



BOARD MEETING

Minutes of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership Board Discussion Forum

held on 15th April 2020, by MS Teams / telephone conference call

Present:

Clare Hayward (Chair)	Eunice Simmons	Chris Hindley	Robert Mee
Nichola Newton	Stephen Kinsey	Graeme Bristow	Cllr Craig Browne
Nicola Dunbar	Peter Broxton	Trevor Brocklebank	

In attendance:

Philip Cox	Andy Farrall	Ian Brooks	Steve Park
Lisa Harris	Carol Young		

Apologies

Cllr Russ Bowden	John Downes	Charlie Seward	Frank Jordan
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Agenda Item 1: Apologies and Introductions

- 1.1 Clare Hayward welcomed Board Members, particularly two new members for whom this was their first official board meeting. Apologies were received as above.
- 1.2 Clare Hayward invited all attendees to introduce themselves to the new board members Trevor Brocklebank and Eunice Simmons who then gave slightly longer personal introductions referring to their backgrounds and experience.

Agenda Item 2: Conflicts of Interest

- 2.1 No conflicts were declared.

Agenda Item 3: Minutes of the Meeting of 7th April 2020

- 3.1 The minutes were approved with the following amendments:

- To record Angie Robinson as having attempted to attend (defeated by the technology)
- To record Stephen Kinsey as the board member leading on Business Growth.
- The revised minutes of 7th April will be published on the LEP website.

Agenda Item 4: Chief Executive's Update

4.1 Philip Cox explained that with the current pace of change written reports were being overtaken by developments surrounding the response to covid-19. He therefore made a verbal report.

4.2 Before returning to the topic of covid-19, he reported on three items of operational business:

- BEIS Cities and Local Growth Unit had confirmed that the LEP achieved the highest possible ratings for its performance in 2019/20. Ratings of "Exceptional" had been awarded for Governance and Delivery. For strategy, the new rating scale only allows for requirements to have been met or not, and the LEP achieved "Meets Requirements". The Board took a moment to reflect on this excellent outcome and thanked all members and staff for their contributions to achieving this accolade.
- The new Deputy Chief Executive of the LEP/Chief Executive of Marketing Cheshire, Joe Manning, will start on Monday 20th April. His commencement and induction are being arranged accepting the challenge that much of it will be virtual from his home in South London. Joe will be moving to Chester once restrictions on movement are lifted.
- The Government had announced the HS2 Phase 1 would be going ahead despite the economic pressures caused by the Coronavirus "lockdown". The Oakervee Report confirms that the business case for Phase 1 relies on the completion of Phase 2, which includes the extension of the line from Birmingham to Crewe.

4.3 In a general update of the LEP support for the local economy, Philip Cox reported that the Growth and Skills Hub continues to provide information and advice to local businesses. Volumes of enquiries have fluctuated, often rising whenever the Government has made new announcements and where businesses ineligible for those schemes have sought assistance then reducing as enquiries recede. The Growth and Skills Hub is signposting to support schemes and providing regular updates.

4.4 The LEP is now chairing the Economic Resilience Cell as part of the overall strategic response within Sub-Regional structures. The Strategic Resilience Forum is meeting daily at 3pm with a focus, presently, on the implications of the pandemic to public health and related services. The Economic Cell is convened twice weekly and focussed, in the short term, on the number of businesses affected, the number of furloughed staff and the rising number of unemployed. 37% of businesses have furloughed staff, and there has been a 20x increase in claims for Universal Credit.

4.5 Home schooling and study has highlighted, for some schools in particular, a significant number of pupils without access to the IT equipment or internet connectivity to study at home. There is a growing concern that some sections of the community will be doubly impacted, where adult family members become unemployed and children have poorer access to education. The board discussed opportunities for equipment to be provided or recycled from college inventory or downsizing businesses with surplus equipment. Eunice Simmons indicated the UoC may have some equipment, but it would be on a re-sale basis. Louise Gittins mentioned a fund available for purchases of IT equipment.

4.6 At its meeting on 7th April, the board agreed to pursue four specific initiatives and work has progressed. The following updates were provided.

4.7 Graeme Bristow and the Transport Board are working closely with Roy Newton to develop a business case for public transport. The work is being funded by a re-prioritisation of ongoing business case development activity.

4.8 The proposal for the LEP to inject up to £2M into Accelerate is developing quickly. The LEP contribution would provide the 60% match needed from individuals to access training and the 40% funding from ESF. Training would therefore be free to the participant and is consistent with the encouragement by Government for training while staff are furloughed. Pat Jackson is preparing a detailed paper. The Board discussed the marketing of the training opportunities. Skills brokers within the Growth and Skills Hub are already generating leads, which will be encouraged by the LEP funding

and Andy Farrall confirmed that Marketing Cheshire, now a named co-delivery partner of Accelerate, is on stand-by to launch an awareness campaign.

