, utilities and broadband etc. The centre offers 24-hour access for 364 days per year, and provides a reception service for the companies based there during normal office hours. The centre holds seminars around three times per year offering basic business advice on topics such as human resources.

The centre often attracts home-based businesses that have outgrown the space they have available. There is no minimum or maximum occupancy period. Companies are issued with a 28 day licence which enables them to move out quickly if they wish or need to. For the businesses moving to the centre, this is important in mitigating the risks attached to taking on a business premises. Business owners value the kudos of having a businesses address and the support of centre staff and other businesses around them.

There is a turnover of approximately four companies a year. In December 2012, there were just two vacant units, one of which will be occupied from mid January. The current occupancy by floor space is 91%, against a national benchmark of 85%.
There is a wide mix of business types and size based at the centre. Some employ staff, and others are staffed by the owner or joint owners. The failure rate of businesses within the centre is extremely low.

It was clear from the conversations with business owners at the centre that in many cases the facilities and support it offered had enabled their businesses to grow, and the centre was able to accommodate this growth by offering larger units and facilities.

In 2012 the centre received 28 enquiries, four of which now have units at the centre. Of these enquiries:
- four had activities which were unsuitable (eg. indoor skate area, car upholstery, paint spraying)
- four have found alternative premises
- two went to other WCC business centres in Nuneaton and Bidford on Avon
- one wanted larger accommodation (1500 square feet)
- the remaining are on the waiting list for suitable units to become available.

4.2.2.4 Planning Service

Whilst the Core Strategy is important in setting out a clear intention by the council to encourage new business developments, the council can also have an important influence through the way it responds to queries from potential developers. Officers provided specific examples of where a ‘VIP service’ to potential investors and developers could make a real difference in attracting new businesses. A case study illustrating how the council’s planning service has worked effectively to assist businesses and facilitate new investment in the area by Sainsbury’s is included below.

This was endorsed in the written evidence received from the Federation of Small Businesses, which included the following comments:

“Inward investment can be greatly impacted by the service a business receives from all departments with a local authority, particularly the planning department. We are please to say that anecdotally our members inform us that RBC has a ‘can do’ attitude to planning and have always held the business community in high regard and recognising them as key to the prosperity of the area. This is very often not the case in many areas, where businesses are seen as the enemy and not encouraged to expand or build.”

The planning service at the council has been through an end to end review and radically changed its service structure as a result, with a clear focus on the customer. As a result, planning officers have a flexible, common sense approach which encourages growth. This is further strengthened by the principle of sustainable development introduced by the National Planning Policy Framework introduced in March 2012, which encourages planning officers to give strong consideration to economic benefit when determining planning applications.
Case Study – Sainsbury’s research and development facility

In the early part of last year, Rugby Borough Council (RBC) received an investment enquiry from Sainsbury’s with a request for a sizeable piece of land suitable to locate their research and development function; producing upwards of 500 skilled jobs. The particular site that interested them, although only one of several locations in the West Midlands they were investigating, was the investment site at Ansty. Indeed Ansty was seen to be somewhat of a wild card by those managing the relocation project.

The site at Ansty is classified as a Major Investment Site (MIS), part of a handful of similar sites throughout the country brought forward under the previous government. MIS’ were managed and promoted at a national and international level by the regional development agencies (RDAs), in our case Advantage West Midlands. When the RDAs were abolished in 2010 their assets were passed to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). The HCA has therefore inherited the management and promotion responsibilities for the Ansty MIS.

The role of RBC has not changed throughout the administration change and the council remains the planning authority for the site. That said, the council has proactively maintained a constant working relationship with the HCA and the project manager for the site, who has remained since the site’s conception. As such we have been able to positively influence the promotion and growth of the site.

The main criteria Sainsbury’s were working towards were that the site location had to be available quickly and needed to have good connections, in particular with London and their HQ.

The RBC role in securing this investment was centred on positive pressure through continual communication with the senior level of the business. We have a history of being able to use the planning system to enable growth and investment and this is something that we knew would attract them to our Borough.

Some of their requirements were not entirely fitting with the original concept of the site, for example they would require a multi level car park. However, through our relationship with the HCA and ability to approach the planning matters flexibly we could demonstrate that we would be able to overcome this issue, amongst others.

