

Economic Development Committee 25 October 2011

☒ Ahead of the council elections next year the council's own "civil service" is driving forward a plan for the new administration to implement over the next five years.

At today's meeting of the committee, comprising councillors of all parties, the Strategy for Jobs was brought up as an extra item on the agenda. Head of Economic Development, Greg Ward, eloquently outlined the idea brought forward from the Edinburgh Economic Review that the council should have its own plan formulated as to how to bring jobs to the capital, rather than simply approving what prospective employers might do in individual cases. He explained to the councillors that the importance of this was brought out in the review conducted between July and September this year by the council in partnership with The Edinburgh Business Forum, a body made up of chief executives, entrepreneurs and academics. The council say that this is "the largest and most wide-ranging economic analysis ever undertaken in the Capital and is expected to herald a raft of radical new policies in the new economic strategy, with a key focus on stimulating jobs and investment."

The committee approved the next step which is to enter into a formal consultation process lasting until December. By the time the Economic Development Committee next meet in December, a full draft strategy with a full 3 year action plan will be available for consideration.

The strategy will be launched sometime next year after the Policy and Strategy Committee meet on 24 January 2011 to give it the seal of approval.

So what is it? Well there are several issues which the council

is being urged to address. The first is that the jobs gap is widening, and it is believed that by 2019 the gap between people available for work will exceed the jobs available by around 38,000. So there is a great need to narrow the jobs gap. This needs more investment, and most of that is expected to come from small to medium sized businesses. Ward explained that from the research undertaken so far, it appears that creating and retaining jobs is the single biggest issue and should be the main focus for the new administration over the next five years.

The jobs are expected to come from a variety of sources such as foreign direct investment. The meeting had just listened to a presentation from Mathieu Juppin de Fondaumière, Deputy Managing Director, Avaloq Innovation Ltd, the Swiss firm which is investing in Edinburgh and which hopes to employ around 100 people here by the end of next year.

The main recommendations are as follows:-

- to look at investing in the city infrastructure so that the current employers are retained and new ones encouraged
- to follow the lead from Scottish Development International in attracting foreign investment
- to support Edinburgh's own entrepreneurs
- to support those who are unemployed to help them find work or learning

Councillor Tom Buchanan, Convenor of Economic Development at the City of Edinburgh Council, said: "I am delighted that we are now at the stage where we will have to refine the strategy, which will be launched next year. Edinburgh's economy has already shown tremendous resilience in difficult times and the outlook is good."

This proposal was brought up as an extra item on the agenda today, and councillors were surprised to find that they were

not allowed to ask any questions about the proposal at this stage. More details of the Edinburgh Economic Review are on the [Council's website.](#)