

Cheshire and Warrington Business Advisory Board

Meeting Note

Date: Wednesday, 16 October 2024

Time: 4:30–6:30pm (via Teams)

Attendees – Business Advisory Board (BAB) Members:

Steve Purdham (Chair)	Jan Chillery	Rupert Collis
Jill Jones	Annabel Turpin	Maggie Chen
Paul Taylor	Andrea Stott	Trevor Brocklebank
Peter Broxton	Adrian Curry	Ian Traynor
Terry Hayward	Yannis Loucopoulis	Annette McDonald
Gaurav Batra	Chris Hindley	
Helen Tonks	Helen Gbormittah	

Apologies:

Jane Hough, Nichola Newton

Attendees – Others:

Philip Cox, CEO Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington (ECW)
Paul Chapman, Growth Hub Manager ECW
Melissa Crellin, Strategy and Public Affairs Director, ECW
Steve Park, Director of Growth, Warrington Borough Council
Sandra Rothwell, consultant to ECW

1. Welcome – Steve Purdham

- 1.1. Steve welcomed the members of the BAB & highlighted the passion & enthusiasm he'd come across during initial conversations with individual members and the opportunity to make a difference.
- 1.2. Key areas of focus for the BAB will be on growth and devolution, with important themes including transportation (esp. W-E), skills & employment, digital innovation & connectivity and access to funding channels.
- 1.3. The main purpose of the meeting today is to bring members up to speed on local and national issues and the development of economic strategy for Cheshire and Warrington.
- 1.4. Recruitment of the BAB was formally completed following the Local Authorities Joint Committee (LAJC) meeting on 27th September, which voted in favour of the appointment of the Chair and final ten members of the board
- 1.5. Links to items referenced during this section:
[BAB press release including link to member profiles](#)
[Committee details \(including papers\) - Cheshire and Warrington Joint Committee](#)

2. Propriety and Conflicts of Interest Overview – Philip Cox

- 2.1. A full briefing will be given at the next meeting, but Philip outlined the core ‘Nolan’ principles of Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership
- 2.2. If members find themselves at a meeting where a matter is under discussion that may have a direct personal bearing on them, or they are unsure, they should declare it at the meeting.
- 2.3. **ACTION:** A register of interests will be circulated and discussed at the next meeting.
- 2.4. Links to items referenced during this section:
[Nolan Principles](#)

3. Shaping the Future: Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy (SIES) and 10-Year Growth Plan – Philip Cox & Melissa Crellin

- 3.1. Philip and Melissa outlined the background to the development of what is now called the Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy (SIES) and work to date. The aim is for the first draft to be published by the end of the year, feeding into the production of the Cheshire and Warrington Growth Plan.
- 3.2. Work is ongoing to engage stakeholders, outlining the pillars of the SIES - Sustainable, Inclusive, Healthy, Growing - and the enabling infrastructure.
- 3.3. Observations from members included:
 - Several members seeking to understand the reasons behind some of the challenges highlighted, for example the slowing increase in productivity and high levels of economic inactivity, particularly among the older population
 - A need for a concerted program of re-training to up-skill the older generation as a means of addressing economic activity in that group
 - Although HyNet, the UK’s leading industrial decarbonisation project, is moving ahead, all parts of the programme currently still await Final Investment Decision
 - Different segments of decarbonisation require different approaches
 - Given the diversity of business types, sizes and locations, there will be a need to prioritise support for businesses to decarbonise
 - Members wish to understand how the SIES work links to Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and highlighted skills shortages in engineering
 - A perceived lack of careers advice in schools
 - Noting that the new Government Industrial Strategy mentioned professional & business services as a key sector
 - A need to ensure that planning strategy provides for smaller-business requirements (e.g. smaller warehousing) – this was endorsed by other members who highlighted the need for good quality, flexible, small-scale business space, the supply of which is severely limited in Cheshire
 - Around 90% of the UK’s existing workforce will need to upskill to meet evolving requirements, which may be something for the BAB to consider

- The road network has been raised (as an issue) for a number of years and as we grow housing and also retain and grow our logistics/distribution hubs, the road network needs to be advanced at a faster pace than we currently have
- The Liverpool Manchester Railway board has recently been formed and there are potentially big opportunities around plans for Manchester Airport station, e.g. housing.
- A suggestion that the BAB have a climate adaption 'lens' on all matters under consideration

3.4. **ACTION:** Circulate updated presentation slides

3.5. Links to items referenced during this section:

[New industrial strategy launched by Government as 'Invest 2035'](#). Press release, including link to main Green Paper - Businesses have until 24th November to respond to the consultation

[HyNet project given go-ahead](#)

[Employment Rights Bill](#)

[UK Shared Prosperity Fund \(UKSPF\)](#)

4. Devolution Update and Strategic Positioning discussion – Philip Cox

4.1. Devolution has been the subject of local discussion for around ten years

4.2. The new Government has made clear that it wishes to increase both the speed and scope of devolution and Local Authority leaders have affirmed their commitment to devolution with the local Growth Plan forming the core delivery proposal.

4.3. There is a need to ensure that the general population understand the benefits of devolution. The implication of not having devolution is that C&W will lag behind other regions, including near neighbours.

4.4. A devolution white paper is in development by Government with a Devolution Bill expected mid 2025 with potential to be passed in early 2026. The current ambition for C&W is to achieve devolution during 2026.

4.5. Observations from members included:

- A general consensus among members that devolution is the right thing for C&W
- A request for a further briefing on devolution in future

4.6. **ACTION:** Chair to communicate the support of the BAB for devolution to the LAJC

4.7. **ACTION:** Schedule a further briefing about devolution at a future meeting

4.8. Links to items referenced during this section:

[Local Government Association devolution information and resources](#)

5. Defining Our Path Forward – Future Agenda for the Business Advisory Board – Steve Purdham

- 5.1. Part of the work of the BAB will take place through sub-groups.
- 5.2. **ACTION:** Members are requested to indicate their areas of interest, aligned to the work streams shown in the in briefing slides (slide 22 on) and feed back to the Chair.
- 5.3. **ACTION:** Members are requested to consider whether the BAB needs to add anything further to the scope of current discussions and feed back to the Chair.

6. AOB:

- 6.1. Members agreed to future BAB communications as open emails (i.e. not BCC) – Members are requested to let the Chair know if they would prefer to opt out of this.
- 6.2. **ACTION:** ECW to investigate the recording of future meetings and possible means of distribution to members.

7. Next meeting dates:

Wednesday, November 6th, 4:30–6:30pm (Teams)

Wednesday, 11th December (in person, venue & time TBA)