



BOARD MEETING

Minutes of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership Board Meeting held on 14th October 2020, at 4.30pm by video conference call

Present

Clare Hayward (Chair)	Trevor Brocklebank	Chris Hindley	Nicola Dunbar
Nichola Newton	Cllr Louise Gittins (to 5.30pm)	Peter Broxton	Cllr Craig Browne (to 5.30pm)
John Downes	Stephen Kinsey	Robert Mee	

In attendance:

Philip Cox	Ian Brooks	Joe Toward (Engagement Board)	Charlie Seward
Adrian Bull (for Angie Robinson)	Alex Thompson (CEC)	John Adlen	

Apologies

Angie Robinson	Eunice Simmons	Joe Manning	Steve Park (WBC)
Cllr Russ Bowden	Frank Jordan (CEC)		

Agenda Item 1: Apologies and Introductions

1.1 Clare Hayward welcomed Board Members. Apologies were received as above.

Agenda Item 2: Conflicts of Interest

2.1 In relation to item 8, Craig Browne and Stephen Kinsey expressed a conflict. Neither was required to leave the meeting, though Craig Browne had left the meeting before the item was discussed.

2.2 IB was requested to provide a definition of conflicts of interest and guidance on procedures when identified.

ACTION: IB

Agenda Item 3: Public Presentation

3.1 There was no public presentations.

Agenda Item 4: Minutes of the Meeting held on 16th September 2020

4.1 The minutes of 16th September 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

Matters arising - Board discussion

4.2 Before taking the agenda items, the Chair invited comments from the board on their recent engagements with businesses and reactions to the latest (Tier 2) Covid-19 measures.

4.3 LG reported that a sector meeting with hospitality representatives had been an emotionally charged discussion, which brought the challenge of balancing public health and economic objectives into sharper focus. It re-emphasised the LEP's public facing role and as a communications channel.

4.4 CS said that residents remain confused about what is allowed and safe to do. High levels of engagement and clear communications will be vital to galvanise behaviours which will protect economic activity and enable the region to return to Tier 1.

4.5 There was a general acknowledgement of weariness to the ongoing challenges presented by Covid-19 and the changing regulations. Empathy with businesses trying to do the right thing will be crucial to maintaining relations.

4.6 On a brighter note, JA reported that demand at Alderley Park remained strong, and that EZ developments at Ellesmere Port, Helix and Aviator, and Hooton Park were let.

4.7 JD said demand for industrial space was generally holding up well and logistics development was strong. Greater uncertainty exists around office space, although some recent recovery had been noted.

Given the conversation, the board agreed to take Agenda Items 7 and 8

Agenda Item 7: Strategy for supporting the C&W economy during the next wave of Covid-19

7.1 PC presented a summary of the wide range of initiatives and activities on which the LEP is working to minimise economic impacts of Covid-19 and accelerate recovery.

7.2 It will take some time before everyone is familiar the Tier system introduced by Government and with the ramifications of each level. An area placed in Tier 2, such as C&W, has that level reviewed every 14 days and feedback indicates this can exaggerate the uncertainty for some economic sectors, not knowing whether the tier will be moved to 3.

7.3 PC sought board approval to extend the capital grants scheme to support business adapting their offer as a result of Covid by releasing £1M of Growing Places Fund, once it is available. Eligible businesses will be those that can demonstrate a negative impact caused by Tier 2 and grants, up to a maximum of 80% of the investment, will be paid in arrears to mitigate fraud. The board approved the scheme and delegated sign off of the final details to the chair and deputy chair.

Agenda Item 8: Investment Proposal for Alderley Park, Blocks 22-24 and Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP)

8.1 JA presented an overview of recent successful developments at Alderley Park (AP) and the significance of the site to creating new space, new jobs and private sector investment to the Science Corridor as a whole.

8.2 The proposal for Blocks 22-24 and MSCP will create 97,000 sqft of additional laboratory space, attract 15-30 new businesses and create 300 new jobs. The 2,247 space MSCP is required as an enabling development because existing capacity at AP is now limited. The total investment is £21M and £4M of EZ funding is needed to bridge the gap. Additional retained business rates are expected to conservatively yield £0.4M per annum. The project had the support of the Growth Corridor board and ratification from Performance and Investment but, at £4M, exceeded the delegated approval limit to the sub-board.

8.3 PB enquired whether the MSCP was necessary or appropriate in light of increased home working for office staff and, more generally, sustainability objectives. JA confirmed that the nature of work at laboratories and location of AP away from public transport networks supported the need and, to help future proof the facility, EV charging points are included within the design.

8.4 LG and NN asked that the project consider promoting apprenticeships in construction and made use of links to skills programmes e.g. digital skills in construction.

8.5 The board unanimously supported the project delegating the Chair and Chair of the Growth Corridor board to complete the investment agreements.

Agenda Item 5: Chief Executive's Update

5.1 Philip Cox presented his report, highlighting in particular that the AGM had achieved strong media attention. Board members were encouraged to share the accompanying LEP Annual Review among their networks and contacts.

ACTION: Board Directors

5.2 It was suggested a one-page summary of the Annual Review was prepared which could be used alongside future communications.

ACTION: JM

5.3 PC mentioned that a campaign to recruit several directors and committee members to vacant positions was being developed which will seek to secure candidates with sector knowledge of transport and digital and that will promote regional representation, diversity and inclusivity.

