



**LEP Strategy Committee
MINUTES (DRAFT)**

Meeting Held: Friday 9th October 2020
Via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Robert Mee (Chair)
Graeme Bristow
Peter Skates
Andy Hulme

Nicola Dunbar
John Downes
Steve Park

Robert Davis
Charlie Seward
Connor Diskin

Apologies:

Philip Cox

Attending:

N/A

Agenda Item 1: Welcome, Introductions & Apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, including Connor Diskin who has been appointed to the Committee as a representative of the LEP's Engagement Board.

Apologies were received from Philip Cox.

Agenda Item 2: Declarations of Interest

[RD Conflicts of interest].

Agenda Item 3: Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The Committee approved the Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 7th August 2020. All actions were completed.

Matters Arising

A13a – Centre of Excellence for Football, Winsford – It was confirmed that a meeting has been held between the LEP, Cheshire West and Chester and the Developer which has resulted in an agreement to work together to review the current proposals and assess progress to date in order to better understand the potential of the scheme and the key steps needed to progress a viable business case. This work should be completed by early 2021.

A19 – Planning Reform – A request was made for the paper referenced in the minutes giving a summary of the changes proposed in the 'Planning for the Future' White Paper published in August. It was noted

that each local authority is currently developing its response to the White Paper and that discussions were ongoing regarding the merits of an additional response at the sub-regional level.

ACTION: Andy Hulme to circulate summary paper on 'Planning for the Future'

Agenda Item 4: Public Speaking Time

No members of the meeting were present at the meeting.

Agenda Item 5: Covid-19 Restart and Recovery Activity

The contents of the report were noted.

Andy Hulme gave a short presentation (slides attached as an appendix to the minutes) summarising the plan to date, which brings together the 6-month recovery plan, Comprehensive Spending Review submission and the Local Industrial Strategy actions.

It was noted that the current state of flux in terms of Covid lockdown restrictions is making the task of developing the plan more complicated as events require a switch back from 'recovery' to 'respond' modes.

In anticipation of a re-write of the national Industrial Strategy, the activities in the plan have been grouped in a series of themes and assessed in terms of short-medium-long term delivery. The language used to describe the themes has also changed slightly to start to move away from the previous focus on the five foundations of productivity.

The Committee discussed at length the plan and the key questions around who provides leadership, how might activity be resourced and how should the programme be prioritised and programmed to achieve greatest impact.

Key points from the discussion included: -

- Given the current economic turbulence, the LEP and local authorities have to work closely to engage with business and business groups to gather intelligence on emerging issues and challenges so that effective and rapid responses can be put in place. Noted that business engagement is hard at the moment given all businesses are having to deal with.
- Suggested that good key account management will be important in the short term in order to identify issues and opportunities early and respond to them.
- Right to focus on the short term at the moment but must also be conscious of key long-term strategic aims that might need short term activity to move them long or position the sub-region to respond
- Need to look at existing structures and groups to see who can provide leadership to different themes and where the gaps are, e.g. Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission can provide leadership to that part of the plan, Employer Skills Board to the Skills and Employment activity, etc. Potential gap around science and innovation.
- In considering leadership roles there is also a need to consider who will also engage in a supporting or enabling role.

- Graeme Bristow highlighted the learning from the AZ withdrawal from Alderley Park and the MIT Regional Entrepreneurship Acceleration Programme (REAP). Both suggest that innovation will be crucial to long term growth and recovery and as such we need to think about how best to encourage and support entrepreneurs – lots of talented people affected by threat of redundancy at the moment who don't know how to turn themselves in to entrepreneurs.

ACTION: Andy Hulme to share a revised version of the Delivery Plan ordered by timescale. Strategy Committee members to provide feedback on priorities in the short-medium term.

ACTION: Andy Hulme to circulate the final version of the CSR submission

Robert Davis gave a brief update on progress in mobilising the new Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission which he is chairing jointly with Cllr Sam Corcoran, Leader of Cheshire East Council. The Commission will adopt a six-stage approach to its activities – collate / plan / consult / promote / execute / review.

