

**BOARD MEETING**

**Minutes of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership Board Meeting**

**held on 26th April 2017, Municipal Buildings, Earl Street, Crewe CW1 2BJ**

**Present:**

Christine Gaskell (Chair) Cllr Rachel Bailey Ged Barlow

Nigel Schofield Meredydd David Robert Davis

Clare Hayward Prof. Tim Wheeler Howard Hopwood

Graeme Bristow Chris Hindley Stephen Kinsey

Gary Steen

**Apologies:**

Cllr Samantha Dixon Cllr Terry O’Neill Robert Mee

Louise Morrissey Martin Ashcroft Pete Waterman

John Downes

**Attending / Observing:**

Philip Cox (LEP Chief Executive) Mark Livesey Andy Hulme

Frank Jordan Charlie Seward Katrina Michel

**Agenda Item 1: Apologies and Introductions**

1.1 Christine Gaskell extended a welcome to the new Board Members and thanked the outgoing Board Members for their service and commitment to the work of the LEP. They had achieved a great deal since their appointment, in the interests of Cheshire and Warrington. Apologies were received from Cllr Terry O’Neill, Cllr Samantha Dixon, Robert Mee, Louise Morrisey, Martin Ashcroft, Pete Waterman and John Downes.

**Agenda Item 2: Conflicts of Interest**

2.1 No conflicts of interest were declared in relation to Agenda Items on the open section of the meeting.

**Agenda Item 3: Public Presentation**

3.1 No request from a member of the public had been received seven days before the meeting.

**Agenda Item 4: Minutes of the Meeting held on 15th February 2017**

4.1 The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record. While attempts had been made to bring the Farmer Review to present at this meeting, no representatives had been available and so they would be invited to the next meeting. **Action: LEP Executive**

**Agenda Item 5: Chief Executive's report**

5.1 The Board noted the report and additional comments from the Chief Executive and:

* Welcomed the outcome of the Board recruitment exercise and thanked outgoing Members for their service and commitment;
* Recognised that following the announcement of the General Election, the LEP would need to observe a period of “purdah” most likely from 3rd May, during which time it would be unable to make any public announcements. This would not mean the work of the LEP would pause. To the contrary, a good deal of work was underway to ensure the LEP is well positioned to respond quickly to the agenda of the new Government. It was likely that some key themes would continue, such as the Industrial Strategy, housing etc. and the LEP would continue to develop and deliver strategies aligned to that approach;
* Welcomed the ongoing development of the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and agreed that it would be sensible to develop a small number of delivery plans and strategies to support the delivery of the SEP;
* Welcomed the ongoing work around pulling together a potential “Energy Sector Deal”. While the election will delay further discussion with Whitehall, the work should continue, along with similar work being progressed in the automotive field;
* Welcomed the formal merger of South Cheshire College and West Cheshire College. This was a significant achievement for the region being one of the first and few to be approved by the Secretary of State for Education and securing a £22.5m debt write down in the process. The priority remained to ensure a strong offer to learners in the region and for providers to work together;
* Welcomed the response to the LEPs first attendance at MIPIM. The coverage achieved had been impressive, estimated to be worth the equivalent of £600,000 of ‘paid for’ advertising and the level of interest in the regions significant. With private sector sponsorship, the net cost had been around £46,000, which the Board agreed was good value for money. The hard work began now to translate that interest into business. Working across LEP boundaries would be important to maximise impact.

**Agenda Item 6: Strategic Economic Plan Refresh**

6.1 The Chief Executive took the Board through the latest draft of the SEP and sought approval to take the draft to publication.

6.2 In discussion the following points were made:

* The analysis had drawn out some interesting features of the region, which weren’t immediately obvious. The Cheshire and Warrington economy was categorised as an industrial economy with a very large manufacturing sector (3x the national average), which was outperforming neighbouring economies. Cheshire and Warrington enjoyed the 2nd highest GVA per capita outside of London. While the population was, in general, highly qualified, most of those were in the older population and challenges around the qualifications of the younger population remained. Cheshire and Warrington had an ageing population and the absence of younger 20-35 year olds remained a concern. Transport pressures were another area of concern given the region’s reliance on good connectivity.
* It is intended that the LEP be seen as a ‘living document’ and as such an early review was planned for October 2017 so that any changes in national policy emerging post-General Election can be captured. It is expected that by this time the first four supporting strategies / delivery plans will have been completed (transport, skills, energy and quality of place)
* It would be sensible to develop a place marketing strategy on the back of this work and, in doing so, it would be important to draw out the differentials that would help Cheshire and Warrington stand out from the rest.
* In disseminating the SEP, thought should be given to the different audiences it would be looking to reach and so presentation and communication was important.
* The Board endorsed the draft SEP and thanked Andy Hulme for his work in pulling together such a strong piece of work.

**Agenda Item 7: LEP Budget 17/18**

7.1 The Deputy Chief Executive took the Board through the draft Budget for 2017/18. While income had fallen in respect of interest received on funds held by the LEP, this had more than been offset by the management income relating to the Local Growth Fund round 3. A different format of match funding would be deployed going forward, with the traditional 50% Local Authority match being reduced to 25% and the remaining 25% being drawn from EZ business rate income. The Budget also made provision for the payment of rent for the LEP’s new premises at Wyvern house, Winsford, which was a new and additional cost.

7.2 The Board agreed the proposed Budget and endorsed the approach being taken.

**Agenda Item 8: Devolution**

8.1 Charlie Seward updated the Board on the devolution work. A good deal of work had already been done by the local authorities and the LEP, in pulling together a potential deal with Government. Conversations with civil servants had been positive and considerable progress had been made. However, the calling of the General Election had meant that further progress could not be made until the new Government was in place.

8.2 While further progress could not be made in terms of a devolution deal, this would not stop the joint working across the sub-region and progress would continue to be made in pulling together a joint investment plan which would incorporate transport, infrastructure and housing. Other areas of joint working would proceed, ensuring the sub-region was well placed to respond to the agenda of a new Government once it was in place.

8.3 Given the arrival of new members to the Board, it was agreed that it would be helpful to schedule a Devolution teach in, covering the history and the proposed deal at a future meeting. **Action: LEP Executive**

**Agenda Item 9: Board Sub-Committee Updates**

9.1 The papers provided in support of Agenda Item 9 were noted.

**Item 10: Any other business**

10.1 Given recent appointments to the LEP team and to the LEP Board, the Board wanted to meet the wider LEP team at the next meeting. **Action: LEP Executive**

**Date and Time of Next Meeting:**

Wednesday 17th May 5.00pm.

**Action points:**

**Action**: LEP Executive to bring the Farmer Review presentation of the Construction Sector to the next Board Meeting.

**Action**: Wider LEP team to come to the next meeting to introduce themselves and the work they are doing.

**Action**: LEP Executive to schedule a Devolution teach in at a future Board meeting.