

## **LEP STRATEGY PROGRAMME BOARD – AGENDA ITEM 5**

### **SUBJECT: LEP REVIEW**

**MEETING DATE: FRIDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2021**

1. As the Strategy Board is aware, the Government has commissioned a review of the role of LEPs which will report by the summer recess.
2. LEPs were formed after the 2010 General Election, when the main theme of Government policy was austerity following the 2008 financial crash, and they have evolved considerably over that time. The main emphasis of Government policy now is recovery from Covid and “levelling up”. The objective of the Government’s review is to ensure that LEPs are organised to make a strong contribution in this changed landscape.

### National LEP Review

3. The terms of reference (TOR) of the national review are attached at annex A. They envisage a stronger role for LEPs in direct business support, and that capital funds that have previously been directed through LEPs will, in future, go through local authorities. The TOR also discuss the need to change the nature of the relationship between LEPs and local authorities.
4. The national review is being undertaken via a series of working groups comprising Officials from Central Government and LEP Board members and executives. There are six working groups:
  - LEP Objectives and Functions
  - Geography
  - Accountability
  - LA Representation and Interaction
  - Implementation and Funding Measures
  - Engagement and Communications
5. The starting point for each group will be a policy paper from Officials to which LEP members of the respective working groups will be invited to respond, with the last of the initial propositions due to be issued on 1 June. Alongside this, a series of other consultation meetings are being held, including regional roundtables and sessions with the Local Government Association. C&W is represented on the Implementation & Funding and the Engagement & Communications groups, whilst Philip Cox is one of the two lead CEOs on the LA Representation & Interaction workstrand.

### Role of the LEP in C&W

6. As the role of LEPs has evolved over the past ten years, the LEP has played an increasingly integral role within the sub-regional architecture in C&W. The LAs and the LEP executive

team have therefore agreed that a local review should also be undertaken to ensure that the sub-region has structures in place to ensure that it can continue to deliver its economic objectives notwithstanding any national decisions that are taken about the role of LEPs.

7. Obviously it will not be possible to draw any final conclusions about local arrangements until the outcomes of the national review become a bit clearer, but the LA Place Directors and the LEP executive team have agreed to hold a seminar on 20 May to discuss the objectives that the sub-region has set for itself for the next two years and the role of the LEP in delivering them. Attached at Annex B is a copy of Ambition Cheshire, that sets out the area's objectives through to 2023, and, at annex C, a draft of a note that sets out the functions currently undertaken by the LEP.

#### Views of Strategy Board Members

8. As an input to both national and local discussions it would be valuable to gather the views of members of the Strategy Board on the role that LEPs should play alongside central and local government to deliver levelling up and a recovery from Covid both nationally and in C&W.

# The Role of the LEP in Cheshire & Warrington

## Capital Investment Programmes

- Local Growth Fund - delivery monitoring
- Getting Building Fund – monitoring delivery and channelling funding to LAs. Delivery monitoring only from April 2022
- Growing Places Fund – management of £9 million loan fund, including oversight of £3 million invested in Cheshire Green Employment Park and consideration of further investments into eg Life Sciences Fund or other measures
- Evergreen Urban Development Fund – oversight of C&W interests in North West Evergreen suite of property investment funds including £20 million nominally in C&W Development Fund for which CEC is Accountable Body
- GM and C&W Life Sciences Fund – £10 million invested in equity fund and showing on LEP balance sheet
- Sub-Regional Housing Board – providing secretariat and policy lead for board which brings together the LEP, the local authorities and Homes England to develop and implement a sub-regional housing strategy and to pipeline and to maximise Homes England investment into the sub-region
- Enterprise Zone – recipient of retained business rates from EZ until 2041, including from a number of investments funded through a £30 million loan facility from the LAs (shown on the LEPs’ balance sheet). The loans are “secured” on the anticipated future flow of business rates from the Enterprise Zone.

## Strategy and Policy

- Developing subregional economic strategies, including the Local Industrial Strategy, the Covid Economic Recovery Plan
- Developing and delivering thematic plans and strategies including the Digital Infrastructure Plan and Natural Capital Audit

- Representing C&W on various North West, Northern and national boards e.g. Local Energy North West, Net Zero North West, NP11 (including hosting its staff and providing accountable body oversight)
- Convening and supporting the C&W Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission (SIGC) and its associated sub-groups
- Delivery partner for NZNW Cluster Plan
- Shortly to be host for Local Energy NW subregional staff member
- Chairing the C&W Covid Economic Resilience Cell
- Chairing the C&W Covid Workforce Recovery Group and funding a programme of on-line job fairs and a Job Opportunities Portal for the unemployed

## Skills

- Funded by DfE to operate a Skills Advisory Panel (SAP), to commissions data and labour market analysis
- Funded by DCMS to deliver a Digital Skills Partnership programme
- Leading the development and regular review of a strong employer-led skills and education strategy and delivery programme through the LEP's Employers' Skills and Education Board (which includes the functions of the SAP)
- Encouraging and facilitating collaboration between local colleges and business Representative Organisations to submit bids for an Institute of Technology and a Skills Accelerator
- The Pledge – Contracted by Careers and Enterprise Company and a complex set of other funding contracts to engage young people about future career opportunities via links to local employers
- Facilitating and coordinating regular reviews of national programmes with local partners including the National Career Service, European Social Fund programmes and the Apprenticeship and T-level programmes
- Contributing to and influencing national policies and programmes such as the Careers and Enterprise Company, the National Career Service

## Transport

- Co-ordinating the development and regular updating of the strategic transport plan and delivery strategy for the sub-region.
- Local Transport Board - providing officer support and taking the lead on policy development and economic appraisal.
- Transport for the North - working with local authority transport leads to ensure that representatives from C&W on TfN are fully briefed and able to articulate agreed C&W thinking on transport that best supports the delivery of the sub-region's economic ambitions. Representing the sub-region at key officer meetings.
- Keeping in regular touch with key people and organisations that have a role or an influence on the delivery of C&W's transport and investment objectives, including Highways England, DfT, Network Rail, neighbouring transport authorities etc.
- Ensuring that key external sub-regional stakeholders are kept in regular touch with progress on transport issues, and that their views are taken into account in the formation of policy.
- Co-ordinating the development and prioritisation of C&W investment priorities and providing £400k pa to fund the development of investment cases through the LEP's Business Case Fund
- Development and regular updating of the digital infrastructure plan and associated delivery strategy for the sub-region.

## Business Growth

- Growth Hub - £462k pa from BEIS to deliver against set of KPIs by providing support for SMEs and scale -ups through a simple diagnostic and signposting/referral process in response to incoming enquiries from companies
- Providing the secretariat for the Cheshire Business Group and using it to gather intelligence, stakeholder views to ensure intelligence flows to inform local and national policy.
- Peer to Peer Network – £150k from BEIS to deliver ten peer to peer learning networks of around ten businesses each
- Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) account manager – £ 68k from BEIS to account manage 30 businesses. Successfully secured more than 20 new investments last year and 400 new jobs.

# Destination Management and Place Marketing

[further material to be added]

- Developing a revised Destination Management Plan.
- Setting up and leading Destination Chester and Cheshire Visitor Economy Forum to engage with businesses and stakeholders and develop coordinated plans for reopening and recovery
- Liaising with DCMS and Visit Britain on behalf of the sub-region.
- Generating significant broadcast coverage for C&W as well as thought leadership pieces in business press.