Agenda Item 6: Strategy Update

The contents of the report were noted.

Andy Hulme updated on the status of the Strategy work programme and Delivery Plan. No activities are currently flagged as red (high risk) and progress overall remains good. Moving forwards there is potential overlap between the Strategy Programme Delivery Plan and the Recovery and Growth Delivery Plan and the latter will potentially become the main point for reference.

The submission to Innovate UK for the next stage of the **Industrial Clusters Decarbonisation programme** has received positive feedback and a formal Ministerial Announcement is awaited to confirm which projects have been successful in their bids. Should funding be confirmed work will start in January 2021, with the LEP taking a lead on commissioning development of the Strategic Outline Business Case.

Robert Davis asked for a further conversation with the LEP to better understand how the various energy initiatives in the pipeline fit together. Andy Hulme to arrange.

ACTION: Andy Hulme to arrange follow up call with Robert Davis.

Delivery of the final draft of the **Digital Infrastructure Plan** is imminent. Andy Hulme highlighted two specific opportunities for cross boundary / cross-border collaboration that the consultant team had flagged during their background work. These were: -

- the potential to work with Liverpool City Region to extend their 'Dig Once' programme into the Ellesmere Port area (providing ducting in advance of need for superfast broadband fibre to coincide with wider utilities replacement work); and
- a proposed 5G corridor that the Welsh Government and North Wales Economic Ambition Board is developing a business case for. This would run along the A55 / M56 and there was scope to extend it across the border through to the M6.

The Committee was supportive of engaging in further discussions on these projects.

An update was provided on initial discussions with neighbouring areas on the potential for a joint proposal when government issues a call for bids for **Freeports** later in the year (post-meeting note, this is likely to be in December). The potential benefits to or manufacturing sector were discussed along with the potential to extend discussions to include north Wales (Ports of Holyhead and Mostyn).

Action: Andy Hulme to arrange follow up discussion with Charlie Seward.

Charlie Seward briefly updated the Committee on discussions that Cheshire West has been progressing with the Welsh and UK governments about the potential for a **cross-border investment programme**. Proposals will be developed over the next six months. The LEP has indicated willingness to make a financial contribution to support this work. It was agreed that a more formal update would be given at the December Strategy Committee meeting.

ACTION: Presentation by Charlie Seward on the Cross-Border Investment Programme to be included on the December Agenda.

Work on the **Natural Capital Audit** is progressing well. A workshop with stakeholders has been arranged for early November which will enable the consultant team to share the findings of its baselining activities as well as initial thoughts on priority areas for investment.

Part B Agenda Items (Non-Public Items)

Agenda Item 7 – Non-Public Items.

There were no items for discussion under this agenda item.

Agenda Item 8 – any Other Business

Graeme Bristow requested further information on the work being undertaken locally to prepare for the end of the Brexit transition period in December. It was suggested that this could be included as an item on the December meeting agenda.

Robert Mee queried whether data was available on the impact of the current Coronavirus crisis on the over-50s (in terms of redundancy, etc). Andy Hulme advised that the Data and Labour Market Sub Group of the Employer Skills Board has produced a number of reports recently including an analysis of JSA / Universal Credit claims by age.

ACTION: Andy Hulme to circulate slides from Data and Labour Market Working Group

Government Announcements noted included: -

- Union Connectivity Plan (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/union-connectivity-review-terms-of-reference/union-connectivity-review-terms-of-reference#contents>)
- HS2 Phase 2b Consultation (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/923784/10961-DfT-

[HS2 DRC2 Response Western Leg Late Stage V10 Accessible.pdf](#)) which has important implications for the our High Speed Growth Corridor proposals as it proposes delivery of the Crewe Northern Junction and a doubling of the size of the Manchester Airport HS2 station.

- Noted that the Budget has been postponed which will have ramifications for the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Agenda Item 9 – Date and Time of Next Meeting

Next meeting: Friday 10th December 2020, 9:00am, location TBC

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