Once Sainsbury’s had indicated their wish to locate at Ansty, senior planners worked solidly on the project to ensure that the council was able to meet their demanding timescales. As such the council was able to use a Certificate of Lawful Proposal; it was previously thought that a full planning permission would be required to change the use of that part of the site. This meant that consent for the development was achieved within a week.

The work of RBC on this project not only ensured this investment but also furthered our reputation as an authority that is pro-business and pro-growth. The investment has also subsequently formed part of the relocation decision of another part of the Sainsbury’s division to DIRFT, bringing further investment and jobs to the area.
4.2.3 Labour market supply and demand

4.2.3.1 Employment rate and qualifications data

The official labour market statistics show that Rugby has a comparatively low unemployment rate and higher than average weekly earnings when compared with the West Midlands and national averages. Though this can be a sign of a healthy local economy, it also means that new businesses cannot be guaranteed a pool of labour. This was borne out by evidence submitted to the task group. Rugby First stated that “there isn’t enough choice… (with) insufficient people looking for work”, while the Federation of Small Businesses stated: “Our members in Rugby tell us that they struggle to recruit because there isn’t a pool of skilled/qualified people looking for work (as unemployment is low). Low unemployment is obviously a benefit to the area but strangely can be an issue for businesses looking to recruit.” Low unemployment in itself can inflate wages, an issue that is further compounded by a reliance on employment in one business sector (logistics), which also drives wages up.

The statistics on qualifications levels show that Rugby has a higher proportion of the working age population with no qualifications than the national (Great Britain) average, though a lower proportion than the West Midlands average. More generally, Rugby performs at an average or above average level in the proportion of its working age population with level 2, 3 and 4 qualifications.

4.2.3.2 Employer skills needs

A key issue raised with the task group was the lack of market intelligence about what employers need. Agencies such as the West Midlands Observatory and the Learning and Skills Council no longer exist, making it difficult to gather such information. In addition, Warwickshire County Council no longer has a strategic role in education and skills provision. There is no data being collected by the public sector and there is just limited data on demand for apprenticeships or Jobcentre Plus vacancies, with Jobcentre Plus only holding 48% of job vacancies. It was clear that more information is needed on the skills employers need so courses can be tailored to meet these.

Warwickshire College reported that they have introduced local consultation boards at each of their centres to work closely with the local business community to better understand their education and training needs. However, it was noted that the commercial focus of the college meant it was more likely to tailor courses to the needs of individual larger employers, and it was not clear that the needs of small and medium-sized businesses were always met, though these employers made up around 85% of the local business base.

The evidence from the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership suggests that the skills base that is needed in the sub-region is technical and science or engineering based, and there is an issue about retaining skilled school-leavers and graduates to work in the area.

There are a number of warehouses in the area which may require a less skilled workforce, though this is not always the case. A new logistics employment hub, led by the Sector Skills Council for logistics, had been established in Daventry, and part
of its role is to demonstrate the breadth of jobs in this sector. Skills for other industry areas such as care and hospitality are also needed.

Evidence from employers and from Jobcentre Plus indicated that companies in the borough have difficulties in recruiting higher skilled employees. The Jobcentre Plus vacancies that fill quickest are for lower skilled jobs, including warehouse/picking and packing, retail, administrative, driving, cleaning and bar work. Chefs, hotel and catering, and engineering are amongst the vacancies that prove more difficult to fill.

There was some evidence from larger employers that both Jobcentre Plus and Warwickshire College were not meeting the requirements of local companies, in terms of quality of employees and relevance of training provision, although this feedback was anecdotal and from a small sample. This was not the universal view, and others cited positive experiences of working with the college and of using Jobcentre Plus to recruit staff.

4.2.3.3 Education and skills – meeting skills needs

Schools, colleges and universities all have a key role to play in meeting employer skills needs and providing a strong local labour market. Rugby benefits from having good local grammar schools and secondary schools and this is seen as a key strength.

Between 2007 and 2011 educational attainment improved across all Warwickshire districts except Rugby Borough, which saw a slight dip in attainment, although results continue to be above the national average. It was reported that there is a downward trend in the number of young people who are ‘not in education training or employment’ (NEETS) across the county, while in Rugby the figure had been relatively static.

