

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Board, held via Microsoft Teams
On Thursday 15th December 2022 – 8am**

Present: Trevor Brocklebank – Chair (“TB”)
Joe Manning (“JM”)
**Marketing Cheshire
Directors** Mark Goldsmith (“MG”)
Andy Lyon (“AL”)
Eleanor Underhill (“EU”)
Sarah Callander-Beckett (“SCB”)
Rob Charnley (“RC”)
Steven Broomhead (“SB”)
Jamie Christon (“JC”)
David Walker (“DW”)
Peter Mearns (“PM”)
Philip Cox (“PC”)

In Attendance: Nicola Said (“NS”)
Sharon Pond (minute taker)

Apologies: Tracey O’Keefe (“TO”)
Rob McKay (“RM”)
Ian Brooks (“IB”)

- **Opening by the Chairman and Welcome**

TB welcomed Board members and thanked them for joining the meeting. It was confirmed that apologies had been received from TO and RM.

- **Declarations of Interest**

TB asked Board members to advise of any declarations of interest.

- **Minutes and Actions from the last Meeting**

The Board confirmed that the minutes from the meeting on the 1st September 2022 were correct.

It was confirmed that the actions from the previous meeting have been dealt with.

- **Risk Register**

TB requested that Board members delegate authority to the audit committee to monitor the risks and report any concerns by exception to the main Board. The Board members present approved the request.

- **Follow up from the Strategy Day**

JM referred to the MC Strategy Day that took place on the 17th November and advised that a very positive follow up session took place with the Destination Cheshire Partnership which was well attended and had a very collaborative feel to the session and a good understanding of the wider place positioning. The next steps include using the period Jan to March to hold workshops to research the ‘Cheshire Story’ with various consumer and business groups across Cheshire, in time for Cheshire Day on the 30th March.

A session also took place at Chester Zoo around animal and plant sciences across Cheshire, attended by delegates from Chester University and Liverpool University Veterinary School. This fits in with the Cheshire story of a great place to live, work and visit.

It was also confirmed that internal work is taking place within Marketing Cheshire around the key focus of activity in the next financial year being orientated around the One City Plan, Chester Management through Destination Chester as well as the Live, Study, Work and Invest elements. We will start to evaluate this work with our partners to identify where we can add more value. IB, JM and NS are working on a full detailed business plan which will be shared with the Board in the New Year.

PC advised that one of the outcomes of the wider LEP review has been the emphasis from the Local Authority partners have put on Marketing Cheshire to work on the Live, Work, Visit, Study agenda and for the LEP to invest a proportion of the LEP budget on this Place Marketing work.

AL suggested that it would also be beneficial to have an invest group workshop to identify why businesses invest in Cheshire. It was confirmed that this is a key area that the LEP are looking to align across the two organisations.

SCB stated that there is huge potential with the world Science events, it was confirmed that the LEP directors are looking to prioritise these areas. As part of the Science Corridor marketing the aim is to highlight these key events and stories and we are looking at holding a symposium in June promote this.

It was stated that we have quirky businesses in Cheshire with fantastic back stories that should be included in the promotion of why Cheshire is a great place to be doing business in Cheshire.

It was stated that we should as a county use what we are doing in terms of our marketing to collectively promote the county at events such as COP15. It was confirmed that we are looking at creating a toolkit to enable our partners and businesses to act as ambassadors for the county.

CW&C are launching its origin brand for Ellesmere Port which would fit well with the Science Corridor.

- **Board Briefing Note / CEO Report**

JM referred Board members to the report circulated within the Board pack and highlighted the following key items

- Joe advised formally that he will be leaving MC to take up a new role in the New Year and thanked board members for their support over the past couple of years.
- Nicola and Joe attended a tourism alliance conference which highlighted parallels to 2008. Conflicting reporting came out of the conference with concerns voiced around the series of crisis over the past few years. However, it was highlighted that post covid consumers want to get out and enjoy the visitor economy, therefore spending money.
- Good press coverage particularly the Time Out article and the Telegraph article
- The review work on the Visitor Information Centre has commenced, and we are engaged with partners to review a set of strategic questions around what the best way is to provide information to visitors. Secondly, we have a set of operational questions which look at the centre as it currently functions, looking at ways to generate additional revenue, cost savings and location of the centre.

