

BOARD MEETING

Minutes of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership Board Meeting held 15th September 2021 at 4.30pm by video conference call

Present:

Clare Hayward	Trevor Brocklebank	Cllr Craig Browne	Cllr Louise Gittins
Stephen Kinsey	Annette McDonald	Peter Broxton	Nicola Newton
Chris Hindley	Nicola Dunbar	Alice Choi	

In attendance:

Philip Cox	Ian Brooks	Joe Toward	Maggie Chen
Lorraine O'Donnell (until 5.30pm) (CEC)	Alex Thompson (CEC, s151)	Steve Park	Peter Skates (CEC)
Gemma Davies (CWaC)	Melissa Crellin		

Apologies

Rupert Collis	John Downes	Eunice Simmons	Cllr Russ Bowden
Loren Jones	Kath Mackay		

Members of the Public (for Part A)

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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 Conflicts of interest were noted from Stephen Kinsey and Craig Browne in relation to Agenda item 10, Life Sciences Fund 2.

Agenda Item 3: Public Presentation

3.1 There were no public presentations.

Agenda Item 4: Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th July 2021.

4.1 The minutes of 14th July 2021 were agreed.

4.2 Actions had been completed.

Agenda Item 5: Board Away Day Conclusions

5.1 PC presented a summary of the key findings and recommendations arising from the board away days. The slides distilled down and set out the immediate priorities for the LEP and the role board members can play.

5.2 AM cautioned against focussing innovation too narrowly on Green Energy and Life Sciences. There are other very strong sectors in the sub-region. PC explained that we are currently preparing a proposal for an Innovation Deal, emphasising the sub-region spends more per head on R&D than any other part of the UK, but which needs to draw out one or two sectors.

5.3 The summary received strong support from board and the slides will be distributed to board members and be made available on the website.

ACTION: PC

5.4 The presentation included a final version of the LEP “Purpose” pyramid and a similar example prepared by the board of Marketing Cheshire which describes their support of the overall aims. Chairs of the policy / decision making sub-boards were tasked to work with their members to prepare a pyramid for each sub-board. AC said that the Business Growth board had begun some work, using the “anchors” of Healthy, Sustainable, Inclusive and Fast-Growing, and whether this should change to reflect the priorities of Skills, Innovation, Regional Strategy, Infrastructure and Net Zero. It was agreed that pyramids needed to address the elements of the vision and the priorities. PB mentioned that the Growth Corridors’ Board had developed a “plan-on-a-page” which would prove helpful in deriving a purpose pyramid.

ACTION: Sub-board Chairs

Agenda Item 6: Board Sub-Committee Reports

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

6.2 Marketing Cheshire Board. Trevor Brocklebank received ratification for the re-appointment of two MC board members, Eleanor Underhill and David Walker, who had reached the end of their first terms. No objections were raised.

6.3 TB went on to describe some of the achievements over the summer, including record visitor numbers at Chester Zoo, the Tour of Britain cycle race which we had supported by providing the helicopter script, Chester winning staycation city of the year, and the application for the Sandstone Ridge / Trail to be given A.O.N.B status. MC are also sharing best practice and good ideas across the towns of the sub-region.

6.4 Digital Connectivity Board. ND reported that the first meeting of the sub-board had now been held and the draft Terms of Reference were presented to the board for ratification. SK proposed one clarification to the drafting; exchanging “split vote” to “no overall majority”. This change will be made and the T.o.R were approved.

6.5 ND added that a meeting had also been held with Esther McVey MP, who offered her support by tabling a Parliamentary Question in support of the sub-regions digital ambitions, making an introduction for us to the Minister for Digital Infrastructure and to keep Digital at the forefront of discussions with Cheshire and Warrington MPs.

6.6 Local Transport Board. AM said the LTB was reviewing its’ T.o.R. to ensure the sub-region has a strong voice on planning matters, and programmes such as integrated rail strategy and bus strategy. She said HS2b is progressing, but more public engagement is needed to explain the benefits, engage “hearts and minds” and bring positive messages to the wider North-West. It was agreed the LEP’s recently appointed PR Agency, Social, could be approached to assist.

6.7 Cllr Louise Gittins is until January 2022 acting chair of Transport for the North, a “vote” for Cheshire, and an opportunity to promote the transport agenda for the sub-region. The various transport programmes, especially HS2, will create many skilled jobs for Cheshire and Staffordshire and the skills “Leads” had met recently at Crewe Alexandra Stadium.