The task group heard from business representatives that it is increasingly difficult for employers to compare qualifications due to the range available and this is likely to become an increasing problem as further changes are planned to qualifications. The group also learned that there is a notable difference between school and employer definitions of ‘work-ready’. Employers report that softer skills such as timekeeping, telephone answering and a general readiness and willingness to work are often lacking. This appeared to be borne out in data shared privately with the task group from Warwickshire College about their course enrolments, which indicated high numbers of enrolments on ‘preparation for life and work’ courses.

Apprenticeships are an important element of providing skilled employees to meet local employer demand. Warwickshire has seen a 10% growth in apprenticeships compared to the national figure of 2%. Even so, it was reported that there are not enough apprentices coming through with the relevant skills for local employers. Though apprenticeships are perceived as being aimed at young people not going to university, students still need 5 GCSE grades A-C to qualify. Many ‘NEETs’ do not have this level of qualification and work is ongoing to try to support these individuals to reach the required level.

The task group learned that the burden of taking on an apprentice should be no more than that of employing any other employee. The college or training provider takes on the administration to help and support the recruitment process. However,
it was clear from the feedback from businesses that many do not have a real understanding of the apprenticeship scheme, and smaller businesses have particular concerns about potential burdens and additional costs and a lack of awareness of financial incentives available.

The development of the Power Academy at Warwickshire College was directly aimed at reflecting local business interests. The Power Academy delivers engineering courses and apprenticeships for large employers at levels 2, 3, 4 and 5. The college is also working towards becoming an entrepreneurial college, as part of the Gazelle initiative, which involves embedding entrepreneurial skills into all of their courses. They are also developing strong links with higher education providers, to demonstrate progression pathways, and now offer their own degree courses.

There are significant changes underway in education for 14-19 year-olds, with the age for compulsory participation in education and training set to increase to 18 years by 2015. It was noted that a University Technical College, supported by the University of Warwick, will be opening in 2013 and will take students from age 14. This will have an engineering focus.

4.2.4 Economic development activity

Inward investment operations can be both proactive and reactive. Examples of proactive inward investment include advertising and marketing, research into the future of the commercial landscape and visiting internal/external businesses. Reactive inward investment operations include the availability of data for enquiries, council services being geared up to deal effectively with inquiries and the ability to engage quickly with third parties. Historically Rugby Borough Council has operated in both of these areas, and has employed a dedicated resource for this purpose.

To support inward investment, this officer is able to facilitate meetings with interested business representatives. Another key role for the Council is to invest in the town centre as a beacon to promote wider growth in the borough, and an example of how the Council does this is the provision of moving-in grants for vacant shop premises. The Council’s own economic development activity is extended by support from Warwickshire Investment Partnership (Warwickshire County Council).

The evidence from external bodies suggested that Rugby is recognised locally for its forward thinking and proactive approach in working with businesses. In particular it was noted that, at a time when many other authorities had reduced or removed their economic development function, Rugby had committed to retaining this role and this had meant that Rugby had strengthened its position in this area. Rugby works well with partners and outside agencies.

With this in mind, it was suggested that the Council could do more to promote itself in this respect. Other councils appear to be better at selling themselves, and the Council needs to build its reputation and promote the borough more visibly within the business community. More emphasis should be placed on building Rugby’s external profile.
Initial expressions of interest in locating businesses in Rugby come from external companies who may then contact the Council, or be referred by agents. It is important at that stage to get the message across about how easy the Council is to work with, and to ensure that a strong package of support is available to these potential investors.

The Council prepares a commercial property guide which is used to help promote the borough. This could be redesigned to produce a showcase pack for potential investors, tailored to particular audiences, and including a section on ‘life in Rugby’ with information on local schools, housing, transport and leisure facilities. It should also introduce the council’s business-friendly planning department to potential investors.

It was also suggested that the use of social media could be considered as a way of promoting the town/borough. Many potential investors will undertake research online, so the availability of good information in this form, and tailored to the particular audiences, is crucial. During the course of the review the Economic Development Officer explored with local businesses and the Communications Manager some ideas for improving the borough’s web presence for inward investment purposes. It was suggested that, at minimal cost, an interactive web-based version of the commercial property guide could be developed. Administrative support to maintain this facility could be provided by the Business Support Team.

