

# Cheshire and Warrington Digital Connectivity Board

## Terms of Reference

### June 2021

#### 1. Name

- 1.1. Cheshire and Warrington Digital Connectivity Board.

#### 2. Geography

- 2.1. The geographical boundary of the Cheshire and Warrington Digital Connectivity Board is consistent with the geography of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership (CWLEP). This covers the administrative areas of the three unitary local authorities, these being,

- Cheshire East Council (CEC);
- Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWACC); and
- Warrington Borough Council (WBC).

#### 3. Role and Responsibilities

- 3.1. The Digital Connectivity Board reports to the LEP Board and is responsible for:
- a) Identifying the priorities for improving digital connectivity across the sub-region which will support and deliver the LEP's vision and wider priorities;
  - b) Influencing those organisations which can help to deliver the priorities, including Government Departments, Local Authorities, Connecting Cheshire, digital infrastructure companies; and
  - c) Working with, influencing, and taking account of the issues and priorities identified by relevant sub-regional structures including Employer Skills and Education Board, Digital Skills Partnership, other LEP Boards and partnerships.
- 3.2. In addition to the responsibilities above the Digital Connectivity Board also provides relevant advice to the CWLEP on strategic digital connectivity policy, strategies and plans for the sub-region.

#### 4. Membership

- 4.1. The Membership of CW Digital Connectivity Board is set out below:

##### **Membership of Cheshire and Warrington Digital Connectivity Board**

The following representatives or their deputies from the constituent organisations:

Nicola Dunbar (Chair)  
Rupert Collis (Vice Chair)  
Bill Carr  
Becky Stuttard  
Connor Diskin (Engagement Board)  
Calum Lewis  
Richard Bailey  
Helen Gopsill

#### **Advisers (Non-voting)**

Additional representatives from the LEP Board, sub-Boards and/or from each constituent authority can be called upon for advice as and when required.

Representatives from delivery organisations could be called upon.

#### **Associate Membership (Non-voting)**

The Digital Connectivity Board can invite other parties to meetings in a non-voting capacity as appropriate. This could include representatives from organisations such as:

- Neighbouring Local Enterprise Partnerships / Local Authorities;
- Connecting Cheshire;
- Neighbouring Digital Partnerships;
- Central Government e.g. Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

- 4.2. **Membership Review** – Membership of the Digital Connectivity Board will be confirmed on an annual basis at its first meeting in public from 1 July of each year as this would synchronise with the political calendar cycle of the constituent local authorities. A vice chair will be elected to cover for any meetings where the chair is not available.
- 4.3. Opportunities to consider extending the membership of the Digital Connectivity Board will also be considered as part of the annual review. Further membership can be reviewed at any meeting in public of the Digital Connectivity Board at the request of the constituent local authorities and/or the CWLEP.

## **5. Voting**

- 5.1. It is central to the ethos of the Digital Connectivity Board that it acts in the interests of the area as a whole and not according to the sectoral or

geographical interests of individual members. In arriving at any decisions, the Digital Connectivity Board will consider the views of all interested parties. If any vote taken by the Digital Connectivity Board is split, then the decision should be deferred for further consideration. If after this deferment, the decision is still split it will be referred to the LEP Board to make a decision.

- 5.2. Voting rights will only apply to one vote for each member of the Digital Connectivity Board.

## **6. Assurance and Accountability**

- 6.1. The CW Digital Connectivity Board will operate within the terms of the CWLEP Growth Programme Assurance and Accountability Framework. This document establishes a framework that the CWLEP will follow in relation to decision making within its Growth Programme (comprising but not limited to: the Local Growth Fund Programme, Growing Places Fund and European Structural Investment Fund).

- 6.2. The Assurance and Accountability Framework is in three parts. Part one sets out the purpose, structure and operating principles of the Framework, including:

- Declaration of Interest Policy;
- Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy;
- Gifts and Hospitality;
- Equality and Diversity Policies;
- Freedom of Information Policy;
- Audit and Scrutiny;
- Complaints and Whistleblowing;
- The role of the Accountable Body

Part two sets out the project prioritisation process (including development of a project pipeline). Part three sets out the programme management and investment decision process. The Framework also comprises a series of Appendices which set out the key documentation and information supporting the Framework.

## **7. Working Arrangements and Meeting Frequency**

- 8.1. All working arrangements and decisions relating to the role and function of the Digital Connectivity Board will be made in public meetings.
- 8.2. The frequency of meetings will be at least quarterly.
- 8.3. Where appropriate, some business can be delegated and undertaken by smaller sub-groups of the Digital Connectivity Board or to officer working groups.

## **8. Transparency and Local Engagement**

- 9.1. The CWLEP is a private company, limited by guarantee however, in line with the Government's expectations of Local Enterprise Partnerships; the CWLEP will adhere as far as practicable to the Local Government Transparency Code as set out in the CWLEP Growth Programme Assurance and Accountability Framework. The CW Digital Connectivity Board will operate within the same terms.
- 9.2. The LEP has an established website which will be used to publish dates of CWLEP Board meetings, agendas, meeting papers and minutes. The annual accounts of CWLEP are also published on their website. Information on how the CWLEP appraises and prioritises projects put forward for funding support and its prioritised list of projects will also be made available. Regular programme updates on delivery and spend against budget will also be published on the CWLEP website. The CWLEP website will be used to publish dates of formal Digital Connectivity Board meetings, agendas, meeting papers and minutes (so long as content is not considered to be commercially sensitive or confidential in nature).
- 9.3. Any recommendations for investment decisions will require approval through a majority vote by the CWLEP Board. The process for how such decisions are made will be published on the CWLEP Website through the Assurance Framework.
- 9.4. Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership is a non-statutory body and, as such, is not subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2005 or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. CEC will hold information about funding and payment decisions relating to the CWLEP. This is unlikely to be classified by the Information Commissioners Office as CEC information and will therefore not be subject to FOI. Any requests to CEC will be reviewed within the normal accountable body procedures.
- 9.5. The CWLEP will ensure that it continues to engage members of the public and other key stakeholders in the development of its key strategies and investment priorities. The nature of this engagement will be set out in the CWLEP Stakeholder Communications Plan.
- 9.6. The CWLEP will publish annual financial statements covering the Local Growth Fund and other funding sources received from Government.

## **9. Monitoring and Review**

- 10.1. This Assurance Framework is considered to be a live document. It will be reviewed and updated on a periodic basis to reflect any changes to national / local circumstances and / or requirements.