

**CHESHIRE SCIENCE CORRIDOR ENTERPRISE ZONE BOARD**

**Minutes**

**31 March 2016, Thornton Science Park**

1. **Present**

Robert Mee (Chair)

Howard Hopwood

Cllr Brian Clarke

Cllr Russ Bowden

Cllr Peter Groves

*In attendance:*

Philip Cox, CEO, LEP

Jonathan Walsh, Birchwood Park

Paul Vernon, Thornton Science Park

Andy Allan, MSP

Steve Park

Matt O’Neill

Tony Clark

Katrina Michel

Caroline Baker

1. **Apologies**

Andy Evans, Chris Farrow, Chris Doherty

1. **Conflicts of Interest**

No Board member had any conflicts of interest to declare

1. **Cheshire Science Corridor EZ Overview**

Robert Mee provided an introductory overview of the Enterprise Zone and the benefits and opportunities it offers. He then invited representatives of the four main sites to describe their individual offers:

* Andy Allan introduced Alderley Park and said that MSP’s key focus is on re-opening buildings for multiple occupancy.
* Jonathan Walsh introduced the Birchwood site which he said still offers significant scope for development. He also highlighted congestion in East Warrington as a major constraint on development of the site.
* Paul Vernon described Thornton and offered a tour for Board members able to stay behind after the meeting. He said that EZ status was already attracting new investors.
* Tony Clark said that the Ellesmere Port sites have the potential to create 3500 new jobs. He also reported that Hooton Park is on the market and that the former DSM site may be developed speculatively as a direct result of EZ status.

1. **EZ Governance**

Caroline Baker introduced her paper setting out the proposed governance structure for the EZ, including the role and membership of the Board and Steering Group. The proposals were agreed as drafted.

In discussion, Jonathan Walsh emphasised the importance of being able to respond quickly to rate relief applications and other proposals affecting EZ sites. Caroline Baker said that the LEP is looking to appoint a manager for the EZ, and would be putting in place interim arrangements pending that appointment.

1. **Operational Overview and EZ Finances**

Caroline Baker confirmed that everything was in place to offer Business Rate discounts and Enhanced Capital Allowances to new and growing firms on the EZ from 1 April. In discussion she agreed to look again at the location test, which is designed to prevent firms moving from other localities simply to take advantage of the EZ but without creating any new jobs.

Philip Cox briefed the Board on the potential to use the EZ as a vehicle for promoting the Cheshire Science Corridor more generally. He said that he had asked Cushman & Wakefield to produce a business case to test whether it would be good value for money to put resources into proactive management and marketing of the Science Corridor. The business case would be discussed with the Board before any decision is taken to progress.

1. **Marketing and Communication**

Caroline Baker outlined the plans being put in place to market the EZ. There would be a formal launch after the Warrington local elections, a website is being built and a marketing brochure is being produced, a draft of which was circulated to those at the meeting. Caroline also showed the ‘Spark’ branding proposal, which was welcomed by Board members. Caroline also said that it would strengthen the launch even further if it were possible to publicise the names of firms that have taken space on the EZ since 1 April.

1. **Any Other Business**

There was no other business.