4.9 The early proposals to provide up to £1M grants for consultancy support and potentially up to £10M direct grants to businesses, not eligible for other Government funding, had also been discussed resulting in the ideas being combined into one possible scheme. A sub-group of board members and the executive developed options which sought to achieve the maximum value for money benefit at a scale that could be adequately managed and administered by available resource. This meant setting criteria that would narrow the scope from the possible 75,000 SMEs in C&W currently excluded from other Government schemes.

The sub-group favoured a grant funding scheme that would support businesses seeking to restructure and innovate for recovery. Grants, for up to 90% of the project costs, would average £10k in value offering support to up to 300 businesses on a first come first served basis. Even at this level, with perhaps in excess of 1000 applications expected, the LEP would require administrative and processing assistance from the Local Authorities. Some due diligence checks will be needed on applicants, the cost of works proposed and the credentials of proposed consultants or suppliers. All three Local Authorities indicated their willingness to provide resources. Andy Devaney will finalise scheme proposals.

4.10 In respect of the proposals made at 4.8 and 4.9, the board agreed

1. It would like to draw £4.8M from the GPF in the form of borrowing which would be repaid over time from retained business rates arising from the Enterprise Zone.
2. Agreed in principle to putting £2M of that into Accelerate to provide the 60% match that would otherwise be required from participants.
3. To delegate sign off of the detailed schemes to Clare Hayward, Chair, and Robert Mee and Chris Hindley, respectively Chairs of the Strategy Committee and Performance and Investment Committee. Sign off will be subject to confirmation that GPF funds can be used for the purposes outlined and that any final proposals receive support from the s151 officer.

Agenda Item 5: Feedback, Context and our C&W LEP Vision:

Clare Hayward presented her initial findings from conversations held with Board members on how the LEP and the Board are performing and set out a process for refreshing aspects of the LEP's Vision, Guiding Principles and Culture.

In context the LEP and the Board are operating in a world very different from the one which existed just one to two months ago. Clarity of purpose and vision, with "ruthless" prioritisation would be necessary to avoid being diverted from core aims and, with the magnitude of uncertainty and change, cultural values of pace, agility and intelligence would be needed to respond effectively. The LEP will be looked to as a strong voice on the economy.

Clare posed questions about making the best use of our experience within the board and how we spread our message, the structure of committees, whether board members should carry sector or geographic portfolios and establishing an appropriate range of KPIs to monitor progress.

In open forum, in addition to the points already summarised in the presentation, thinking needed to address:

- the relationship between the LEP Board and the Board of Marketing Cheshire (at the operational level, promoted by the current challenges, the two organisations are working seamlessly),
- When we compete and when we collaborate with other LEPs
- The role of the LEP in devolution
- How the board can rise above its strong foundations (as evaluated by BEIS) and become more ambassadorial for the sub-region

- How the LEP demonstrates close alignment to Local Authority plans e.g. around Climate Change and People and Skills
- Takes more time to “step-back” to reflect on what we are doing and why?
- Establishes and integrates the Youth Board.
- How the LEP raises its’ profile within the Business community of C&W.
- How we identify which businesses and sectors will come out better from the pandemic crisis.

There was agreement that before launching the next board recruitment campaign, clarity was needed so as to inform the knowledge and experience we might seek.

To start the process, Clare proposed the board worked in three sub-groups, each seeking to populate the pyramid of vision, purpose etc, and returning to the next board meeting in May with ideas. Sub-groups might like to consider questions such as “Why is the LEP here?”, “What do we want C&W to be?”, “What would we want the headline in the FT to say about us?”

The proposed group structure is:

Craig Browne	Louise Gittins	Russ Bowden / Steve Park
Robert Mee	Angie Robinson / Adrian Bull	Graeme Bristow
Eunice Simmons	Chris Hindley	Nicola Dunbar
Trevor Brocklebank	Nichola Newton	Stephen Kinsey
Peter Broxton	John Downes	Philip Cox
Joe Manning	Ian Brooks	

LEP Officers will provide support for their respective sub-groups and, initially, assist to find mutually convenient dates for them to meet.

Agenda Item 6: Any Other Business:

Confirmation that Marketing Cheshire will co-ordinate the formal launch of funding towards Accelerate in the next few days.

Agenda Item 7: Date and Time of Next Meetings:

Board Meeting (Covid-19) Wednesday 29th April 2020 4:30 – 6:30pm MS Teams/ Teleconference

Board Meeting (public) Wednesday 13th May 2020 4:30 - 6:30pm.