**LEP Strategy Committee**

**MINUTES (DRAFT)**

Meeting Held: 20th December 2019

LEP Board Room, Wyvern House, Winsford

**Present:**

Robert Mee (Chair) Nicola Dunbar Philip Cox

Graeme Bristow Robert Davis Stephen Fitzsimons

Peter Skates Andy Hulme Sean Traynor

**Apologies:**

Charlie Seward John Downes

**Attending:**

Martin Wood John Adlen (AI9 only)

**Agenda Item 1: Welcome, Introductions & Apologies**

The Chair welcomed members and guests to the meeting, particularly Martin Wood, Assistant Director (Assistant Director and Area Lead for Cheshire and Warrington, Cities and Local Growth Unit).

Apologies were received from John Downes, Charlie Seward (represented by Sean Traynor, Senior Manager, Transport & Infrastructure) and Steve Park (represented by Stephen Fitzsimons, Business Growth & Investment).

**Agenda Item 2: Declarations of Interest**

Peter Skates declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 7.

Robert Davis declared a pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 9, and wished the minutes to record that he would absent himself from the room when the item was discussed, and that no papers related to the item had been shared with any member of the team involved in project bids.

**Agenda Item 3: Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the meeting held on Friday 20th September 2019 were agreed. All matters arising had been addressed or elsewhere covered on the agenda.

**Agenda Item 4: Public Speaking Time**

No members of the public were in attendance.

**Agenda Item 5: Strategy Update**

The contents of the report were noted.

The Committee considered progress against the SEP Delivery Plan and noted the amendments made following feedback at the September meeting.

A draft work programme for the 15 months from January 2020 to March 2021 was discussed and agreed, subject to confirmation of the wider LEP budget for 2020/21 by the Board in February. It was also suggested that a flexible approach may be required in order to respond effectively to any issues or opportunities that might arise following the budget on 7th February.

In this regard it was noted that a couple of the proposed work packages are provisional, subject to sufficient budget being available towards the end of the financial year to March 2021.

The Committee discussed the likely need to respond quickly to the infrastructure funding tap ‘being turned on’, linked to priorities of the LIS. It was noted that LEP has been in discussion over a project pipeline with the Local Authorities and this is also linked to Agenda Item 7, the business case development activity.

Committee members noted importance of having the longer-term vision and strategy linked to ability to meet short term demands. Delivery performance on the current LGF programme is likely to be a key determinant of future funding, and it was confirmed that this is currently on target.

A Draft Forward Plan for Strategy Committee meetings in 2020 was shared and agreed.

Martin Wood suggested that moving forwards the Committee may wish to reflect on the innovation agenda which will feature strongly in priorities moving forwards. There is an opportunity for thought leadership in this space from Cheshire and Warrington.

There was a short discussion on the relationship with and alignment to strategies sitting outside of the LEP, e.g. the current North West Business Leadership Team and NP11 agendas. It was confirmed that the LEP inputs to these work programmes when able and appropriate to make sure there are no conflicts in policy. It was suggested that David Levine, Strategic Coordinator at NP11, be invited to a future meeting to discuss emerging NP11 strategies.

***Action: Andy Hulme to incorporate a session on NP11 strategy work into the Forward Plan.***

Peter Skates asked for an update on the work on the rural agenda being progressed by Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester to be included as part of the Forward plan.

***Action: Andy Hulme to incorporate a session on the rural growth agenda into the Forward Plan.***

**Agenda Item 6: Local Industrial Strategy**

Andy Hulme provided a verbal update on the current position regarding the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS).

The latest draft is still with the Cities and Local Growth Unit, with some further feedback received yesterday. It has been agreed that one further draft will be produced for mid-January to reflect the latest comments. The LEP is still waiting for a clear position to emerge from Ministers as to future direction on LIS, although the extensive references in the election manifesto and Queens Speech to infrastructure investment, towns and ‘levelling up’ are seen as positive and well aligned with the ambitions of the LIS.

Martin Wood stressed that from a BEIS perspective they still see our LIS content as important and that it should be shaping activity moving forwards.

**Agenda Item 7: Allocation of Funding for Business Case Development**

John Adlen joined the meeting for this item.

The contents of the papers were noted.

Philip Cox, LEP Chief Executive, presented the main paper which set out the proposed allocation of the balance of the 2019/20 business case fund. Four schemes were recommended for funding, some of these being further allocations to progress business cases to the next, more detailed, stage of development.

John Adlen presented a supplementary paper seeking agreement to provide a £12.5k contribution from the LEP towards a high-level land use options exercise for surplus land around the existing Vauxhall Motors plant in Ellesmere Port. The changing nature of operations at Ellesmere Port, in particular the shift to ‘just-in-time’ production has resulted in large parts of the site being surplus to current requirements. The LEP and Cheshire West and Chester are therefore looking to commission work to understand how this land could be better utilised to support operations at the plant including boosting scope for supply chain manufacturers to locate there.

The Committee approved the allocation of £212,500 to support the development of these projects, noting that there will need to be an element of cashflowing into 2020/21.

**Agenda Item 8: Government Announcements**

There was a short discussion on the outcome of the 2019 General Election, which now sees the sub-region represented by six Conservative and four Labour MPs. The LEP is still waiting to understand the local implications of the content of the Queens Speech and the proposed legislation set out within it.

In particular, it was noted that the Government will be bringing forward an English Devolution White Paper in the new year which may have implications for Cheshire and Warrington.

Sean Traynor informed the Committee that a briefing had been provided to the sub-regional Transport Advisory Group yesterday which had highlighted national DFT priorities around transport decarbonisation as well as integration of transport systems for smaller towns.

**Part B Agenda Items (Non-Public Items)**

**Agenda Item 9 – Low Carbon Energy Innovation Fund**

Robert Davis absented himself from the meeting in advance of this item being discussed.

The contents of the report were noted. All six of the projects supported at the September meeting has provided more detailed business cases as required. Two of these had requested an increase in the level of LGF required. One project had requested an additional £45k in the context of a £100k increase in overall scheme costs, and a second project had requested an additional £100k although the revised total still represented a modest 23% intervention rate. There was sufficient unallocated LGF to accommodate these increases.

The Committee approved the recommendation that the change in LGF requested by two projects under the Low carbon Energy Innovation Fund be agreed, with further scrutiny of the business cases by the Performance and Investment Committee.

The Strategy Committee also approved delegated Authority for Officers (including the LEP Chief Executive) to consider options and agree how best to deploy the remaining unallocated Energy innovation Fund monies (approximately £95k).

**Agenda Item 10 – any Other Business**

Nicola Dunbar updated on progress with the planned Cheshire FA development at Knights Grange in Winsford. The project will provide world class training facilities for the England Women’s Football Team and other groups and it was agreed that a presentation on the proposals would be welcomed by the Strategy Committee.

***Action: Andy Hulme to incorporate a presentation from Cheshire FA into the Forward Plan.***

**Agenda Item 12 – Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Next meeting: Friday 7th February 2020, 9:00am, Wyvern House.