Agenda Item 6: Economic Developments – Crewe

Crewe North Junction

6.1 PC introduced this section of the agenda by referring to the launch, over the previous week of the HS2 Design Refinement Consultation and the announcement of plans to undertake a £600 million rebuild of Leighton Hospital in Crewe. The HS2 consultation consult on a new Crewe North Junction that will allow all HS2 trains direct routing into Manchester and Manchester Airport. The junction will cost several hundred million pounds and ensure that Crewe station becomes a key hub within the HS2 network. Alongside the proposed hospital redevelopment, Crewe will benefit from hundreds of million of investment during the 2020s.

Leighton Hospital

6.2 It was agreed that November's board meeting would include full presentations of plans for Leighton and Warrington Hospital re-developments. In the context of Crewe developments, TB gave a short overview of the issues facing Leighton and the proposals to address them. He described the concrete panels used to construct Leighton are beyond the end of expected life and that to replace them before they have an increased risk of failure would cost £380-£400M. The alternative is to rebuild the hospital, which can be done at the same site. Facilities at Northwich Victoria would also be modernised. Plans will be submitted to Government as part the call for investment in hospital replacement.

Growth Corridor

6.3 JA presented a summary of the Growth Corridor proposals which form a central tenet of the sub-region's submission for the Comprehensive Spending Review. The Growth Corridor seeks to accelerate the delivery and maximise the economic benefits afforded by the hub station of HS2 at Crewe and Northern Powerhouse Rail at Warrington. By strategically connecting industrial development locations

at Basford East, Winsford Industrial Estate, Midpoint 18 and Port Warrington, with housing pathfinder projects, the Growth Corridor offers an opportunity for “levelling up” on a sub-regional scale.

6.4 The proposal includes a tax increment financing model similar to, but different from, an Enterprise Zone, where up front borrowing to invest in the sites is repaid by retained business rates thus generated. Crucially any surplus business rates generated will be used to (part)-finance the re-development of Crewe rail station, reducing the costs to central Government.

6.5 It has been demonstrated, by other high speed investments, that a failure to invest in Crewe will tend to draw future investment away from the area to the larger conurbations at the “end of the line”, e.g. towards Manchester and Birmingham, thus causing the opposite effect to the one planned and envisaged.

6.6 With the projections that Manchester and Birmingham will be within 30 minutes of Crewe and London within 1 hour, Crewe becomes a central location enhancing the reasons to live and locate in and around the area.

Wider Developments in Crewe

6.7 PS outlined a range of other supporting investments and developments in Crewe. Crewe is awaiting announcements by MHCLG for the Future high Streets Fund, having been shortlisted. Investment proposals consider improving the access to the centre of Crewe from to station, residential and civic schemes, a technology and digital innovation campus and a sustainable energy network.

6.8 Crewe is also a recipient of Stronger Towns Funding for investments largely between 2022-26. Some of that has been accelerated and is investing in public realm at Lyceum Square. The Towns Board is presently developing ideas for consultation. PS/JA will arrange for more detailed discussions with board members regarding the Towns Fund proposals. JT reminded the board to consult with members of the Engagement Board.

ACTION PS/JA

6.9 In the centre of town, the demolition of Royal Arcade is expected to commence soon and the refurbishment of Crewe Market Hall is complete, and an operator in situ.

6.10 It was agreed that a further meeting be arranged to discuss the developments in and around Crewe in more detail.

ACTION PC

Agenda Item 9: Registers of Interests

9.1 As part of their papers, Board Members had received a blank template to update their individual registers of interests. IB requested that these were completed and returned to him within 2-3 weeks so that the website could be brought up to date. The template follows that provided within the Local Assurance Framework and having up to date registers on the website is a factor used by MHCLG to determine the LEP performance rating for governance.

ACTION: Board Directors

Agenda Item 10: Sub-board updates

10.1 CH reported P&I’s continued focus on ensuring delivery of programmes by 31st March.

10.2 ND said the ESB had received a further illuminating presentation on skills and CH recommended this was brought to the full board in November. Progress continues with Digital Skills, Accelerate, and the Pledge. We continue to encourage more girls into digital and STEM courses and careers.

10.3 RM explained how strategy committee was adapting to the changed priorities of central government. While the budget for November has been cancelled, work continues on the CSR. The fundamentals of the Local Industrial Strategy remain in place even though there is no timetable for publication.

10.4 SK reported that the Business Growth committee had met on 13/10 with discussion focussed on the extension to the capital grants scheme, peer to peer networks and EU exit. CH proposed the board receive and update on EU Exit and transition at the November board meeting.

ACTION: PC

10.5 AB reported that MarCom had received the report on External Perception, which reinforced some of the concerns we had already identified during work on the LIS. Work was continuing to develop approaches to Place Marketing, with several engagement activities proposed. The External Perception report will be shared with the board.

ACTION: JM

10.6 JT reminded sub-board chairs to involve the Engagement board members in consultation work.

Agenda Item 11: Any Other Business

11.1 CH recorded the board's thanks to Graeme Bristow who had resigned from the board during the week to pursue other interests. Graeme had been an active and engaged member of the board and as chair of the Local Transport Board and will be missed.

11.2 CH mentioned that the Sustainability and Inclusivity commission had held its' inaugural meeting and proposed an update at the November Board.

ACTION: PC

Date and Time of Next Meetings:

Board Meeting: 18th November 2020, 4:30pm– 6:30pm (Virtual – MS Teams)

Board Discussion Forum: 16th December 2020, 4:30pm– 6:30pm (Virtual – MS Teams)