

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Board, held via Microsoft Teams
On Thursday 7th September 2023 – 8am**

Present:	Philip Cox (“PC”) - Chair Eleanor Underhill (“EU”) Sarah Callander-Beckett (“SCB”)
Marketing Cheshire Directors	Steven Broomhead (“SB”) David Walker (“DW”) Tracey O’Keefe (“TO”) Jamie Christon (“JC”) Mark Goldsmith (“MG”) Peter Mearns (“PM”) Gemma Davies (“GD”) Ian Brooks (“IB”)
In Attendance:	Diane Cunningham (“DC”) Keith Blundell (“KB”) – part meeting Liam Hartzenberg (“LH”) Sharon Pond (minute taker)
Apologies:	Trevor Brocklebank – (“TB”)

Opening by the Chairman and Welcome

PM welcomed Board members and thanked them for joining the meeting. It was confirmed that apologies had been received from Trevor Brocklebank and PM has stepped in to Chair the meeting in TB’s absence.

PM advised Board members that Rob McKay has resigned from the Board.

Declarations of Interest

Board members to advise Sharon of any declarations of interest.

Minutes and Actions from the last Meeting

The Board confirmed that the minutes from the meeting on the 18th May were correct and confirmed that all actions had been addressed.

With regard to the partnership rate card, it was confirmed that it had been agreed that for 2023-4 rates would be increased by 10% at their current level due to the current economic climate. It was referred to that SCB and EC had previously offered to review the levels of membership tiers to ensure they fitted with partnership requirements. No review is currently due and DC advised that partnership requirements would be reviewed as part of the stakeholder work. (discussed later in the agenda)

SCB advised that Carole Hyde has been appointed Head of Rural and Cultural Economy at Cheshire East Council following Brendan’s retirement.

LEP Transition

PC gave the board an update on the progress of the LEP transition advising that following the session at Willington Hall the government response to the consultation was reported to LEP chairs on the 4th August. The government are looking to see sub regional work retained and continue to operate at a sub-regional level. This was already one of the key objectives in the plans that C&W LAs have developed for the future of the LEP and MC.

The work going on now is focussed on the detail of how the transfer should be managed and therefore includes a lot of due diligence work involving lawyers and accountants. A meeting of the Leaders and Chief Executives' group is planned for the 29th September and a meeting with the Growth Directors is taking place today to finalise the paper for the meeting on the 29th.

There are two options available as follows:

Option One – LEP and MC transfer in total and are merged into one of the 3 Local Authorities.

Option Two – keep LEP as a company and the Local authorities become the joint owners of the company.

The current analysis strongly favours the company approach; however, the hosted approach is still possible. The detailed legal work that has taken place has identified that MC can continue to trade under the hosted model. Further legal work is being undertaken to ensure MC is compliant with competition regulations under the teckal ruling.

It is hoped that we will have an agreement in principle to the organisation's structure on the 29th September. It will then go to the 3 Local Authority cabinet / committee meetings individually to seek approval.

SB advised the board that the local authorities have no appetite to divide Marketing Cheshire and want a sub-regional cohesive solution. It was reiterated that Marketing Cheshire are being considered in these discussions.

Recruitment update

PC advised that the closing date for applications for the Managing Director role is the 15th September and interviews will take place w/c 9th October. There will also be a stakeholder panel event to meet the candidates. Marketing Manchester are also currently recruiting a CEO at a higher salary band, but we have nevertheless received some very good applications for our role. The Marketing Manchester role is a different role to the MC role and is likely to attract different candidates, but even though they are slightly behind us in the recruitment timescales we will liaise in case they have potential suitable candidates for our role.

Trevor, Philip and Charlie Seward (CW&C) will be members of the final interview panel alongside a stakeholder panel drawn from the board and other stakeholders including representatives from Destination Chester and Destination Cheshire.

CEO Report

It was agreed that the CEO report circulated to the Board would be taken as read and DC welcomed any comments from the Board.

Comments from Board

Further to Colin Potts' appointment as Chair of Destination Chester the Board thought that having him as a member with his background would be beneficial and would ensure we bring Chester and Cheshire together to work as a group cohesively. It was therefore proposed that Colin should become a member of the board. PC advised that he would discuss this with Trevor and the LAs given the current transition process. **Action PC to discuss further with Trevor Brocklebank**

**Action
PC**

GD, on behalf of CW&C, explained that Destination Chester is responsible for the delivery of the Visitor Economy actions of the One City Plan and that CW&C are utilising UKSPF funding to support activity. She emphasised that Destination Chester and Destination Cheshire are both very important groups and funding has been provided by CW&C for Destination Chester particularly around Covid recovery.

SCB has expressed concerns that there is too much focus on Chester when the wider county is responsible for bringing a lot to Chester and needs recognition for it. DC referred Board members to the media report and the increased number of Cheshire-wide articles.

TO said she was concerned that that information is being circulated to stakeholder groups without the board having sight of these reports and requested that reports are brought to the Board for review prior to wider circulation. It was agreed that it would be beneficial to have a clear governance diagram to show the relationship between the board and the different stakeholder groups. **Action: Document to be circulated showing key meetings and decisions to shape a future discussion on governance**

Action
DC

Stakeholder Engagement

Concerns were voiced by the board over the reputation of MC and it was suggested that this could be why we are struggling with partnership sign ups. Both JC and GD have been approached by partners advising of their concerns. It was felt that we are in a better place with Destination Chester now that a Chair has been appointed. There is a need to address the stakeholder communication issue.

