

BOARD MEETING

Minutes of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership Board Meeting held 26th July 2023 at 4.30pm By Teams

Board Members:

	Present	Apology		Present	Apology
Clare Hayward (CH)	x		John Downes		x
Trevor Brocklebank	x		Chris Hindley (CHi)	x	
Russ Bowden		x	Kath Mackay		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
Andy Devaney	x		John Adlen	x	
Melissa Crellin	x		Liam Hartzenberg	x	
Yulanda Duff		x	Alex Thompson		x

Members of the Public (for Part A)

N/A

Agenda Item 1: Apologies and Introductions

1.1 CH welcomed Board Members. Apologies were received as above.

Agenda Item 2. Conflicts of Interest

2.1 No conflicts were noted.

Agenda Item 3: Public Presentation

3.1 There were no public presentations.

Agenda Item 4: Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th June 2023 and Matters Arising

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

4.2 RN confirmed that a Task and Finish Group is going to take place on 31st July, to discuss the TfN Strategic Plan. Several board and non-executive members have expressed an interest in attending. CH reported that TfN had recognised the valuable contributions made by RN and LG to transport strategy and planning.

Agenda Item 5: Chief Executive's Report

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

5.2 Conversations continue to take place regarding a possible devolution deal. LG also had the opportunity to speak to Lisa Nandy's political adviser Alex Norris and leaders were hoping to meet in the margins of the Labour Party conference. Even in the absence of a deal, leaders had agreed that progress can still be achieved, for example by some issues being addressed through sub-regional portfolios. Should a deal be forthcoming, it will be important to have elements of double devolution. Presentation to the public will require careful planning. CB/LG stressed that a conversation with residents will be necessary and the offer will need to address their needs.

5.3 LG asked whether we have any data on which firms are decarbonising their operations.

ACTION: MC

Agenda Item 6: LEP Transition Update (covered as part of CEO report)

6.1 Work continues with the Local Authorities on the LEP Transition to LA control. Further intensive discussions are expected in the next few weeks with the intention of offering leaders clear advice for their September meeting.

Agenda Item 7: Presentation: Business Survey / Inward Investment

7.1 AD presented the results of the most recent Growth Hub quarterly survey of businesses. The slides have been shared with board members under separate email. LG asked which sectors are experiencing the most challenges recruiting staff. More detailed analysis highlights hospitality and the care sectors but also senior level in Advanced Manufacturing and digital. However, issues are not restricted to any particular sector. RC explained that surveyors with 2-3 years post qualification are in heavy demand. PB mentioned a more cautious approach being taken recently by investment houses seeking to fund businesses. CH referred to the upcoming launch of the NPIF2. TB reported on a recent round of successful fund raising by an IT business, though valuations were affected by recent perceptions of risks and financing costs.

7.2 AD said improving Access to Finance remained priority for the Growth hub. He also mentioned that there was a significant opportunity to increase the number of firms which export.

7.3 AD explained the latest figures (2022-23) for Foreign Direct Investment, where C&W had performed well with 18 new investments, 60% of which were new businesses. The balance was expansion of existing. The investments would create around 600 new jobs. The LEP and LAs work closely together using an approach which continues to focus on core sectors and high productivity jobs.

Agenda Item 8: Fair Employment Charter

8.1 MC updated the board on the progress towards a sub-regional Fair Employment Charter. Consultations have elicited good support. The slides will be circulated separately. Within C&W 19% of jobs are below the Real Living Wage and there are issues for the young and over 50's to access employment. Employers, overall, continue to struggle to offer sufficient flexibility in hours, days and location to suit those with poor physical or mental health. CH asked whether the University of Chester had seen a rise in mature student enrolment.

8.2 The board accepted the need for joined up approaches between employers and institutions. Companies would also look for cross boundary recognition between different regions offering charters.

8.3 MC wondered whether a sub-regional accreditation would be as valuable to firms as e.g., B-Corporation accreditation.

8.4 The LEP will commission an internal review of its' current policies compared to the developing standards set out in the charter.

Agenda Item 9: Presentation - Science Corridor Relaunch and Re-branding

9.1 JA explained the background to the Science Corridor Enterprise Zone, which has been highly successful in generating additional floorspace, jobs and private sector funding. However, with higher borrowing costs and shorter timescales for payback, future support packages would become more challenging to provide. A refreshed offer might be possible if the area could achieve Investment Zone status, like Manchester and Liverpool (which includes Runcorn). In the meantime, the sub-region would seek to reinforce its Science offer by increasing brand recognition and including e.g., animal life sciences into the sector specialisms. Citing the Science Corridor as an example, TB was keen to ensure that the LEP's marketing presence was not diminished by the LEP transition.

9.2 The slides will be circulated, and Board members were asked to send their comments on the emerging brand propositions to John Adlen.

ACTION: Board Members

Agenda Item 10: Any Other Business

10.1 None

Agenda Item 10: Date and Time of Next Meetings:

Board Meeting: 13th September, 2023, 4.30pm - IN PERSON Chester Zoo (after Cheshire Science Symposium)

AGM and Economic Conference: 18th October 2023 (morning)

Board Meeting: 18th October, 2023, 4.30pm

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Action arising	Action	Who	Complete?
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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
26/7/23	To share any data on industrial decarbonisation by local businesses with LG.	Melissa Crellin	
26/7/23	Board members were asked to send their comments on the emerging brand propositions to John Adlen.	Board Members	