



BOARD MEETING

Minutes of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership Board Meeting held 19th May 2021 at 4.30pm by video conference call

Present:

Clare Hayward	Trevor Brocklebank	Cllr Craig Browne	Cllr Russ Bowden
Cllr Louise Gittins	Robert Mee	Peter Broxton	Nicola Newton (until 5.30pm)
Chris Hindley	Nichola Newton	Alice Choi	Kath Mackay
Stephen Kinsey	John Downes (until 5.00pm)	Eunice Simmons	Annette McDonald
Rupert Collis	Loren Jones		

In attendance:

Philip Cox	Ian Brooks	Joe Manning	Frank Jordan
Joe Toward	Melissa Crellin	Steve Park	Charlie Seward
John Adlen			

Apologies

Nicola Dunbar	Cllr Russ Bowden	Joe Toward	Maggie Chen
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Members of the Public (for Part A)

None			
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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 No conflicts of interests were declared.

Agenda Item 3: Public Presentation

3.1 There were no public presentations.

Agenda Item 4: Minutes of the Meeting held on 17th March 2021.

4.1 The minutes of 17th March 2021 were agreed.

4.2 One action was outstanding; to circulate the notes of the Peer Review. PC will follow up.

Agenda Item 5: Chief Executive's report

5.1 Philip Cox provided a written update to the Board, and provided additional detail as follows:

5.2 The LEP Review is progressing well with high levels of collaboration between the LEP Network, MHCLG and BEIS to determine the future role of LEPs. This has allowed for the strategic element of LEP functions to be given more prominence. While not a matter for C&W, consultations with respect to LEP geographies in other parts of the country are taking longer than anticipated. The discussions on the relationships between Local Authorities and LEPs are, to some extent, dependent on resolving the geographic issues so the timetable for ministers to make announcements prior to the summer recess appears to be slipping.

5.3 The Government has also announced that it will not now bring forward the Devolution White Paper, replacing it instead with a Levelling Up White Paper. We understand that this will be produced from No. 10, rather than the department, by individuals who have previously had a strong connection with LEPs.

5.4 PC reported that despite higher levels of unemployment generally, the hospitality sector was reporting difficulty recruiting sufficient staff to support re-opening. This seems to be a national issue. He had introduced Sarah Callender-Beckett, Board member of Marketing Cheshire, to officials at DWP with a view to promoting sector opportunities to those seeking work and to raise awareness among employers of support provided by the Kickstart programme.

5.5 The discussion which followed led to several themes and questions as to why the sector is facing recruitment challenges, which the executive will pursue.

Agenda Item 6: Board Sub-Committee Reports

6.1 The board heard updates from the sub-board chairs.

6.2 Employers' Skills Board. Kath Mackay reported on the progress of the application for an Institute of Technology, which we believe has a strong chance of being accepted and will bring significant resources to the colleges. KM also invited board members to attend an on-line event on 16th June, at 12.00 to 1.30, which will showcase the skills projects funded by Local Growth Fund. IB will liaise with Sarah Williams to ensure board members have the sign in details.

ACTION: IB

6.3 Digital Connectivity Board. The board is in its early stages of formation. Louise Gittins offered the sub-board a presentation from the CWaC team working on digital inclusion. Rupert Collis reported that the sub-board has identified several existing plans from which the key themes relevant for C&W need to be distilled. Kath Mackay raised the concern that digital skills courses are attracting too few female applicants.

6.4 Strategy Programme Board. Robert Mee mentioned the key decision taken by the sub-board was support for the I.o.T application. In addition, there are some investment opportunities which do not have a natural "fit" with one of the other sub-boards. Strategy programme board decided these instances would be considered by the Growth Corridors Science and EZ sub-board.

6.5 Business Growth. Stephen Kinsey reported that the sub-board had received a presentation on growing businesses by export, made by Tricia Francis who has joined the LEP on secondment from DiT. Exporting represents one strategy for growth, often shied away from by smaller businesses, and a promotional campaign is being developed to encourage this avenue to growth. It was also reported that Birchwood Park had achieved its largest ever letting to Arne Clothing, an e-commerce business expanding from its previous base at Wigan.

6.6 Local Transport Board. Alice Choi said that the LTB had received an update from DfT regarding Bus Back Better, and plans were seeking to address the impacts social distancing has had on public transport

usage. The M6 J19 works are progressing and expected to complete in late summer. A business case being prepared for Northern Powerhouse Rail has been held back awaiting better understanding of the Integrated Rail Plan.

