

BOARD MEETING

**Minutes of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership Board Meeting
held 19th April 2023 at 4.30pm at The Portal, CWAC, Civic Way, Ellesmere Port, CH65 OBA**

Board Members:

	Present	Apology		Present	Apology
Clare Hayward		x	John Downes		x
Trevor Brocklebank	x		Chris Hindley	x	
Russ Bowden		x	Kath Mackay (from Item		x
Craig Browne		x	Annette McDonald	x	
Louise Gittins		x	Nichola Newton		x
Peter Broxton	x		Eunice Simmons	x	
Rupert Collis		x			

Attendees:

	Present	Apology		Present	Apology
Philip Cox	x		Steve Park	x	
Ian Brooks	x		Charlie Seward		x
Maggie Chen		x	Peter Skates	x	
Alex Thompson	x		Robert Charnley		

Members of the Public (for Part A)

N/A

Agenda Item 1: Tour of the Portal

1.1 The board were provided with a short tour of the Portal which the LEP had supported with Local Growth Funding.

Agenda Item 2: Apologies and Introductions

2.1 TB welcomed Board Members. Apologies were received as above.

2.2 TB noted that the meeting was taking place during the purdah period prior to local elections in Cheshire on May 4th.

Agenda Item 3. Conflicts of Interest

3.1 None.

Agenda Item 4: Public Presentation

4.1 There were no public presentations.

Agenda Item 5: Minutes of the Meeting held on 15th March 2023 and Matters Arising

5.1 The minutes were agreed and the table of actions attached to these minutes has been updated. Completed actions from previous meeting have been removed.

Agenda Item 6: Chief Executive's Report

6.1 The report was taken as read and the following additional updates presented.

6.2 PB asked how other LEPs are responding to the Government's announcement regarding the future of LEPs. PC explained that the LEP landscape is not identical. For some, the withdrawal of core funding presents a threat to their continuity, while for others transferring activities to Local Authorities may be relatively straightforward or very challenging due to the number of authorities associated with the local LEP and overlaps of geographical boundaries. The DBT has convened several workshops to engage LEP Chief Executives on issues relating to transition and to provide advice to Ministers.

6.3 SP reported on a constructive session that Melissa Crellin had held with a committee of Warrington councillors on the proposals to implement a fair employment charter. The concept received positive feedback but exposed a concern that businesses should not be allowed to remain permanently on the first level of accreditation, i.e. supporter level.

6.4 PC said that the LEP is currently canvassing for dates to convene a communications group for industrial Net Zero. Separately PC and CS will be chairing a meeting with businesses involved in hydrogen to develop public facing communications.

6.5 AM provided an update on a meeting of key industries (Bentley, AZ, Encirc, Barclays, Tatton Estate, Chester Zoo) that are looking to learn from each other about how they can accelerate their progress to net zero. Several cross-cutting challenges, including transport, land use, decarbonisation were discussed and the group is considering putting itself on a permanent footing.

6.6 In relation to the Life Sciences Fund 2, IB advised the board that the discussions with Finexic Concordia had concluded but without agreement for additional funds to be invested. It was possible discussions might re-open but is considered unlikely in the short term. In the meantime, interest in the fund and the pipeline remains strong with co-investment occurring on a deal-by-deal basis.

Agenda Item 7: Transition Update

7.1 The board welcomed assurances provided by PC that the board's fiduciary responsibilities were a priority in evaluating any options for transfer of responsibilities. IB confirmed that Mills & Reeve, the LEP's retained legal advisers, had been approached to provide support and advice. The range of advice could be extensive, including how to make constitutional changes to the company, corporate development, distribution and transfer of assets and liabilities, novation of contracts and managing HR protections. Mills & Reeve will therefore need to establish a team of specialists. PB and TB reflected that while advice is necessary, it is also important to remain vigilant and to be prepared to challenge.

7.2 SP, currently chair of Growth Directors, provided an overview of the approach being taken by the Local Authorities to the issues presented by the transition. Although only a few weeks since the announcement, the pre-existing high levels of co-operation between the LAs and the LEP provide a solid foundation to address the transition strategically and practically. Progress was already underway and local elections did not prevent discussions between the LA. He also confirmed that while there is no requirement to “fix” anything broken, the LAs recognised the urgency for principles to be stated early and for clear communication to staff (both of the LEP and the LAs) to permit detailed planning.

7.3 The LAs agree that the sub-region is facing decisions relating to a County Deal and that the future of the LEP functions should be considered within that context. There were no expectations or indications that the functional economic area would change.

7.4 SP re-stated the value LAs place on having a business board with representatives from the private sector, though the role might evolve.

Agenda Item 8: Draft Delivery Plan 2023-24

8.1 AD presented an updated delivery plan which was approved by those present. Absent board members are requested to confirm their approval.

ACTION: Board members not present at the meeting

Agenda Item 9: Draft Budget 2023-24

9.1 IB presented a revised budget, compared to the paper presented to the March meeting, with two changes to assumptions.

9.2 Confirmation had been received from DBT that Growth Hub funding would be £261k, an increase from £231k. The additional funding would be matched to additional activity and expenditure.

9.3 Given the uncertainty of the LEP’s future structure, rather than seek to transfer the delivery of the Pledge for the new academic year in September, the programme would remain with the LEP for the full year. Provision for the match funding required to obtain the allocation from the Careers and Enterprise Company (DfE) had there for been included in the LEPs expenditure. The additional burden created a budget deficit, and use of reserves, of £32k.

9.4 The budget was approved.

Agenda Item 10: Any Other Business

10.1 None

Agenda Item 11: Date and Time of Next Meetings:

Board meeting: 24th May 2023. (Time and place TBC) **NOTE: The meeting date has been changed.**

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Action arising	Action	Who	Complete?
16/3/22	Take forward recommendations to improve interaction with engagement board members:	Board members	Ongoing
16/3/22 & 16/11/22	Circulate a list of events (being attended by LEP Board members) including invitations for LEP speakers	Philip Cox / Sharon Pond	Ongoing
19/4/23	LEP Board members to confirm approval of the Annual Delivery Plan	Board members	