

MEDIA RELEASE

Rugby's new voice for business has welcomed the borough's efforts to go for even stronger growth – but some obstacles have been identified.

Karen Shuter, a director at Exact Logistics in Dunchurch, was appointed as the new chair of the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce's Rugby branch at its latest meeting.

The event heard from Rob Back, of Rugby Borough Council, on the latest version of the Local Plan for the area and from Mark Pawsey, the MP for Rugby.

Rob explained that 12,400 homes were planned for the area between 2011 and 2031 and 110 hectares of employment land had been identified. That, he said, required the allocation of 5,200 homes and 30 hectares in this new local plan.

The plan is currently out for consultation and, if approved, would be adopted in autumn 2017.

David Penn, a regional property expert and chair of the Chamber's Coventry branch, said the new plan would still leave the Rugby area short of factory and office space as many developers saw the region as ideal for industry and logistics. He added that much of the land allocated had, in fact, already been developed.

Rob acknowledged the issue and said the council is supportive of identifying additional industrial space through the local plan as long as the appropriate balance between commercial and residential development can be maintained.

He said: "We will do everything we can but the council can only create the conditions for growth – we cannot force the market."

Mark Pawsey then listened to the concerns of businesses around everything from Brexit to increases in costs and welcomed the new World Rugby Hall of Fame, which is due to open in November.

He said: "I always welcome the opportunity to meet the Chamber and to talk to businesses about my role and listen to the issues they are facing.

"My impression, in terms of Brexit, is that businesses are carrying on as normal and the economy is quite steady as we stand.

"The Government is doing a good job at maintaining confidence and, whatever the outcome of the negotiations, there is no question that we have to export more."

Karen said: "This was a really informative event for the branch and, for me as the new branch chair, there was a great deal of food for thought.

“We have very good lines of communication with Mark Pawsey and with the Borough Council and that allows us to feedback to them as a very active voice for business.

“The Chamber’s campaign this year is Go For Growth so we very much welcome the drive to grow the economy in the area.

“Our members are telling us that more space is required for businesses to grow and the increase in employment land is welcome – but we have raised the question as to whether it is enough and, also, whether the council can do everything in its power to ensure it is the right type of property to meet our economic needs.”

Pictured (left to right, front): Rob Back, Peter Burns (past president of the Chamber), Mark Pawsey, Karen Shuter with members of the branch committee behind.

