

## **Cheshire and Warrington Business Advisory Board**

### **Meeting Note**

**Date:** Wednesday, 6 November 2024

**Time:** 4:30–6:30pm (via Teams)

#### **Attendees – Business Advisory Board (BAB) Members:**

|                       |                    |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Steve Purdham (Chair) | Andrea Stott       | Trevor Brocklebank |
| Jill Jones            | Adrian Curry       | Ian Traynor        |
| Paul Taylor           | Yannis Loucopoulis | Annette McDonald   |
| Peter Broxton         | Chris Hindley      | Jane Hough         |
| Terry Hayward         | Helen Gbormittah   | Nichola Newton     |
| Helen Tonks           | Rupert Collis      |                    |
| Jan Chillery          | Maggie Chen        |                    |

#### **Apologies:**

Annabel Turpin, Gaurav Batra

#### **Attendees – Others:**

Philip Cox, CEO Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington (ECW)

Paul Chapman, Growth Hub Manager ECW

Melissa Crellin, Strategy and Public Affairs Director ECW

Debbie Simpson, Interim FD 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.
- 1.2. Steve introduced Jan Chillery as vice chair of the BAB.

### **2. Conflicts of interest – Steve Purdham**

- 2.1. The importance of declaring interest was emphasised to members and will be covered further during the briefing on Nolan Principles (agenda item 8 below).

### **3. Minutes of the Board meeting held on 16th October 2024, agreed actions and matters arising – Steve Purdham**

- 3.1. Notes from the BAB meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2024 were agreed as accurate.
- 3.2. Actions from the last meeting have been completed or will be completed during this meeting.

3.3. 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. C&W Growth Plan Working Group membership – Steve Purdham

4.1. Steve outlined the relationship between the various work-streams and priorities from ECW, Joint Committee (JC) and the BAB to each other, noting that a number of topics do not have their own specific work-stream in ECW/JC including digital, planning and funding and initiated discussion on whether these topic areas should be considered by the BAB and if so, how this should be achieved.

4.2. Observations from members included:

- General consensus that planning is relevant to business growth and should be considered by the BAB.
- Being able to feed into planning process would be helpful, especially in Cheshire East.
- Worth considering planning as a stand-alone area.
- Could be too much for BAB to consider alongside other work, risk of spreading resource too thinly.
- Access to funding is important for all businesses.
- Rural economy has potential for growth, many opportunities & barriers common to other businesses as well as rural.
- Aligning BAB structure to JC would make it easier to communicate.
- Would be useful to have definitions for each area as terminology can vary.
- Rural economy will be important in devolution planning.
- Suggestions from several members that a number of topics, such as rural , planning, funding and/or sectors could be considered a 'cross cutting' themes as many business issues are the same and they touch on many work-streams, but not consensus on this approach in relation to funding in the interests of simplicity.
- Importance of not losing consideration of visitor economy (although need to understand if this is already covered, e.g. by Marketing Cheshire).
- Suggestion to nominate 'champions' to ensure themes are always considered in discussions.
- Recognition that many themes are interconnected.
- Consider identifying 5-10 year goals for each theme.

4.3. **ACTION:** Circulate diagram of draft work-stream mapping.

**ACTION:** Members to nominate their area(s) of interest/expertise to Chair to inform the creation of future working sub-groups.

#### 5. HyNet and the economic opportunities for C&W from the decarbonisation agenda

5.1. Members received an overview of the HyNet industrial decarbonisation project, based near Ellesmere Port and potentially one of the biggest projects of its type in the world & including the recent announcement of nearly £22bn funding pledged by Government, of which around half will benefit the HyNet programme in Cheshire.

5.2. Observations from members included:

- Links with previous planning discussion, for example regarding the routing of pipelines.
- Noting prior PR difficulties (e.g. Whitby Village project) and Importance of communication and education.
- Decarbonisation is a key factor in ensuring future national energy security.
- ECW PR company Social has been engaged to run focus groups to understand key messages in decarbonisation and interest in involving BAB members in that discussion.
- Opportunity at Thornton Science Park in relation to decarbonisation skills.

5.3. **ACTION:** Circulate presentation slides.

5.4. Links to items referenced during this section:

[HyNet](#)

[EET Redefining Energy video](#)

[Peak Cluster / Pipeline](#)

## 6. Devolution update – Steve Purdham

6.1. Letter of support for devolution from the BAB has been sent to the JC.

6.2. Leaders confirmed commitment to devolution at a recent House of Lords event.

6.3. Ask of BAB to host a summit with Local Authorities in January & potential option to extend to involve local businesses.

6.4. Observations from members included:

- Clarification that the form of devolution under consideration includes an elected leader.
- Timeframe likely to target May 2026 earliest but subject to Government timetables.
- Devolution white paper expected from Government in next few weeks.
- Communication will be important to encourage general 'buy-in' during consultation.

## 7. Industrial Strategy Green Paper – developing C&W's response – Melissa Crellin

7.1. Members received an overview of Cheshire and Warrington's proposed response to the consultation on 'Invest 2035', the UK's proposed future Modern Industrial Strategy (MIS), together with a summary of the strengths of the C&W sub-region in relation to MIS priorities.

7.2. The consultation response is due by 24<sup>th</sup> November.

7.3. Request for assistance from members to collate BAB views on the MIS.

7.4. Observations from members included:

- Note to include Catapults as stakeholders as they have a UK-wide remit.
- Request to share the 'questions' asked in the Green Paper.

7.5. **ACTION:** Members requested to advise Chair if they are able to assist in the development of the response from C&W to the Green Paper.

**ACTION:** Circulate presentation slides, including Green Paper questions.

7.6. Links to items referenced during this section:

[Invest 2035 - Modern Industrial Strategy Green Paper](#)

## 8. Nolan Principles: requirements on members of the BAB – Debbie Simpson

8.1. Members received an overview of the Seven Principles of Public Life, aka the ‘Nolan Principles’, which apply to all BAB members.

8.2. **ACTION:** Circulate presentation slides.

**ACTION:** Circulate declarations of interest form and members to complete and return.

8.3. Links to items referenced during this section:

[Nolan Principles](#)

[ECW Policies & Procedures \(inc Declarations of Interest\)](#)

[Openness and transparency on personal interests - Guide](#)

## 9. AOB:

9.1. In light of recent budget announcement regarding increases in employers National Insurance contributions, there was discussion of the potential impacts on businesses.

9.2. Observations from members included:

- Employers have finite budgets for wage costs, so increases in NI may lead to reduced level of wage increases for employees in future.
- Additional costs will restrict growth and have potential to lead to insolvencies among businesses.
- Significant impact on businesses with large workforces and/or low margins, for example visitor economy and care sector.
- Potential to exacerbate the impact of proposed Employment Rights legislation and minimum wage increases.
- Minimum wage increases drive general wage inflation due to the need for employers to maintain pay-band differentials.

9.3. Update on rail board meeting today, some concern that Cheshire and Warrington is not as strongly represented as it could be.

9.4. **ACTION:** Note to be circulated with further details of rail board meeting.

## 10. Next meeting dates:

Wednesday, 11th December 3.30-7pm (in person, venue TBA)

Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> January, 4:30–6:30pm (Teams)

Wednesday, 12<sup>th</sup> February, 4:30–6:30pm (Teams)