

Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Wednesday 3rd June 2020
Virtual Meeting via Teams**

Present: Councillor Steve Parish (Chair), Tracy Walsh, Catherine Barber-Brown, Helen Nellist, Yvette Hastings and Cllr Paul Donovan.

Also In Attendance:

- Phillip Cox - Cheshire and Warrington LEP
- Ian Brooks – Cheshire and Warrington LEP
- Andy Devaney – Growth Hub
- Sharon Parker – Warrington Borough Council (secretariat)

13. Apologies

No apologies were received.

14. Declarations of Interest

Nil.

15. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on the 5th March 2020 were received as a correct record.

16. Membership of the Committee

Noted:

- (1) Awaiting confirmation from Cheshire East re Councillor Suzanne Brookfield as the representative.
- (2) Cheshire Business Group has been asked to nominate 2 representatives to the Scrutiny Committee as ex officio members.

17. Presentation by Growth Hub on Business Support, Impact of Brexit and resilience measures

The Committee received a presentation from Andy Devaney on the above. Information was provided on:

The Growth Hub had changed its focus to that of more account management. Details were provided on targets to be achieved eg export levels, head count, research, winning new contracts.

Since March 2020 due to Covid-19, however, this had changed to a service being very reactive. Previously the team dealt with around 50-75 businesses per month this had increased to 1000 level of enquiries.

Shift in focus – still a long way to go.

The Committee discussed in detail the information provided and asked:

1. **Pledge** – did the Hub link in with the Pledge?

Yes it was all joined up.

2. What were the **three top searches on the site?**

Finance, skills and access to talent.

3. **Inclusivity Agenda** – have you got access to information that would provide details on this?

Have got information regarding where people come from but not on the disadvantaged side – this needs more work.

18. Cheshire and Warrington LEP – Response to Covid-19

Phillip Cox provided a presentation on the following: Developing a plan for restart and recovery following the Covid-19 pandemic.

- The phases were – immediate, restart and recovery.
- Timings for each phase were provided.
- Current focus was on the restart phase. A quarter of the work force had been furloughed, support was being provided for those looking for work and those trying to find their way through the welfare system.
- The LEP was chairing the Local Resilience Fora
- Details of the restart phase was provided together with the key aspects, including – step by step approach to increase confidence, in line with Government, practical solutions, working in partnership, alongside the business community and being able to monitor and adapt.
- Some context was outlined to the Committee – 54% of the British population thought lockdown was taken off too early, not all young people were going back to school.
- The strategic aims and delivery priorities were outlined – protect people and jobs, increase confidence amongst business, workforce and consumers, build towards achieving the vision to be the UK's healthiest most sustainable growing economy. Discussions were taking place with the Leaders Board and the LEP Board on the priorities.

- Examples were provided which included issues around digital inclusion – 2500 secondary age children did not have access to a computer. Likely to be more problems on the high street.
- The delivery framework was outlined for the period May to June 2020 together with the potential aims and opportunities.

The Committee asked about the following issues:

1. **Mental Health** – what was being done to support this as part of the recovery programme?

Andy Devaney outlined the national and local support in this area but it was something that the LEP would be focussing on over the next few weeks. Webinars were an example of a potential solution.

2. **Veterans** – how were they being supported? Better to go to them rather than the other way around.
3. **Free Ports** – clarification on this and whether it would be possible for the region? Could Businesses collaborate to support this?

Phillip Cox outlined what a free port was ie an area that could import raw materials, and turn out a product again without duty being payable. The products had to be sold outside the UK. It was considered that there was no reason why it could not be done in the region e.g. Crewe, Ellesmere Port.

Government were currently consulting on the model for a free port and were inviting bids.

Supply Chains – has Covid made Businesses think about more local or have different supply chains e.g. food supply?

The lock down period had presented some issues for businesses and some may need to rethink. Agriculture within the region was only around 1% so there was not a big opportunity for businesses to use this more.

Use of Canal Chains – could this be made better use of?

It was a work in progress.

19. Public Participation

To receive questions from members of the public in accordance with Governance Procedure Rule 6. A total period of 15 minutes will be allocated for members of the public to speak at

Panel meetings. Each member of the public shall be limited to a period of up to 5 minutes speaking.

Nil

20. Work Programme

Agreed.

Discussion around looking at (1) impact of items on the agenda meeting and (2) how they are displayed.

Action SP to speak with the Committee outside of the meeting.

21. Future Meeting Dates

Decision – To note the following schedule of meetings, commencing at 2.00pm, at Wyvern House. Pre meeting at 1.30pm.

Dates for 2020/2021:

- 2 September 2020, 2 December 2020.

22. Part II – Matters to be discussed in private

Nil