Agenda Item 7: Chief Executive's report

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

7.2 Following the PM’s speech, devolution has been gaining more traction and support. A meeting had been held with MHCLG officials which indicated the Government wished to press on with two or three deals in the North (but not Cheshire and Warrington), and the Cheshire and Warrington authorities would need to consider carefully how to proceed. The board recognised the wide spectrum of views held locally in respect of devolution, that there are different possible models, and different routes to obtaining a democratic mandate. AM reported that when devolution is discussed at Business Leaders, the business community have limited understanding of what a “deal” might offer.

7.3 Hot off the press was the ongoing cabinet reshuffle. PC explained that the outcome could have a material effect on the LEP Review given the range of opinions held by Government Ministers towards LEPs. In general, he felt from what had been announced so far, the reshuffle would shift the balance of opinion and influence in favour of LEPs and the functions they perform.

7.4 PC also mentioned that the independent review of Destination Management Organisations (DMO) led by Nick de Bois had been published. The recommendations, if accepted by Government, could provide additional funding and there is an opportunity for MC to be a “Top-Tier” Tourist Board.

Agenda Item 8: COP-26

8.1. Melissa Crellin presented slides outlining the programme of events associated with the COP-26 conference taking place between September and November. The sub-region will use the opportunity to promote a range of successes and achievements including being the:

- First hydrogen production plant in the UK
- First glass furnace in the world to use hydrogen and green electricity - Encirc
- First to have an all-electric vehicle manufacturing plant in the UK – Vauxhall
- First hydrogen refuelling station in the NW – Storengy/CEC
- First plastic to hydrogen recycling unit consented in the UK – Protos (Peel)
- First most densely monitored low voltage network in the UK (and possibly the world) for smart energy innovation – EA Technology/SPEN/Energy Innovation District
- (subject to planning) First sustainable aviation fuel pipeline direct to airport in the UK/world – Fulcrum Northpoint

8.2. The board agreed that the legacy of COP-26 should establish the sub-region as a hub for low carbon energy generation, technology and innovation and a place at the forefront of achieving Net Zero. We are also aiming to have the world’s first net zero industrial cluster by 2040.

8.3. There are two key green Zone events; one focusing on industrial decarbonisation, to be held at the Heath, and one focussing on Smart Cities, at a location in Manchester. Board members were asked to hold the dates if they could.

8.4 MC will circulate twitter hashtags etc to board members to help share and promote local activities. AC recommended MC also talk to Engagement Board members who can assist in social media channels and engaging the younger generations’ voice.

ACTION: MC

8.5 The Board supported the LEP sponsoring the programme (£5k) and encouraging other businesses to engage in sponsorships.

8.6 AM said Sky News will be running a series of lead in stories to COP-26 and Social may help secure some examples for the sub-region.

Agenda Item 9: Economic Summit/AGM Update on Preparations

9.1 PC provided a verbal report on progress towards the Economic Summit / AGM on 19th October, 2021. Board Members should have received an invitation.

Agenda Item 10: Life Sciences Fund 2

10.1 IB updated the board that consensus had been reached by the co-investors to the creation of a second Life Sciences Fund, that legal counsel had been appointed and preparations for procurement of a fund manager were beginning. The board approved the ongoing involvement of the LEP on the basis outlined in the paper.

10.2 PB expressed a concern that as described in the paper, the fund appeared to favour investments in Cheshire to Alderley Park. He sought assurances that all of Cheshire and Warrington would be included, and that opportunities would be available for the University of Chester as it grows and develops its' medical faculty. The board also stressed the importance of promoting wider outcomes for diversity and inclusivity. IB and SK explained that the fund will be established to allow investment and promote Life Sciences across the sub-region. IB also explained that as part of the procurement process Fund Managers will be asked to describe their proposals for delivering the wider benefits and that the monitoring will include the fund managers reporting on a range of criteria.

Agenda Item 11: A.o.B

11.1 PC provided an outline of the successful Peer to Peer cohorts which are currently running and asked Board members to promote, through their networks, that we will be establishing a further 4 networks shortly. An updated brochure is being prepared with a testimonial from a local business. AC would especially like representation from manufacturing or technical sectors.

Agenda Item 12: Date and Time of Next Meetings:

Board Discussion Forum: 20th October 2021, 4:30pm– 6:30pm in person at Chester Zoo (details to follow)

Board Meeting: 17th November 2021, 4:30pm– 6:30pm (Virtual – MS Teams)