

Cheshire and Warrington Business Advisory Board

Meeting Note

Date: Wednesday, 15 January 2025

Time: 4:30–6:30pm (via Teams)

Attendees – Business Advisory Board (BAB) Members:

Steve Purdham (Chair)	Jan Chillery	Annette McDonald
Jill Jones	Andrea Stott	Nichola Newton
Paul Taylor	Adrian Curry	Annabel Turpin
Peter Broxton	Maggie Chen	Gaurav Batra
Terry Hayward	Trevor Brocklebank	

Apologies:

Helen Gbormittah, Ian Traynor, Rupert Collis, Chris Hindley, Jane Hough, Helen Tonks, Yannis Loucopoulis

Attendees – Others:

Philip Cox, CEO Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington (ECW)
Steve Park, Growth Director Warrington Borough Council
Paul Chapman, Growth Hub Manager ECW

1. Apologies, welcome and introduction – Steve Purdham

- 1.1. Steve welcomed the members of the BAB & thanked members for feedback and introductions since the last meeting.

2. Conflicts of interest – Steve Purdham

- 2.1. No conflicts of interest were declared

3. Minutes of the Board meeting held on 11th December 2024, agreed actions and matters arising – Steve Purdham

- 3.1. Notes from the BAB meeting on 11th December 2024 were agreed as accurate.
- 3.2. Actions from the last meeting have been completed or will be completed during this meeting.
- 3.3. **ACTION:** Meeting notes and agendas will be published.
- 3.4. Links to items referenced during this section:
[BAB web page including board papers & relevant publications](#)

4. BAB Working Group Updates

4.1. Members received updates from the leads of each of the BAB working groups, who also provided slide decks, highlighting emerging priorities:

4.2. Net Zero

Observations from members included:

- Pull between increasing energy requirements of new technologies such as AI and the need to reduce energy consumption
- Final Investment Decision has not yet been announced for the HyNet project
- The move towards Net Zero provides many opportunities and therefore prioritisation will be necessary – Role for the local Growth Plan in this

4.3. Community & Employment (Skills)

Observations from members included:

- There is potential to build on the existing employer portal produced by (former LEP) ECW
- Importance of not 'reinventing the wheel', but bring things together and publicise to avoid duplication
- Need for a central business resource
- Query to what extent will Artificial Intelligence provide solutions to queries – need to take into account to avoid new solutions potentially being superseded quickly
- New Government Business Growth Service intended to provide a central resource through Growth Hubs

4.4. Infrastructure

Observations from members included:

- Artificial Intelligence Growth Zones provide a potential opportunity
- Note that the hydrogen produced by HyNet will not be suitable for vehicles initially

4.5. Sectors and Investment

Observations from members included:

- Inward investment may bypass C&W as there is no obvious central point of contact
- There are some good examples of inward investment strategy in the private sector (e.g. Alderley Park), we should look at best practice and consider replicating
- Caveat to the above that the private sector has differing drivers and priorities
- Desire to understand what has been tried and was/wasn't effective
- Cheshire has a different inward investment landscape than city-region neighbours with restricted supply of labour and commercial premises/land and therefore needs a focussed approach
- Need to ensure that enabling infrastructure (housing, transport, etc) is in place to support investment
- Consider 'post investment' follow up to understand why businesses chose C&W and what their experience has been as investors.

4.6. **ACTION:** Working Group slide decks to be circulated

4.7. Links to items referenced during this section:

[Artificial Intelligence Growth Zones](#)

5. Devolution & Summit Update

5.1. Members received an update on devolution plans and the forthcoming Cheshire and Warrington Devolution Summit. The three local authorities have submitted a letter expressing an interest in the Devolution Priority Programme.

5.2. Observations from members included:

- Emphasise importance of communication both ways to understand concerns as well as opportunities

5.3. Links to items referenced during this section:

[Local Authorities Letter Press Release](#)

[English Devolution White Paper](#)

6. Growth Plan – Next steps

6.1. Members received an update on the Devolution/Growth Plan

6.2. Observations from members included:

- General low awareness of devolution and its benefits among residents
- Request for the BAB to review and feedback on the content of the Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy (when available), especially from the point of view of communication style

7. AOB:

7.1. Offer from the Chair to run an artificial intelligence workshop to help raise awareness of the technology and possible applications

8. Next meeting dates:

Devolution Summit, Tuesday 21st January, 8:30-12:30 (Park Royal Hotel & Spa)

Wednesday, 12th February, 4:30–6:30pm (Teams)

Wednesday, 12th March, 4:30–6:30pm (In person – Park Royal Hotel, Warrington)

Wednesday, 9th April, 4:30–6:30pm (Teams)