

BOARD MEETING

Minutes of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership Board Meeting held 16th March 2022 at 5.00pm by video conference call

Present:

Clare Hayward (CH)	Trevor Brocklebank	Cllr Louise Gittins	Eunice Simmons
Stephen Kinsey	Annette McDonald	Peter Broxton	Rupert Collis
Chris Hindley (CHi)	Nicola Dunbar	Alice Choi	Kath Mackay
	Cllr Craig Browne		

In attendance:

Philip Cox	Ian Brooks	Joe Manning	Maggie Chen
Yulanda Duff	Alex Thompson (CEC, s151)	Rebecca Luck	

Apologies

Loren Jones	Cllr Russ Bowden	Nicola Newton	John Downes
Steve Park	Jane Traverse (CEC)	Charlie Seward (CWaC)	

Members of the Public (for Part A)

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Agenda Item 1: Apologies and Introductions

1.1 CH welcomed Board Members. Apologies were received as above.

1.2 CH remarked that since the board last meet, conflict had started in Ukraine and Covid infection rates had seen an upturn, bringing yet more uncertainty to the business and economic environment. LG said she would share information about Ukrainian refugees coming to the area and CH suggested the April discussion forum spent part of its time considering the Cheshire / Warrington response. The April forum is already planned to cover the challenges to growth that businesses are facing.

Agenda Item 2: Conflicts of Interest

2.1 No conflicts were reported.

Agenda Item 3: Public Presentation

3.1 There were no public items.

Agenda Item 4: Minutes of the Meeting held on 19th January 2022.

4.1 The minutes of 19th January 2022 were agreed.

4.2 Actions had been completed or were addressed on the agenda.

Agenda Item 5: Board Sub-committee Reports

5.1 Performance and Investment Committee. A focussed slot was provided to CHI, who made a presentation to update the board on the performance of the Getting Building Fund, a £15.5M programme targeted to three key projects. The Chester Drainage Tunnel and Warrington Bus Depot had progressed successfully with all funding claimed. The Medicines Discovery Catapult had, however run into difficulty, with a significant escalation in delivery timescales and costs, culminating in a formal request to close the project early, without completion, risking that £4.4M of funding would be lost from the sub-region and refunded to BEIS.

5.2 Rebecca Luck, programme manager, worked closely with BEIS, CEC and P&I to identify alternative projects where the funding could be utilised, securing approval from all stakeholders that the funding could be re-purposed to support further development within the Life Science Sector.

5.3 In formally closing the project, the LEP will require a final audit report for funding already claimed by MDC and reserves the right to reclaim previous payments, although any final decisions would be subject to discussion with BEIS and Innovate UK.

5.4 AC asked whether lessons were being learned. CHI referred to initial indications regarding the challenging timescales to prepare what was complex project and, as risks materialised, revised assumptions on the likely demand for its capabilities had shifted the economic model.

5.5 Local Transport Board. AM informed the board that the Expression of Interest had been submitted for Crewe to be considered as the future HQ for Great British Railways. There will be a concerted PR and social media campaign to raise awareness in support of the “bid” seeking to garner as much public and business support as possible across the sub-region.

5.6 Marketing Cheshire. TB reported that Marketing Cheshire had been successful in receiving £100k from Visit England to be spent over the Spring and Early Summer promoting the visitor economy.

Agenda Item 6: Engagement Board

6.1 MC, supported by YD, presented a paper outlining a several proposals to improve the level of involvement between the board, board sub-committees and the engagement board. It was thought that closer ties would enable the Engagement board members to add more value to discussions.

6.2 The board supported:

- Providing the Engagement Board with a schedule of discussion topics for the year ahead
- Including Engagement Board Feedback as a standing agenda item
- Identifying a named Mentor from a different sub board to that in which the Engagement Board Member attends, to each 1 or 2 Engagement Board Members
- Scheduling 6 month review meetings with Sub Board Chairs & Sub Board Members, to reflect on performance & ascertain whether EB contributions are beneficial, or if any changes need to be made.
- Schedule induction meetings for all newly recruited Engagement Board Members with Sub Board Chairs.
- Providing an attendee at each Engagement Board Meeting from the either the Executive or a main Board relevant to the topics under discussion.
- That EB Members should participate in the key decision making sub-boards (and possibly programme boards, such as Digital skills board) and the next recruitment campaign should seek to fill those vacancies. TB requested that a representative join the Marketing Cheshire board.

ACTION: MC/Board members

6.3 CHI thanked JT for his contribution to P&I, but felt that Engagement board members would feel they were adding more value if engaged earlier in the decision making processes. AC invited him to join Business Growth.

Agenda Item 7: Chief Executive's Report

7.1. Report was taken as read. However, PC highlighted the pipeline of LTB projects and that the pressures on energy prices, now exacerbated by the war in Ukraine, would accelerate a move towards renewables. The Government Energy Strategy is awaited. PC noted that the increase in gas prices may mean that Hynet has to accelerate its plans and technology development to move from blue hydrogen (produced from natural gas) to green hydrogen (produced without reliance on a fossil fuel).

7.2 AM recognised the impact of global shocks on the less privileged sections of our community and PC confirmed that SIGC had already started to look at how to address the consequences.

7.3 PB enquired on the status of the Life Science Fund 2. IB confirmed that the successful bidder was being progressed into contract discussions and announcements are expected to follow within a few weeks.

Agenda Item 8: Delivery Plan

8.1 RL presented the working draft of the LEP/MC delivery plan 2022-23 seeking board feedback on its content and approach before bringing a final version to May's meeting for approval. Delivery targets will become smarter once we receive formal confirmation of budgets and associated output and outcome targets. The document will also be updated to reference SIGC actions once the consultations on those are completed.

8.2 The board welcomed the style, which made clear distinctions regarding strategy, delivery, influence and governance, and tasked sub board chairs to review their respective plan with their sub-boards.

ACTION: Sub-board chairs

8.3 KM asked if the Shared Prosperity Fund would be included. PC explained that this will be considered once we know the funding allocation to Cheshire and Warrington, which might form part of the Spring Statement, and have more clarity on our role.

Agenda Item 9: Draft Budget

9.1 IB presented a paper which included a working budget to which the executive will operate in the interim, and which will be updated once funding allocations are confirmed.

9.2 In response to PB asking if cost inflation had been included, IB confirmed that increases had been included, compared to the current year forecast, and £50k was included as a contingency.

Agenda Item 10:

10.1 ES mentioned that over the course of the summer 30,000 visitors can be expected in Chester associated with 38 graduation ceremonies. If not this year, then in future, this represents a significant opportunity to market the city and wider region.

10.2 After mention of the Green Expo in June, and the MC Awards on 24th March, it was proposed that a list of upcoming events is circulated.

ACTION: JM

Agenda Item 11: Date and Time of Next Meetings:

Board Discussion Forum: 13th April 2022, 4:30pm– 6:30pm (Virtual – MS Teams) – Topic: Business growth and business environment – challenges facing business and responses. AC and Andy Devaney to facilitate.

Board Meeting: 18th May 2022, 4:30pm– 6:30pm in person (details to follow)

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

Action arising	Action	Who	Complete?
16/3/22	Take forward recommendations to improve interaction with engagement board members:	Board members	
16/3/22	Sub-boards to review and comment on relevant sections of delivery plan	Sub-board chairs	
16/3/22	Circulate a list of events (being attended by LEP Board members)	Joe Manning	