6.7 Marketing Cheshire Board. Trevor Brocklebank summarised the new recruitment to the MC board and the constructive away day that the board had attended. It had provided an opportunity to discuss short term recovery measures for the hospitality and visitor economy but also begin to think for the medium and longer term. Two initiatives have been established; Destination Chester and Destination Cheshire, the latter trying to bring together assets such as Jodrell Bank, Tatton Estate and Bewilderwood. Chester has also made the shortlist of finalists for itravel staycation awards.

6.8 Performance and Investment Committee. Chris Hindley reported on the most recent meeting confirming that we had fully spent the LGF allocation (to the LEP) of £127M and that the next phase would be continuing to monitor the performance of those investments. He recognised that without the lever of further capital funding, partners might have less incentive to report progress, but said it was important that reports continued to be forthcoming, even if timetables were relaxed to a quarterly or bi-annual rhythm.

6.9 Finance and Audit committee. IB requested the board approve a change to the Terms of Reference to allow non-executive members to be appointed to the committee. This was unanimously agreed.

Agenda Item 7: Recovery Plan and Delivery Plan 2021-22

7.1 Melissa Crellin presented the latest version of the Recovery and Delivery Plan to the board, which had benefitted from several consultation sessions involving over 140 participants over the previous two months. The consultation demonstrated strong support for the overall objectives and direction. The plan, which expresses the LEP contribution towards recovery, will sit alongside the plans of each Local Authority. MC explained that the next steps are to include more cases studies, develop the executive summary such that it can be read as a stand-alone shorter document, and to consider whether it might be possible to represent the content as a “Plan on a page”. She also explained that a further plan, more focussed on the medium term would be scheduled for production later in the year to reflect progress with the recovery and a provide a longer-term view on how the sub region can deliver it vision.

7.2 Loren Jones asked how the plan would be linked to the work of sub-boards. Clare Hayward confirmed this will form a key discussion topic at the upcoming board away day.

7.3 Alice Choi proposed that we liaise with organisations expert in issues such as diversity and inclusivity to help set measures supportive of our vision and ambition. It was proposed that when assessing funding requests, sustainability and inclusivity factors are considered. She also enquired whether the LEP has, in the past, provided any training on diversity and inclusivity. This will be considered by the executive.

ACTION: IB

7.4 In response to a question from Kath Mackay, PC thought that we might, in future, face challenges from individuals or groups who have a strong affiliation to either sustainability or inclusivity or economy, while our objective is to find balance between people, plant and profit.

7.5 Within the consultation process, we had received strong engagement from third sector organisations and we will explore further how the third sector may assist the delivery of the vision.

7.6 Peter Broxton reminded the board that the impact of growth initiatives and programmes needs to be seen across the full geography of the sub-region.

7.7 The board recognised the considerable effort invested compiling the plan, supported the approach and agreed the proposed next steps. Sign off for the final document was delegated to the Chair and Chief Executive.

7.8 Steve Park suggested the launch of the final document represented a good opportunity to promote the work of the LEP and Marketing Cheshire, in particular to raise awareness with small business.

ACTION: JM

Agenda Item 8: Review of Enterprise Zone 2016-2021

8.1 Robert Mee and John Adlen presented a summary of the first five years of the Cheshire Science Corridor Enterprise Zone, showcasing the many and varied investments supported by the LEP since the inception of the EZ.

8.2 The presentation provided an opportunity to demonstrate the close co-operation between the LEP and Local Authorities and to achieve some excellent outcomes in terms of new commercial space, jobs creation, and private sector match investment. The increase in business rates, which are retained locally until 2041 will, once loans are repaid, provide an income stream for further investment.

8.3 The board welcomed the presentation and congratulated the team involved.

Agenda Item 9: Board Awayday

9.1 Clare Hayward briefed the board on the plans for an AwayDay on 27th May, combining a virtual session for all board members and followed by some small groups meeting outdoors at various locations in Cheshire.

Agenda Item 10: Any Other Business

10.1 Robert Mee asked board members to hold the date of 29th July 2021 (from 5.00pm) for the High Sheriff's Summer Party.

Agenda Item 11: Date and Time of Next Meetings:

Board Discussion Forum: 16th June 2021, 4:30pm– 6:30pm (Virtual – MS Teams)

Board Meeting: 14th July 2021, 4:30pm– 6:30pm (Virtual – MS Teams)