It was also suggested to the task group that the Council could work more closely with developers in promoting the borough, as they share the same aim of attracting businesses and individuals to the area. The Economic Development Officer informed the task group about a sub-regional magazine he had identified, funded by developers and businesses, which showcases commercial development opportunities for the sub-region. Some of the sites in the borough are not currently featured, and there was an opportunity to be more proactive in using this magazine.

The Rugby (League and Union) World Cup events to be hosted by England and Wales in 2013 and 2015 provide an important opportunity to promote the town and the borough. There is already a working group in place, involving key external partners, looking at how these opportunities can best be exploited. The task group also learned that officers had had initial discussions with Creative England about the potential to promote Rugby as a film location.

### 4.3 COUNTY AND SUB-REGIONAL CONTEXT

It was clear from the evidence presented to the task group that inward investment has to be considered in a county and sub-regional context.

#### 4.3.1 Warwickshire County Council

Within Warwickshire, the County Council’s Warwickshire Investment Partnership (WIP) team offers a single point of contact for businesses considering locating in the county and works to promote the county as a location for businesses and to support existing businesses. There is an inward investment officer within this team who has a particular focus on Rugby. The council pays an annual fee to WIP of
£5,500, which is the same figure paid by all of the Warwickshire boroughs and districts. They provide a valuable service to the council in making connections with potential investors.

A comment was made at the select committee meeting that the relationship between Warwickshire County Council (WCC), Rugby Borough Council and external commercial agents is too fragmented. It was also suggested that the county council may concentrate more on promoting their priority areas and that Rugby is lost within the county-wide offer. Similarly there are inherent tensions as there will be competition between the Warwickshire boroughs and districts to attract new businesses.

As part of its ‘Going for Growth’ agenda, Warwickshire County Council agreed (December 2012) funding for new schemes, including a small business loan scheme and a scheme to revitalise Warwickshire’s town centres and market towns, focusing on increasing footfall. Funding for Rugby will be administered by Rugby First (BID Company).

Warwickshire County Council owns ten small business incubation units across the county. The centres are now income-generating.

4.3.2 Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP)

The key strategic body influencing inward investment and supporting business growth in the sub-region is the Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP). The LEP is a private sector/public sector collaboration which plays a central role in determining local economic priorities and undertaking activities to drive economic growth and the creation of local jobs. It has been in operation since January 2011. Its role is even more pivotal with the adoption of the pooling arrangement for local retention of business rates.

In April 2011 the CW LEP published its five-year strategy, which sets out focussed plans to achieve three Key Ambitions:

1. Create an environment where it is easy for businesses to start, locate and thrive
2. Accelerate the growth of our economy through targeting support in our key strategic sectors
3. Tackle the skills problem by aligning supply and demand.

Alongside these ambitions, the CW LEP Board has identified a national influencing role on promoting low carbon mobility, and has an ongoing commitment to consider the challenges and opportunities presented by low carbon issues in all that they do.

More recently, the CW LEP commissioned commercial research which has resulted in a decision to focus attention on four niche sectors within Coventry and Warwickshire:

- **Low carbon mobility**
  The right level of research and development for prototype testing exists and other assets include test-beds and support from both Coventry University and the University of Warwick in delivering students with the right skills. This is a growing market of which Coventry and Warwickshire is at the forefront.
• **Motorsport**  
This is not a huge market but is at the pinnacle of advanced engineering. Successes include design and development for Formula 1 teams.

• **Serious games and software**  
This technology has become a valuable business tool. Internet based software can be used to sell goods or train staff through a virtual world. Coventry and Warwickshire is a global leader in this sector and a number of companies are exploiting this.

• **Intelligent Transport Systems**  
This includes intelligent software and digital technology for cars and transport to develop automatic traffic flow control systems. Interest in this technology would come mainly from the transport and logistics sector, one of the area’s key industries.

The level of employment in these sectors is only around 8% and therefore they are not a direct source of growth, but the model the LEP is adopting is to highlight these sectoral strengths as a means of attracting a wider range of businesses to the area from around the globe. The LEP’s emerging strategic approach to inward investment is one of focusing on these strengths as a top priority, but also building on the sub-region’s broader strengths and assets (eg. advanced engineering and manufacturing, transport and logistics, digital media, head office functions, development opportunities) and continuing the routine approach of reactive services based on interest and demand.

