**CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON LEP BOARD MEETING**

**Subject: Chief Executive’s Report Agenda Item: 5**

**Author: Philip Cox**

**Meeting Date: 14 November 2018**

Summary

1. We have taken some fairly significant steps over the last month, submitting our formal response to the LEP Review, continuing to gear up to substantially enhance the service provided to businesses through the Growth Hub and continuing with the development of our Local Industrial Strategy. Alongside this, we have played a significant role in the pan-Northern NP11 Group, and Christine Gaskell has been invited to sit on the Industrial Strategy Council.

LEP Review

1. Members of the Board cleared our return to the LEP Review in correspondence, and it was submitted, on time, on 31 October. Unlike many LEPs, we have relatively little to do to fully comply with the requirements of the review, the most notable actions being to improve the gender balance of the Board, produce an annual delivery plan, and hold an annual general meeting in public. MHCLG also invited us, as part of the submission, to apply for an additional £200,000 of running cost funding for this financial year. We explained, in our bid, that we wanted to use around £50k of the funding to provide additional finance support for the LEP, including appointing a new Finance Director, and £150k to fund work on our Local Industrial Strategy. We are proposing to make £75k of this available to the local authorities to support the development of Industrial Strategies for districts in C&W.

C&W Local Industrial Strategy (LIS)

1. The Strategy Committee is due to have a detailed discussion about the LIS immediately before the main board meeting. Metro Dynamics are continuing to develop a finer grain understanding of the evidence base and an initial meeting with analysts from BEIS to talk them through the evidence base is due to take place on 9th November. An Officer Steering Group has been established (comprising the LEP, Local Authorities, BEIS and Metro dynamics) to provide operational oversight and input and will report to the LEP Strategy Committee. Targeted meetings are also being held with senior representatives from our key sectors, along with Place Team Chairs and members of the Community and Voluntary Sector whilst a broader engagement programme is being developed for the first quarter of 2019 once the evidence work and key messages, challenges and opportunities have been pulled together.

Appointments

1. I am delighted to be able to let you know that Catherine Walker will be joining us as our new Marketing and Communications Director on 14 January. Catherine currently works for the NewcastleGateshead Initiative, but regards Cheshire as home. We have also appointed Roy Newton as our Transport and Investment Programme Director. Roy, of course, has been doing a lot of work for us over the past two years, via a contract with AECOM, but I am delighted that he will become a LEP employee on 1 February.
2. Catharine and Roy fill two long standing vacancies within the team. We are also due to be interviewing for our Business and Innovation Director on 15 November, whilst the advert for the Finance Director should be issued over the weekend of 11 November. Both of these are new posts, the first to provide the leadership of the Growth Hub, using funding provided by BEIS, the second to respond to a long-standing request from the Board for such a post. Subject to approval of our bid, funding will be provided for this post for the first eighteen months by MHCLG/BEIS.
3. Alongside these appointments, we are steadily building up capacity within our Growth Hub. Kerry Hall joined us in early October from Cheshire East, two Careers and Enterprise Co-ordinators join us on 19 November, and we expect to make two other appointments by the time of the Board meeting. These posts are funded by a combination of BEIS, plus two Department for Education bodies - the Careers and Enterprise Company and Higher Horizons. We are also waiting for our ERDF and ESF bids for the Growth and Skills Hub to be processed, which will allow us to bring our full plans to fruition.

NP11

1. The NP11 Chairs are due to have dinner with Jake Berry on 8 November and a business meeting on 13 November to agree the programme they want to pursue over the next 12 – 18 months. It is likely to focus on Energy, Supply Chains, a Northern International Trade and Investment Strategy plus some work on Health Innovation to help address one of the Government’s Grand Challenges. It is also likely that the Chairs will agree to appoint a relatively senior policy officer to represent NP11 in discussions about, for example, the Northern Powerhouse Strategy Refresh announced in the Budget, or to engage in discussions with the Government about the Spending Review. As we manage NP11’s finances and provide part of the secretariat role, we are likely to be the policy officer’s employer, although they may well be located elsewhere in the North

The Budget

1. The Budget took place on 29 October. The press branded it as the end of austerity, but, in practice, with uncertainty about the terms of the Brexit deal and a Spending Review due next year, there were few significant changes in policy that affected the LEP. The Chancellor did confirm, however, that Vehicle Excise Duty will be ring fenced to create a roads investment fund that will cover Highways England’s trunk road network, and the new Major Road Network (MRN) – major A roads that will, in future, receive investment from the new fund. We are waiting for DfT to make announcements both about the roads that will be part of the MRN, and also the next five year programme of improvements to the Trunk Road Network (so called RIS2).

Industrial Strategy Council

1. Christine has been appointed to the Government’s Industrial Strategy Council. The Council is Chaired by Andy Haldane, Chief Economist at the Bank of England, and the first meeting was attended the Prime Minister, the Chancellor and Greg Clark, the Business Secretary. Christine is the only LEP Chair on the Council and will be working alongside people such as Sir Charlie Mayfield, Chairman of John Lewis, Matthew Taylor, head of the No.10 Policy Unit under Tony Blair, and Dame Vivian Hunt, Managing Partner of McKinsey in the UK and Ireland.

Regional Leaders Summit, Dalian, China

1. Tim Wheeler and I represented the LEP at the annual UK-China Regional Leaders Summit in Dalian, North East China, last month. Tim was able to use the visit to sign an MOU with the University in Dalian, and I will be following up some contacts with cities in southern China who are keen to form stronger links with the UK. What the visit served to emphasise was the importance that both sides attach to these Summits. We were hosted by the Mayor of Dalian and the Governor of its surrounding Province (responsible for populations of 4½

million and 43 million respectively), whilst the UK delegation was led by the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service (de facto head of Government in the absence of the Assembly), the Lord Provost of Glasgow and the (metro) Mayor of Sheffield, Dan Jarvis.