We will aim to provide the board with an update on this work in approx. 6 months' time.

- The Sustainability conference went well with just under fifty delegates in attendance. There is a growing audience for us to step into the business advice work.
- It was advised that sadly Debbie Bland, our former Finance Manager passed away in September and the work Debbie put in to get us through the covid period was highlighted and it was advised that we have made a small donation to the East Cheshire Hospice where Debbie received end of life care.

Comments from Board

- The board thanked Joe for his work over the past few years commenting that we are in a much more inclusive position representative of the whole Cheshire and Warrington area.
- It was asked what the plans are for Joe's succession. TB also advised that his Chairmanship is also up in March so we will need to be looking at a succession plan for both roles.

PC advised that the LEP are looking at succession planning and the immediate priority will be to recruit an interim replacement for Joe to enable the LEP to take the time to find the right permanent replacement for Joe's role. PC emphasised that MC has a very important future role so it will be key that the person has the skills to carry out the MC role.

The Board also thanked Trevor for his commitment over the past 3 years.

- **DMO review**

NS referred to the slides in the Board pack from the Visit England (VE) / DCMS roundtable that TB attended in October.

Two main updates from the roundtable were: -

- The criteria to become a LVEP has been streamlined and the expression of interest process has started for DMOs who would like to consider themselves as LVEPs with the formal application process taking place in the spring. NS will be reviewing the forms and will start the process to apply formally in the New Year.
- Newcastle and Gateshead have been chosen as the destination pilot, the goal being to demonstrate the impact of the additional funding.

JM advised that the distinction between LVEPs and DDPs is confusing and is creating some challenges. NS stated that this is part of the reason for the pilot scheme.

It was suggested that we need clarity from DCMS on the approach to this process. TB advised that the initial plan is to look at creating the LVEPs and to get consistency and uniformity over the next couple of years. It was agreed that we need to pull together our intelligence to report to VE on how our businesses have performed and we will continue to have these conversations with VE.

PC stated that the issue is around lack of funding, the pilot scheme in Newcastle and Gateshead will help to justify the impact of the funding. We have a lot of expertise at the LEP, especially within the Growth Hub to support businesses and provide resource, therefore we are in a good position to provide this ongoing support.

NS advised that we will review the opportunities that exist in applying for the LVEP status such as data and intelligence therefore identifying the opportunities that come through this process. NS to review these opportunities in advance of the next board meeting.

It was suggested that as part of the data collection process we should encourage collaboration with the Destination partners to collect this data to all work together. NS advised that we are looking to transform our partnership to a means to obtain greater data and the MC team are keen to develop this process.

It was questioned whether there is an opportunity to look at collaborative ways of working across boundaries. JM advised we have been collaborating more with the NW DMOs around sharing information what we have not done is got together around specific target areas or looked at international gateway work, the DDP would allow us to do this by creating the resource. With the NW DMOs we collaborate at CEO level but tends to be closed doors when it comes to funding discussions.

It was emphasised that there is a huge amount of work taking place at a regional level to look at making Cheshire and Warrington an integral place to visit in the Northwest. Another opportunity is the Open at Hoylake and Eurovision in Liverpool.

- **Company Finances**

TB introduced DW to give an overview of the company finances.

DW referred Board members to the current YTD report included within the board pack advising that the operating result is better than budgeted returning a small deficit. DW ran through the key elements of the report noting that the Audit Committee are comfortable with the cash position and use of reserves.

PC confirmed that the employee pay award has been processed in line with previous discussions.

JM advised that the account management approach is enthusing the MC team and thanked the team for their hard work.

Additional funding from Local Authority partners has allowed us to work on more activity. There is a need to look at other funding opportunities such as a corporate or sponsorship approach.

- **Any Other Business**

It was suggested that we should bring the next board forward a week to allow Joe to attend before he leaves – **action SP to look at alternative date.**

It was suggested that the new Chair and CEO should meet the board prior to the May board meeting – **PC to review**

Future Board Meetings

Thursday 9th Feb 2023 (date to be reviewed)

Thursday 18th May 2023

Thursday 7th Sept 2023

Thursday 16th Nov 2023

Thursday 14 December 2023

Signature (Trevor Brocklebank, Chair)

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Date