The proposed inward investment offer from the LEP involves the following key components:

• Property offer – right properties in the right places are available for investors  
• Key strengths – promoting and selling the sub-region’s unique strengths, providing confidence to businesses that they can be successful here  
• VIP service – providing a high quality, integrated, consistent and welcoming service to potential investors, utilising full range of assets and partners.

Though the LEP is business-led, it needs public sector input and local authorities have a key contribution to make on skills, infrastructure and support for businesses. The Leader of Rugby Borough Council has an important role as a member of the CW LEP Board, representing all of the Warwickshire districts and boroughs.

In October 2012 it was announced that the CW LEP had been awarded £24.4 million from the Government’s Regional Growth Fund to boost the local economy and help create jobs. In December the Board announced that it had decided to add this to some of the funding from the Growing Places Fund and from the European Regional Development Fund, amounting to a programme of more than £30 million. This will be aimed at helping three target areas – access to finance, support for strategic companies and for assistance to infrastructure and major projects.
5. CONCLUSIONS

The task group has drawn the following conclusions from the evidence it received:

5.1 Planning

Having a Core Strategy, and therefore plan-led growth, is a clear strength and inspires confidence in investors.

The Council’s Planning Service has been reviewed and restructured so that it is now able and willing to have a wider role in inward investment. It is very much linked with economic development and is known to be business friendly.

5.2 Availability of commercial land and property

Availability of commercial land is generally good, but the shortage of appropriately-sized business units is a key issue.

The council is limited in its ability to control the provision of appropriately sized business properties. It is not possible to control the build on pre-let units which are built to match particular requirements.

The review proved inconclusive as to whether small and medium business property requirements are being adequately met. Consideration was given to the possibility of undertaking a gap analysis to establish the level of unmet demand. However it was concluded that this would require commissioned research, at a cost to the council, and this would not be a worthwhile value for money exercise in the current economic climate.

Nevertheless there would be value in exploring the potential for providing additional facilities for small businesses in Rugby, like the Sir Frank Whittle Business Centre, should the opportunity arise to access external funding.

5.3 Communication and profile

There is a need for better promotion of Rugby to potential investors. Communication should be tailored to particular audiences and focus both on the business case for investment in Rugby (clear information about finance, land and infrastructure) and on shaping perceptions of the town and borough as a place to live.

A strong emphasis should be placed on developing effective electronic information about Rugby as a place to do business.

Consideration could be given to the possibility of seeking joint financing for such work with developers who have an interest in attracting new businesses to the area.

Rugby needs to build its reputation and is more than capable of winning more business awards, which would raise its profile. Such opportunities should be more actively pursued.
The Council should fully support the Rugby World Cup working group to maximise the opportunities arising from the events in 2013 and 2015 and continue to pursue any potential to promote Rugby as a film location.

5.4 Skills

Following the closure of the West Midlands Observatory and the Learning and Skills Council there is an absence of data about employer skills needs.

In the absence of a coordinating body with a strategic role in education and skills provision, there is a need for more effective and formal partnership working between agencies to map and respond to employer skills needs.

It is possible that the skills needs of small and medium-sized businesses (which make up around 85% of the local business base) are not being adequately reflected in local skills training provision, as courses tailored to the needs of larger employer are more commercially viable.

There is evidence that school leavers lack the soft skills required to make them ready for employment, and that the college and Jobcentre Plus are having to plug the gap by delivering courses to a large number of students specifically aimed at preparation for work.

More could be done to promote apprenticeships to local employers and debunk some of the myths about the administrative burdens.

Rugby might benefit from better links with Coventry University to enable businesses to tap into a pool of higher skilled graduates. The University has a global reputation for its design and research programmes, and students are actively recruited by companies outside of the area.

5.5 Labour market supply

Rugby has relatively low unemployment levels, and there is some evidence that this creates difficulties in recruitment.

There is evidence that companies in Rugby have difficulties in recruiting higher skilled employees. The majority of vacancies filled quickly by Jobcentre Plus are for lower skilled type jobs.

5.6 Business rates

Rugby BC performs well on the collection of business rates.

