



LEP Strategy Committee

MINUTES (DRAFT)

Meeting Held: 20th September 2019
LEP Board Room, Wyvern House, Winsford

Present:

Robert Mee (Chair)
Graeme Bristow
Peter Skates

Nicola Dunbar
Robert Davis
Andy Hulme

Philip Cox
Steve Park

Apologies:

Charlie Seward

John Downes

Frank Jordan

Attending:

Paul Barnfather

Istiaque Emu

Agenda Item 1: Welcome, Introductions & Apologies

The Chair welcomed members and guests to the meeting, in particular Nicola Dunbar who joins the Strategy Committee as a new member. Thanks were also recorded to Stephen Kinsey and Clare Heyward for their service on the Committee.

Apologies were received from Charlie Seward, John Downes and Frank Jordan (represented by Peter Skates).

Agenda Item 2: Declarations of Interest

Peter Skates and Steve Parks declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 9.

Robert Davis declared a pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 9, and wished the minutes to record that he would absent himself from the room when the item was discussed, and that no papers related to the item had been shared with any member of the team involved in project bids.

Agenda Item 3: Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on Friday 12th July 2019 were agreed. All matters arising had been addressed or elsewhere covered on the agenda.

Agenda Item 4: Public Speaking Time

No members of the public were in attendance.

Agenda Item 5: Presentation – E-Port Smart Energy Project

Paul Barnfather, Head of Electrical Vehicle Infrastructure at EA Technology and Istiaque Emu, Project Manager, delivered a presentation on the E-Port Smart Energy project (a key element of the Cheshire and Warrington Energy Innovation District). The project, led by the Cheshire Energy Hub, has recently submitted its initial stage feasibility study to Innovate UK which had part-funded the work as part of its 'Prospering From the Energy Revolution' competition.

The project looks at the technical options and high-level costings for developing an intelligent energy network focussed on the industrial heart of Ellesmere Port. The network and associated trading platform would connect a mix of low and zero carbon energy sources across the area to provide access to lower cost heat and power to businesses and potentially residential areas and is regarded as a key opportunity in delivering the LEP's clean growth ambitions.

Initial findings are very positive and a bid for stage 2 funding has been submitted, with decisions expected later in the year.

The Chair thanked Paul and Istiaque for their very informative presentation and asked that the slides be circulated with the minutes.

Action: Andy Hulme to circulate a copy of the presentation with the minutes.

Agenda Item 6: Strategy Update

The contents of the report were noted.

The Committee considered progress against the SEP Delivery Plan. There is still some concern at the volume of activity being managed and the level of resource available to progress the work programme. It was noted that much of the activity highlighted involves an 'influencing' role for the LEP and is actually being delivered by other partners and also other sub-groups of the LEP Board.

It was agreed that the proposed activity to develop a specific Board to oversee the Science and Innovation Strategy should be reviewed, as the Strategy Committee questioned the value of adding another group to the LEP governance structure.

There was a discussion on how best to ensure that the Strategy Committee is sighted on the work of the other sub-groups. It was suggested that updates and presentations from key groups could be built into the Strategy Committee work programme.

Action: Andy Hulme to draft forward plan for the Strategy Committee for 2020.

Agenda Item 7: Local Industrial Strategy

The contents of the report were noted.

Good progress is being made in developing the LIS (and the supporting Local Area Industrial Strategies) and the LEP Chief Executive has recently attended Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings at Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester to update in more detail. A meeting with the equivalent group in Warrington is scheduled for 1st October.

There is still a lack of clarity over when a final LIS might be published, due to Government's focus on Brexit.

The Committee acknowledged the work put in to developing the Strategy so far by the LEP Team.

Agenda Item 8: Government Announcements

The Committee noted the inclusion of Warrington in the recent announcement on the Stronger Towns Fund.

Part B Agenda Items (Non-Public Items)

Agenda Item 9a – Low Carbon Energy Innovation Fund

The Committee noted the content of the report which was seeking the approval of the Strategy Committee to the proposed provisional allocation of funding to projects through the Low Carbon Energy Innovation Fund.

The process for evaluating and scoring each of the submitted bids was noted. By the closing date of 16th August a total of 15 applications had been received totalling an LGF ask of £9.1m (out of total project costs of £27.3m).

The Committee considered the strategic fit and deliverability of the bids submitted, and the approved the recommendation that the top six projects (totalling £3.9m of LGF) be invited to develop a detailed business case in time for an investment decision to be made by the LEP performance and Investment Committee in November.

The Committee also agreed a recommendation that a further project be notified that they are being held as a reserve in the event that either another bidder drops out or final project costs result in sufficient LGF being released to fund a further project.

The Committee further agreed that up to £50k of the LGF allocation be reserved to cover the costs of evaluating the programme.

Agenda Item 9b – Growing Places Fund

The Committee noted the content of a report on progress with an application for GPF to support a commercial development in Chester. A more detailed note of the discussion is recorded elsewhere to protect commercially confidentiality.

Concerns were expressed by the Committee at the potential level of financial exposure in the current proposal and the higher than average risk that the loan being offered by the LEP might not be repaid. Whilst supportive of the scheme in principle, the Committee agreed that further negotiations were

required. The Committee delegated authority to the Chair and LEP Chief Executive to agree (or reject) terms with the Developer. It was noted that the proposal may have to go to the full LEP Board given its novel features.

Agenda Item 10 – any Other Business

There was a discussion over the schedule of meetings for 2020. It was agreed that a draft list of dates would be circulated for consideration.

Agenda Item 12 – Date and Time of Next Meeting

Next public meeting: Friday 29th November 2019, 9:00am, Wyvern House.

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