DC advised that the Oneday team have been discussing a stakeholder engagement programme with PC and have reviewed a long list of stakeholders with PC which has been narrowed down to approx. 25. Meetings with these stakeholders will commence shortly and will include one-to-one conversations with Board members to discuss concerns and ideas to move forward and we can then discuss these outcomes further at a future Board / workshop.

TO suggested that the Oneday stakeholder engagement could be positioned as a market research process around what partners need and are prepared to pay for at different tiers to feed into the new MD but have a clear comms document/process which explains where we are now, what we are achieving in the meantime etc.

DC said that the engagement will cover stakeholder requirements, but it will not focus on pricing as the engagement is at a senior, strategic level while the Marketing Cheshire team cover business as usual such as rate card and tier levels. The conversations will be elevated around what MC are doing – strategically, rather than activity focused - and what the partner organisations are also doing and how they want to be involved to develop a fuller picture. There are concerns that MC are being blamed for the visitor economy not being as good as it was (pre-Covid-19 pandemic), but we need a two-way conversation to understand what stakeholders are doing to increase visitors.

JC and EU commented on the tone/approach being positive and not defensive which DC echoed.

Board members requested to review the list of identified stakeholders for meetings and offered to take part in the stakeholder engagement meetings to provide continuity as Oneday handover to the new managing director as it could be 6 months before the successful candidate becomes effective in the role. DC said that the one-to-one conversations with Board members will include a discussion about how board members can get involved.

DC highlighted that the team is too under resourced to attend all the meetings however PC and LM will be attending some of the stakeholder meetings and it was confirmed that the outcome of the stakeholder discussions will be captured in a report for the new MD.

PC confirmed that meetings will start imminently with Board members factored into the plan ASAP and if available, Board members will be invited to join stakeholder meetings however, we do not want this to delay the meetings.

JC stated that all the stakeholders want to know is what is MC doing and reassurance that MC is working hard in difficult circumstances, therefore it was suggested that a communication needs to come from the Chair as soon as possible to advise what the team are doing. Board

members can then follow this up with individual stakeholders who have approached them.

Action: DC to draft letter from TB offering meetings to those on the stakeholder list and a more general communication to others

**Action
DC**

Marketing Delivery Plan

LH updated the board providing a top line overview of the Marketing delivery plan – attached.

Comments from the Board

It was questioned whether Board members would be invited to contribute to the forward plan piece of work and it was confirmed that this could be included in the planned workshop and/or future Board meeting. **Action: LH to consider timing for updating the marketing plan for 2024-5 to include the board?**

**Action
LH**

It was requested that future board reports include an update on the overarching business plan.

Concerns were voiced that PR is not mentioned in the plan. It was confirmed that PR is assigned against individual comms pieces as well as being included in the CEO report quarterly.

SB referred to Pete Waterman’s ‘Making Tracks’ event at Chester Cathedral which attracted 150k visitors and the need for continuing this sort of activity in Cheshire and felt Cheshire should also look into hosting a stage of the Tour of Britain.

Strategic projects

Keith Blundell (KB), Oneday joined the meeting and presented the LVEP Growth Plan and DMP to Board members – presentation attached.

Comments from the Board

It was agreed that the Board need more time to review the presentation offline and then Board can feedback comments to KB. It was confirmed that part of the ongoing work is to line up the team internally to lead their areas of activity to provide a seamless handover to the new MD.

Action DC to review circulation of key documents in relation to review, timing and approval.

**Action
DC**

TO stated it is essential that board members are given the opportunity to feed into the growth action plan before it is submitted. Once the process is in place this document will be shared in board papers. The DMP will not be taken forward until it is signed off by the Board.

Insight and Data

It was confirmed that KB has been working with the team on insight and data and there are 16-18 datasets to choose from. The infographic in the board report is one example and will form part of the board one to one discussions.

The data set is attached and board members will be asked for feedback in one-to-ones and for any comments on the alternative CEO Report for the board.

It was agreed by Board members that we should consider holding online board meetings every 6-8 weeks and/or periodic workshops. these meetings could be reduced to an hour if appropriate. **PC to discuss meeting frequency and the need for a Board workshop with Trevor.**

**Action
PC and
Trevor**

Company Finances

PM introduced IB to give an overview of the company finances.

IB referred Board members to the current YTD report included within the board pack advising that the forecast is for a small deficit. Solvency position is a working capital business income and expenditure rather than attached to fixed assets. The operating reserves remain above

the minimum required level. IB ran through the key elements of the report noting that the Audit Committee are comfortable with the cash position and use of reserves.

Comments from Board

The certainty around future commercial income was questioned and IB advised that the CW&C contract is a 5-year deal which we are at the end of the first year of. LEP funding is committed. We are yet to get to the absolute numbers, but it is looking positive. VIC growth of 20% over last year and hoping to see this grow further. The LEP review is taking place and may come up with some recommendations going forward.

2022/2023 Statutory Accounts

IB updated Board members on CWTB’s financial position at the year end and advised that the Statutory accounts have been approved by the Audit Committee and moved for the Board to approve and sign the accounts.

The Board Members present approved the Audited accounts for 2022/23 for CWTB.

IB to arrange for the accounts to be included in the LEP group accounts to be taken to the next LEP Board meeting for sign off.

**Action
IB**

IB to arrange for Rob MacKay to be removed from the accounts as a director before submitting.

**Action
IB**

Any Other Business

The Board thanked Rob for his time on the board and his support.

Future Board Meetings

- Thursday 16th Nov 2023
- Thursday 14 December 2023
- Thursday 15th February 2024
- Thursday 16th May 2024
- Thursday 5th September 2024
- Thursday 14th November 2024

Signature (Trevor Brocklebank, Chair)

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Date