

MEDIA RELEASE

Rugby is in a prime position to grow economically in 2018 – and should be looking to make the most of its near neighbour’s recent success, a business meeting has heard.

The Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce’s Rugby branch met at Brownsover Hall to discuss any issues facing industry in the region and to decide where to focus its efforts in the New Year.

The meeting heard from Martyne Manning, policy manager at the Chamber, who said that the statistics for Rugby were positive but there were still potential barriers to growth.

She said: “Our most recent Quarterly Economic Survey, in conjunction with Warwickshire County Council, showed that there is confidence across the region which is reflected here in Rugby.

“There is a 30 per cent increase in the number of business births and survival rates for those businesses is well above the national average.

“It’s important, however, that we look into the reasons why some of those businesses don’t then scale up and go on to employ more than 20 people which would, obviously, bring additional benefits to the economy.

“They are surviving but we need to take them to the next level.

“As we have discussed at recent meetings, there is a skills shortage, which is one of the reasons for not growing – therefore, businesses can talk to the Chamber to find alternate ways of increasing productivity such as upskilling staff and investing in technology.”

Skills and availability of commercial space have both been high on the agenda for the Chamber in 2017 and Rugby branch chair Karen Shuter said they were ongoing issues that would continue to be raised with decision-makers.

Karen said businesses needed to be more aware of issues around cyber security and General Data Protection Regulation as potential pitfalls.

Karen said: “That’s certainly one of the topics I want firmly on the agenda in 2018 as well as the effect that HS2 is going to have on Rugby and how businesses in this region can benefit from it.

“I believe Rugby also needs to start planning now for how it can benefit from the recent news that Coventry will be UK City of Culture in 2021.

“This will bring additional visitors to our region and Rugby must be prepared for that, particularly our hospitality industry, to ensure we maximise the positive economic affect it will have here.

“Overall, Rugby is in good shape going into 2018 but there is still plenty to do to ensure the conditions for economic growth here are the best they can be for companies across the borough.”

Pictured: Karen Shuter (front, left) with Martyne Manning and the Rugby branch of the Chamber

