

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

### **Meeting Note**

**Date:** Wednesday, 12 March 2025

**Time:** 4:30–6:30pm

**Venue:** The Park Royal Hotel, Warrington

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

|                       |                    |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Steve Purdham (Chair) | Andrea Stott       | Nichola Newton     |
| Paul Taylor           | Adrian Curry       | Helen Gbormittah   |
| Peter Broxton         | Chris Hindley      | Gaurav Batra       |
| Helen Tonks           | Trevor Brocklebank | Maggie Chen        |
| Jan Chillery          | Annette McDonald   | Yannis Loucopoulis |

#### **Apologies:**

Ian Traynor, Jane Hough, Rupert Collis, Terry Hayward, Jill Jones, Annabel Turpin

#### **Attendees – Others:**

Philip Cox, CEO Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington (ECW)

Tom Moody, Director of Transport and Infrastructure, Cheshire East Council (CEC)

Paul Chapman, Growth Hub Manager ECW

### **1. Apologies, welcome and introduction – Steve Purdham**

- 1.1. Steve welcomed the members of the BAB & thanked members for feedback and ongoing work since the last meeting.

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

- 2.1. No conflicts of interest were declared

### **3. Minutes of the Board meetings held on 15th January & 12th February, agreed actions and matters arising – Steve Purdham**

- 3.1. Notes from the BAB meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2025 & 12<sup>th</sup> February were reviewed  
Actions were completed or will be completed during this meeting
- 3.2. **ACTION:** Meeting notes and agendas will be published.
- 3.3. Links to items referenced during this section:  
[BAB web page including board papers & relevant publications](#)

### **4. Devolution update including progress on the development of the Devolution Plan**

4.1. Members received updates on progress towards devolution and the development of the Cheshire and Warrington Devolution Plan (formerly the Growth Plan), highlighting:

- There will now be a face-to-face element to the Government consultation, details TBA
- Some aspects of the devolution planning will need to await the outcome of the Autumn Budget
- The position of potential Mayoral candidates is currently unknown

4.2. Observations from members included:

- The issued consultation questionnaire is rather lengthy
- Suggestion that the BAB profile should not be linked directly to devolution, but should be the voice of all businesses and independent of the public sector
- Members reported generally positive feedback on devolution from their networks

## **5. Devolution priorities from Cheshire East Council**

5.1. Members received an update on devolution priorities from Cheshire East Council (CEC) highlighting:

- Cheshire East Growth Strategy (in development)
- A vision for Crewe to be the best small city in Europe by 2050
- Macclesfield's identity as a green, creative, connected, social and quirky town
- Handforth Garden Village
- Opportunities at Alderley Park
- Crewe Rail Hub
- Presence at UKREiF 2025

5.2. Observations from members included:

- Challenges of taking forward development in green-belt areas, political and legal
- There will be a need for highly-skilled individuals to realise the vision
- Emphasising recognition of the needs for the development of young people – the re-imagining of Crewe town centre will be a big factor in attracting them
- A vibrant cultural quarter is also attractive to young people
- A range of business spaces is also needed
- Connectivity is also a key requirement to attract businesses and people

5.3. Links to items referenced during this section:

[Cheshire East Plan 2025-29 \(draft\)](#)

[Handforth Garden Village](#)

[UKREiF 2025](#)

## **6. Devolution Comms**

6.1. Members received an update on devolution comms and discussion included:

- A 'strapline' or headline for BAB communications

- A proposed 'mission statement'
- Devolution-specific communications

#### 6.2. Observations from members included:

- A suggestion to include desired outcomes in the strapline
- A number of proposals for a strapline or mission statement
- Businesses may feel historically that their voice hasn't been heard
- Awareness of the positioning of other business representative organisations
- The role of the BAB as advisor to the Joint Committee and future Mayor are a USP
- Suggestion to look at example of the approach from other BABs around the country
- Need to be aware of the risk of over-promising what can be delivered
- Suggestion to run a devolution summit or open session for businesses
- Chester Business Club are hosting a Dinner on 22 May 2025, "Devolution Dialogue", when there will be a panel and Q&A to discuss devolution

#### 6.3. Links to items referenced during this section:

[Chester Business Club 'Devolution Dialogue' dinner](#)  
[Cheshire and Warrington devolution website](#)

## 7. New Business Growth Service & Small Business Strategy

#### 7.1. Members received a briefing on proposals for the new service and strategy highlighting:

- Five key policy pillars of the Small Business Strategy – Finance, Markets, Business Capabilities, High Streets, Wider Environment
- Business Growth Service objective to focus on providing businesses with a more cohesive, joined-up route to support to help them start up, scale and grow
- Proposed BGS launch mid-year with a brand and digital offer, key local delivery of the service via Growth Hubs
- Intention to grow the BGS in future, including greater integration of Government support services and potential links with universities
- Government consultation on proposals

#### 7.2. Observations from members included:

- Need to engage with the wider business community (not just the BAB) to gather feedback on the proposals

#### 7.3. Links to items referenced during this section:

[GOV.UK Business Growth Service PR](#)

## 8. AOB:

- 8.1. The Chair represented the BAB at the recent Convention of the North – New brand for the region 'Great North'
- 8.2. Request for feedback from members about the new Planning and Infrastructure Bill (information previously circulated)

- 8.3. The C&W Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Strategy (SEIS) is being finalised and will be published as a consultation draft soon (update at future meeting)
- 8.4. Links to items referenced during this section:
  - [Convention of the North 2025](#)
  - [Guide to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill](#)

**9. Next meeting dates:**

Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> April, 4:30–6:30pm (Teams)