

BOARD MEETING

Minutes of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership Board Meeting held 17th November 2021 at 4.30pm by video conference call

Present:

Clare Hayward	Trevor Brocklebank	John Downes	Eunice Simmons
Stephen Kinsey	Annette McDonald	Peter Broxton	Loren Jones
Chris Hindley	Nicola Dunbar	Alice Choi (from 5pm)	Kath Mackay

In attendance:

Philip Cox (until 5.15pm)	Ian Brooks	Joe Manning	Maggie Chen
Charlie Seward (CWaC)	Alex Thompson (CEC, s151)	Steve Park	Jane Traverse (CEC)
Melissa Crellin			

Apologies

Rupert Collis	Joe Toward	Cllr Louise Gittins	Cllr Russ Bowden
Nicola Newton	Cllr Craig Browne		

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 No conflicts of interest were noted.

Agenda Item 3: Public Presentation

3.1 An email from Mr Lee Peters to Cllr Louise Gittins was discussed. Mr Peters had commented on paragraph 3.2 of the paper published for item 7 of the agenda (Spending Review), raising his concerns that the BDUK proposals for investment in digital in Cheshire would not bring benefits before 2025, and that the LEP should be under no misunderstanding that the scale of investment remained insufficient to address the entire challenge of poor connectivity and broadband speeds to rural areas

3.2 It was agreed that the LEP would draft a response to Mr Peters, on behalf of Cllr Gittins. We will convey that the Local Authorities and LEP board recognise the ongoing need for investment in digital and will be seeking to explore all options, not just those available from BDUK, to accelerate projects and expand their scope.

ACTION: IB/Catherine Walker

Agenda Item 4: Minutes of the Meeting held on 15th September 2021.

4.1 The minutes of 15th September 2021 were agreed.

4.2 Actions had been completed.

4.3 Before commencing the agenda, CH commended the team on the successful engagement the sub-region had been able to achieve with COP-26 and associated events. We had many opportunities to participate, including several places on panels, and PR coverage which gave opportunities for our voice to be heard. Although a team effort special mention was given to Melissa Crellin, Norbert Magos, Nicola Said and the teams at Social and Font.

Agenda Item 5: Board Sub-committee Reports

5.1 Local Transport Board. A focussed slot was provided to AM. Analysis of the Spending Review suggested that while the headline figures for DfT indicated strong investment, much of the funding was directed towards HS2 and funding for other initiatives was likely to be limited. We welcomed funding towards developing bus service improvement plans and the support for Warrington's transition to an All-Electric Bus Fleet. With the imminent publication of the Integrated Rail Plan and various leaks of its content in preceding days, it appeared that the region would retain most, if not all, the planned investments but, disappointingly, there would be revisions in respect of the Northern Powerhouse Rail and connections to the Northeast. RN is developing "lines to take". No decision has been reached on the location of the HQ for Great British Railways.

5.2 Employers Skills Board. The recent meeting had re-iterated that national issues are also playing out locally, with retail, hospitality, social care and transport suffering acute labour shortages. There is increasing evidence that many candidates are receiving multiple job offers, and that others are making employment choices aligned to values and lifestyle. Employers are facing a battle for talent and need to keep abreast of changing recruitment practices. MC commented on a COP fringe meeting which concluded that graduating students are "turning the tables" and effectively interviewing employers.

5.3 Cheshire College South and West is leading the regional application for an Institute of Technology, an interview for which is taking place with DfE on 1/12. This could deliver a £30M investment to the sub-region, with possible announcements before Xmas. ES suggested that the bid emphasises the strong links between HE, FE and the University and the strong collaboration to deliver vocational qualifications. KM will pass on the board views of points to raise at the DfE meeting.

ACTION: KM

5.4 Strategy Programme Board. JD reported that the key to the next strategy developments will be the publication of the Levelling Up white paper and the LEP review. We expect these shortly. In preparation, the T.o.R for the SPB were being reviewed and a piece of work is being commissioned to consider how the broader vision aims of healthy, sustainable and inclusive, should be captured in local plans. There is consensus that Levelling Up proposals, or a bid for a County Deal, will require a strong evidence base which addresses policy aims beyond simply economic growth. MC has been tasked with drawing up a specification for the work, which will be agreed with Growth Directors and the SPB prior to commencing the procurement exercise. The board also considered an investment proposal for GPF, but concluded the scale, terms and nature of the investment represented to great a demand and risk on LEP resources.