Coventry and Warwickshire local authorities have done well to develop a pooling proposal in the limited time available, and this should place all seven of the councils involved in a financially favourable position when the local retention of business rates scheme is introduced.

The Localism Act gives councils wider discretion in the use of discretionary rate relief. However, any increased discretionary relief given would be at a direct cost to the council and significant gains would be needed to justify additional expenditure.
The council should keep under review how neighbouring authorities are responding to the new powers under the Localism Act.

5.7 Economic development activity

Having a dedicated (but still limited) resource to support economic development is seen as a strength by external bodies. The local retention of business rates gives the council an added incentive to invest in activity to attract new businesses and retaining existing businesses in the borough.

5.8 Sub-regional context

The wider county and sub-regional context is crucial to inward investment, particularly following the formation of a Coventry and Warwickshire pool for business rates.

The council should continue to engage proactively with the CW LEP to ensure it is well-placed to access new funding opportunities as they arise.
### Review of Inward Investment Action Plan

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Recommendations and Actions</th>
<th>Managed by</th>
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<th>Due date</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Council should work with local agents to develop a showcase pack for potential investors in the town and wider Rugby area, based around a re-designed commercial property guide.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Commercial property guide redesigned and expanded into a showcase pack for potential investors.</td>
<td>Sarah Fisher</td>
<td>John Dale</td>
<td>May 2013</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Consultation with local agents on the new showcase pack.</td>
<td>Sarah Fisher</td>
<td>John Dale</td>
<td>June 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Council should promote local land and development sites across the borough in a privately-funded sub-regional magazine.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Establish contact with magazine and provide information on local land and development sites for publication.</td>
<td>Sarah Fisher</td>
<td>John Dale</td>
<td>April 2013</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Covalent update to confirm that regular updates are being provided and key local land and development sites are featuring in the magazine on an ongoing basis.</td>
<td>Sarah Fisher</td>
<td>John Dale</td>
<td>October 2013</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>The working group established in relation to the Rugby World Cup events in 2013 and 2015 should be fully supported by the Council to exploit economic development opportunities arising from the events.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Feedback from the working group to Customer and Partnerships Committee on activities to promote economic development opportunities arising from the RWC events.</td>
<td>Anna Rose</td>
<td>Debbie Dawson</td>
<td>November 2013</td>
<td></td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>An interactive web-based version of the commercial property guide should be developed on the council’s website, and maintained as an up-to-date resource.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Redesigned commercial property guide developed in interactive format for council website.</td>
<td>Matthew Deaves</td>
<td>John Dale</td>
<td>April 2013</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Support secured from Business Support Team to administer the web-based commercial property guide.</td>
<td>Debbie McCarthy</td>
<td>John Dale</td>
<td>April 2013</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Council should keep under regular review how neighbouring local authorities are responding to the additional powers in the Localism Act to grant discretionary business rate relief.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5.1</strong> Covalent update to confirm that officers are monitoring whether neighbouring local authorities are offering any additional discretionary business rate relief</td>
<td>Adam Norburn</td>
<td>Chryssa Burdett</td>
<td>December 2013</td>
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<td><strong>6</strong> To raise the profile of the borough, relevant award schemes should be identified and applications submitted on a quarterly basis.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6.1</strong> Covalent update to confirm that award schemes are being researched and applications submitted where relevant.</td>
<td>Anna Rose</td>
<td>John Dale</td>
<td>Sep 2013</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6.2</strong> The Council is successful in winning an award which helps to raise the council’s profile externally.</td>
<td>Anna Rose</td>
<td>John Dale</td>
<td>March 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>7</strong> More effective and formal partnership working between agencies should be encouraged to map and respond to employer skills needs across the county.</td>
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<td><strong>7.1</strong> Officers work with Warwickshire Observatory and partners to map employer skills requirements across Rugby and the wider area.</td>
<td>Anna Rose</td>
<td>John Dale</td>
<td>December 2013</td>
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<tr>
<td>A copy of the final review report should be sent to Warwickshire County Council, highlighting in particular the review findings about the lack of awareness amongst employers about apprentice scheme opportunities and the negative perceptions that exist about the potential burdens of taking on an apprentice.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Debbie Dawson</td>
<td>April 2013</td>
<td>This is not an action for monitoring through Covalent.</td>
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