

**BOARD MEETING**

**Minutes of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership Board Meeting**

**held on 31st March 2016, Palatine Room, Chester Town Hall, Chester, CH1 2HJ**

**Present:**

Christine Gaskell (Chair) Howard Hopwood Cllr Samantha Dixon

Cllr Rachel Bailey Pete Waterman Robert Mee

Robert Davis Ged Barlow Martin Ashcroft

Jamie Christon

**Apologies:**

Louise Morrissey Prof. Tim Wheeler Cllr Terry O’Neill

Clare Hayward Nigel Schofield Meredydd David

**Attending / Observing:**

Philip Cox (LEP Chief Executive) Andy Farrall Andrew Round

Charlie Seward Katrina Michel Andy Hulme (Minutes)

**Agenda Item 1: Apologies and Introductions**

* 1. Apologies were received from Cllr Terry O’Neill, Louise Morrissey, Professor Tim Wheeler, Nigel Schofield, Meredydd David and Clare Hayward

**Agenda Item 2: Conflicts of Interest**

2.1 Cllr Bailey declared an interest in Item 8 (Area Based Review) as a Governor of Reaseheath College.

**Agenda Item 3: Public Presentation**

3.1 No request from a member of the public had been received seven days before the meeting.

**Agenda Item 4: Minutes of the Meeting held on 20th January 2016**

4.1 The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.

4.2 All actions had been completed or covered elsewhere on the agenda.

**Agenda Item 5: Chief Executive's report**

5.1 The Board noted the report and the following additional comments from the Chief Executive:

* Details of the next round of Local Growth Fund are expected shortly; £1.8bn has been made available with an expectation that bids will be submitted prior to the Summer Recess
* The launch event held at MIPIM for the Northern Gateway Development Zone prospectus was very successful with a number of key property and investment professionals attending. Feedback had highlighted the importance of creating a compelling offer including focus on quality of place.
* The Area Based Review is progressing. Focus in the early stages has been on securing a sound financial future for our colleges. It will be important moving forwards for the LEP Employer Skills Board to continue to feed in to the process so that there is real clarity over skills requirements that colleges can respond to effectively.
* In response to the National Audit Office report on DCLG’s management of LEPs, work is underway with CEC (as Accountable Body) to ensure a formal process for dispute resolution is in place within our Assurance and Accountability Framework, in the event that CEC’s Section 151 Officer disagrees with a decision made by the LEP.
* Interviews for the position of Deputy Chief Executive were held on 29th March. Three strong candidates had been interviewed and an offer has now been made to the preferred candidate.

5.2 Following discussion on the NAO item, it was agreed that further work was needed to consider how the LEP might raise its profile beyond key stakeholders.

**Action: Item on LEP awareness raising to be included on the April Discussion Form agenda**

**Agenda Item 6: Northern Independent Economic Review**

6.1 The Board noted the content of the report presented by Andy Hulme, LEP Policy and Strategy Manager, updating on the Northern Independent Economic Review being undertaken on behalf of Transport for the North.

6.2 It was noted that Cheshire and Warrington’s sector strengths align very strongly with the ‘Prime’ and ‘Enabling’ capabilities identified in the review as having the potential to deliver above average growth over the next 25 years, so helping close the productivity gap between the Northern Powerhouse area and the UK average.

6.3 The Board discussed the importance of defining our key economic messages and ensuring that these are shared with key stakeholders and influencers including our MPs.

**Agenda Item 7: Establishing the Cheshire Science Corridor Enterprise Zone**

7.1 The Board noted the content of the report presented by Robert Mee, Chair of the Enterprise Zone Investment Board. Key points noted included:

* The first meeting of the EZ Board had been held on the morning of 31st March 2016. In addition to providing governance and oversight to the implementation and operation of the Enterprise Zone the Board intends to be an advocate for the wider Cheshire Science Corridor.
* The EZ formally comes into being on 1st April 2016 and it is hoped that there will be a number of early announcements of new occupiers. A more formal launch is planned for mid-May following the end of Purdah for the forthcoming Local Elections.
* Work is ongoing with EZ landowners to agree a branding and marketing strategy and supporting marketing collateral.

**The Board formally confirmed the proposed membership of the Enterprise Zone Investment Board.**

7.2 The LEP Chief Executive expressed his gratitude for the work put in by Local Authority teams to ensure that the necessary orders and permissions for the Enterprise Zone were in place in advance of the Zone going live.

**Agenda Item 8: Board Sub-committee Updates**

8.1 The papers provided in support of Agenda Item 8 were noted.

8.2 Robert Davis provided a further verbal update on the LEP Strategy Board.

8.3 Ged Barlow provided a further verbal update on the Performance and Investment Committee. He confirmed that the investment programme is broadly on track and that the Committee has been receiving a series of presentations from the key projects funded through Local Growth Fund which have provided the opportunity for further scrutiny.

8.4 ESIF Committee – it was noted that the Committee has been discussing concerns over the quality of bids received to date for ERDF. Consideration is to be given to how these could be improved and whether increased funds should be made available to support the development of the Business Growth Hub.

8.5 Philip Cox presented the proposed LEP Budget for 2016/17, highlighting the key changes from 2015/16 including an allowance to front fund mobilisation of the Enterprise Zone in advance of monies being available through retention of business rates generated. **The Board approved the Budget for 2016/17.**

**Item 9: Any other business**

9.1 Cllr Dixon provided an update on recent discussions with authorities in North Wales over development of the Mersey Dee Alliance proposition, North Wales Rail Modernisation task Force and wider working with the North Wales Economic Ambition Board. This has included input to a ‘round table’ discussion with the new Secretary of State for Wales, Alun Cairns MP on 30th March around the potential for a cross-border Growth Deal.

**Action: Item on cross-border working with North Wales to be included on the April Discussion Forum agenda.**

9.3 Pete Waterman noted that the HS2 Hybrid Bill has now passed its final reading and should come into force in the coming weeks.

9.4 The Board noted the recent announcement by Tata Steel regarding its UK steel business. Shotton Steel Works is amongst the affected sites and it was confirmed that Cheshire West and Chester has collaborative arrangements in place with neighbouring authorities in North Wales to provide support to affected workers in the event that this is required.

**Date and Time of Next Meeting:**

• 4.30pm-6.30pm, 18th May 2016, venue to be confirmed