5.5 PB sought an update regarding the GM and Cheshire Life Sciences Fund 2. IB explained that good progress has been made with the lawyers to complete draft contracts which will accompany an exercise to procure fund managers. The procurement is expected to launch in November. IB confirmed that he

KPIs addressed the board previous comments for metrics on investment in Cheshire more widely than Alderley Park, on the number of apprenticeships and the diversity of applicants.

5.6 Growth Corridors Board. PB reported that the board is expecting to review two new investments at its' upcoming meeting(s). LJ referred to Rolls Royce's recent announcements regarding small nuclear modular reactors and that they will be seeking six manufacturing locations. He has advocated consideration of / by Cheshire and Warrington.

5.7 Business Growth Board. AC reported on ongoing work by the board to formalise five strategic imperatives to set priorities going forward.

5.8 Engagement Board. IB agreed to discuss the next recruitment campaign with MC.

ACTION: IB

5.9 Marketing Cheshire. TB updated the board on the Marketing Cheshire Awards and promotional activity by Destination Chester and Destination Cheshire.

5.10 Finance and Audit. The committee is next due to meet in December. However, IB updated the board that Ministers and HMT had authorised payment of the second tranche of LEP core funding (£250k) without conditions attached. This represents a welcome shift in attitudes towards LEP funding compared to earlier in the year when different ministers were in post.

Agenda Item 6: COP-26 Review

6.1 CH reflected on the strong representation at COP-26 and the associated fringe events and that we had multiple opportunities for the sub-regional voice to be heard and to assert regional issues alongside those of the major cities.

6.2 A clear and consistent message from COP is the role and leadership business will need to take to decarbonise their activities and achieve the net zero targets. As a partnership organisation the LEP has a role to play, not least in helping maintain the momentum from COP and to keep raising our profile beyond the boundaries of the sub-region. AM thought some sectors lacked leadership or were looking to others to help facilitate their journey towards net zero. She thought there is a gap on where to get advice. SME's need practical advice.

6.3 SP offered to take forward a conversation about improving housing standards, where local authorities have a key role to play. He recognised the need for a collaborative approach with developers to "raise the bar". Residents have a large gap of understanding when considering sustainable technologies. This might form the basis of a future discussion at the board.

Action: SP

6.4 COP-26 raised the issue of joined up finance and the role of financiers such as the Green Finance Institute in driving change. JD expressed a view that lenders can instigate improvements through their lending decisions but that many banks lack a basic understanding of sustainable development.

6.5 ES reported on a meeting with the skills minister and the need to create a green skills plan. The UoC is partnering with Cambridge on a case study project to refurbish a Victorian building.

6.6 The board agreed that C&W should continue to develop and promote the uniqueness of the sub-region's progress, and to maintain a strong message that investment has to be "green and fair", i.e., sustainable and inclusive. We are seeking to build a portfolio of 15-20 case studies that can showcase C&W.

6.7 Reference was made to an initiative by Andy Burnham and Steve Rotherham to establish a NW Young Persons "Parliament". The Engagement Board might seek to link with this.

Agenda Item 7: Spending Review

7.1 MC presented an analysis of the Spending Review. We were seeking feedback to understand better the reasons for successful and failed bids for Levelling Up funding.

7.2 JM outlined the ongoing work preparing for publication of the Levelling Up white paper. There has been a shift in language towards more widespread policy categories and “people-based” outcomes, compared with the more traditional economic metrics and regional productivity measures of local growth policy. Our work on delivering for the sub-region seeks to address outcomes we can achieve with existing powers and structures through to those ambitions which can only be achieved with more powers and funding. The LEP is working on behalf of the sub-region, to support a Levelling Up proposition for Government.

Agenda Item 8: Chief Executive’s Report

8.1. Report was taken as read. Much of the report had been covered by earlier items on COP-26, Spending Review, and Levelling Up. Highlighted ongoing challenges that businesses are reporting due to increased costs of operating, from energy to supply chain challenges.

Agenda Item 9: Discussion Forum

9.1 The feedback from the Skills discussion was provided under item 5.

9.2 The December forum will focus on Levelling Up and will be a hybrid virtual / in person meeting. Those meeting in person will be at Alderley Park. Details will be forwarded in due course.

Agenda Item 10: A.o.B.

10.1 None.

Agenda Item 11: Date and Time of Next Meetings:

Board Discussion Forum: 15th December 2021, 4:30pm– 6:30pm in person at Alderley Park (details to follow)

Board Meeting: 19th January 2022, 4:30pm– 6:30pm (Virtual – MS Teams)

Dates for 2022 have been circulated and will be published on the website.