

Cheshire and Warrington Business Advisory Board

Meeting Note

Date: Wednesday, 12 February 2025

Time: 4:30–5:40pm (via Teams)

Attendees – Business Advisory Board (BAB) Members:

Steve Purdham (Chair)	Jan Chillery	Ian Traynor
Jill Jones	Andrea Stott	Annette McDonald
Paul Taylor	Adrian Curry	Jane Hough
Peter Broxton	Chris Hindley	Nichola Newton
Terry Hayward	Rupert Collis	Annabel Turpin
Helen Tonks	Trevor Brocklebank	Helen Gbormittah

Apologies:

Gaurav Batra, Maggie Chen, Yannis Loucopoulis

Attendees – Others:

Philip Cox, CEO Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington (ECW)

Cristian Marcucci, MD Marketing Cheshire

Paul Chapman, Growth Hub Manager ECW

1. Apologies, welcome and introduction – Steve Purdham

- 1.1. Steve welcomed the members of the BAB & thanked members for feedback and ongoing work since the last meeting.

2. Conflicts of interest – Steve Purdham

- 2.1. No conflicts of interest were declared

3. Minutes of the Board meeting held on 15th January 2025, agreed actions and matters arising – Steve Purdham

- 3.1. Notes from the BAB meeting on 15th January 2025 were unavailable and will be reviewed at the next meeting.
- 3.2. **ACTION:** Meeting notes and agendas will be published.
- 3.3. Links to items referenced during this section:
[BAB web page including board papers & relevant publications](#)

4. Devolution update including progress on the development of the Devolution Plan

4.1. Members received updates on progress towards devolution and the development of the Cheshire and Warrington Devolution Plan (formerly the Growth Plan), highlighting:

- Cheshire and Warrington has been accepted on the Government Devolution Priority Programme along with five other areas
- The statutory devolution consultation is expected to start imminently, will be led by Government and is expected to take approximately 8 weeks
- The devolution timeline is expected to lead to the formation of a combined authority for Cheshire and Warrington in March 2026, with Mayoral elections following in May of that year.

4.2. Links to items referenced during this section:

[Devolution revolution press release](#)

5. Devolution Comms

5.1. Members received an update on the forthcoming devolution consultation, communications priorities and the roles of local authorities and the Business Advisory Board in that process.

5.2. A devolution website has been set up and regular press briefings are taking place. The website includes a FAQ section and it is suggested that enquiries requesting more information about devolution can be directed to the website for the most up-to-date information.

5.3. Observations from members included:

- Request for clearer understanding of the purpose of the Govt consultation
A: Current legislation requires a public consultation as part of the devolution process
- Information about engagement with younger people
A: Specific discussions with comms partners are taking place & will be fed back to BAB
- Implications for the Police and Fire & Rescue services
A: Although the Devolution White Paper states the Governments view that it is a 'good thing' for Mayors to be responsible for these services, this will only be where the geographies of these services align with Combined Authorities. 'Over the long term, the government is announcing an ambition to align public service boundaries, including job centres, police, probation, fire, health services and Strategic and Local Authorities'
- Suggestion that BAB should have some communications resource
- Main communications messaging seems to be aimed at residents of the area rather than businesses
- Request for point of contact for BAB members to refer enquiries to:
A: Requests for further information can be directed to the Cheshire and Warrington devolution website (see below)

5.4. Further discussion took place concerning the best means of keeping the business community informed about devolution and gathering feedback on proposals, including:

- The wider network of BAB members includes Cheshire Business Group & through them most business representative organisations in addition to education providers, NFU, 3rd sector, CBI Future Leaders network, Cheshire & Warrington Principals Group

- The professional services community have a role as intermediaries as well as businesses in their own right
- Don't underestimate the resources required to reach a significant proportion of the business community – need to be realistic
- Need to communicate the role & aims of the BAB as a precursor to pushing out devolution messages. Requirement for a distinct identity for the BAB separate from the public sector. This work could be done during the 8-week Govt comms period
- Risk of foreign-owned business and others who are not typically members of BROs being missed out from comms
- Need to ensure we collect information/feedback from businesses and give them a voice as well as disseminating messages
- Use the opportunity to establish a framework for communication with the business community that can have benefits beyond the devolution timeframe
- Ask to understand any potential unintended negative consequences of devolution
- Suggestion for BAB to host an in-person event to engage with the business community
- Messages need to speak to the priorities of different groups 'what's in it for me...'
- Businesses which are owned outside of the region may be disengaged
- Bring in 'case studies' from businesses in other areas who have benefitted from devolution

5.5. **ACTIONS:**

CHAIR: Prepare a communications action plan

MEMBERS: Email chair with information about members individual networks & communication channels that they can access

5.6. Links to items referenced during this section:

[Cheshire and Warrington devolution website](#)

6. **AOB:**

- 6.1. Enterprise Zone proposals previously discussed by the BAB have been fed back to the Joint Committee and advice acted upon

7. **Next meeting dates:**

Wednesday, 12th March, 4:30–6:30pm (In Person – Park Royal Hotel, Warrington)

Wednesday, 9th April, 4:30–6:30pm (Teams)