

LEP Strategy Programme Board

MINUTES (DRAFT)

Meeting Held: Tuesday 16th November 2021

Via Microsoft Teams

Present:

John Downes (Chair)

Peter Skates

Steven Gleave

Iain Paton

Nicola Dunbar

Stephen Kinsey

Nicola Dunbar

Philip Cox (present for items 6 & 7 only)

Rupert Collis

Melissa Crellin

Eunice Simmons

Apologies:

Charlie Seward

Connor Diskin

Steve Park

Jayne Traverse

Robert Davis

Gemma Davies

Attending:

Ian Brooks

Rebecca Luck

Agenda Item 1: Welcome, Introductions & Apologies

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Charlie, Seward, Jayne Traverse, Steve Park, Robert Davis, Gemma Davies, and Connor Diskin.

Agenda Item 2: Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest given.

Agenda Item 3: Minutes of Strategy Committee held 14th May/29th June and Matters Arising

The minutes for both 14th May and 29th June were accepted as a true record of the discussions.

Matters Arising

29th June

Item 5 – business case development fund - business case development projects are in progress. It was agreed to request a report on progress towards delivery of business cases for the next meeting as per the action agreed on 29th June.

Agenda Item 4: Public Speaking Time / Open Session

There were no members of the public at the meeting.

Agenda Item 5: Budget and Spending Review 2021

MC outlined key government announcements and policies of relevance to C&W as summarised in the paper.

There was a discussion about the two outstanding pieces of work still expected from Government that have implications for the SPB's work programme and which have caused delay: the Levelling Up White Paper and the LEP Review. These were expected by the autumn but have not yet been issued. The LEP understands that with the recent Cabinet reshuffle new Ministers have taken on these pieces of work and this has caused delay whilst the work has been reviewed. SPB's concern was noted in terms of managing uncertainties.

There was a discussion about future funding and about the funding bids submitted by Councils for the Levelling Up Fund and Community Renewal Fund, which weren't successful. The Councils are still waiting to receive formal government feedback on the bids.

Agenda Item 6: LEP Economic Strategies Review

MC presented findings from a recent review of C&W economic strategies and gave an overview of the LEP's suggested approach to taking forward the LEP/subregion's economic strategy (as referred to on the paper). Any new strategy needs to update the evidence base and recast the strategy in terms of the new vision: healthy, inclusive, sustainable and growing, rather than the previous approach to growing GVA (which was commissioned by government). The approach may be quite different to previous and also needs to link to work ongoing around a County Deal/Levelling Up Deal. In terms of future strategy, Government wants future policy proposals to be evidence based which an updated strategy would assist with.

PC gave an overview of this County Deal/Levelling Up work currently being done with the three Local Authorities. The LEP and Local Authorities have had a conversation with Government and agreed to jointly commission some work to put together an outline proposition. Joe Manning is leading this work and is looking at what we can do: with current powers; with additional funding; with additional powers and flexibilities, of which the latter two would form a County Deal. It will focus on how we deliver 'levelling up' in the broadest terms e.g. between rural and urban/areas of deprivation and other areas/across gender and other equality and diversity considerations etc, and will focus more on outcomes rather than process and structures. We have run a tender and appointed Metrodynamics to do the work.

The SPB was asked to consider whether the LEP should commission further work on a consolidated economic strategy, bearing in mind that it is possible that the LEP Review conclusions could be delayed for another year, but that we do expect the Levelling Up White Paper before Christmas, and that we have budget set aside for this. It was agreed that this approach is sensible and that SPB will input to the terms of reference for the work.

The discussion noted that there is a new approach to strategy at the University with a focus on scale and pace post-COP26 and on what the work means to individual citizens and localities. The LEP can deliver at different scales, and it will be helpful now to link strategy to operational impact more convincingly. It

was also noted that digital technology and innovation will be critical in driving the green agenda and needs to be centrally placed within the strategy. It is important to note that the LEP is a small organisation within a £30bn economy, with a limited number of staff working on this agenda. The LEP's role in future will be more of a network of networks and an influencer and catalyser, for example by working with key sectors and local authorities such as in Energy and Life Sciences, and extending this approach, providing support whilst industries take the lead. We don't expect there to be large pots of money such as Local Growth Fund etc coming to the LEP in future.

Action: PC/MC to share the terms of reference for the piece of strategy update work with SPB by email for comments and views. The LEP Board itself will also be interested in this.

Agenda Item 7: Strategy Programme Board Terms of Reference

ToR changes agreed subject to subsequent review with Ian Brooks to ensure consistency of governance across wider LEP sub boards e.g. on delegated powers, decision making and conflicts of interest etc.

It was noted that risk is managed at an officer level feeding into the LEP's overarching risk register and the relevant risks will be brought to the SPB. KPIs were discussed and it was noted that KPIs will be a core part of the new approach to economic strategy. This could feed into KPI's for SPB whilst noting that these will also be relevant to the main LEP Board.

Action: IB and MC to review ToR.

Agenda Item 8: Update on Sustainability/Energy-related Programmes

MC updated members on the sustainability/energy programme activity summarised in the paper.

The paper was welcomed as a helpful summary of activity. There was a query about deliverability of the vision/programmes which was met with the proviso that the LEP in future will not be a delivery agency, and will work with others who will deliver. It was also suggested that the green skills sections could be extended and importance strengthened. The University has met with the Skills Minister and is of the view that green skills are a key opportunity for the subregion, and it will be useful to connect the HE sector evidence into the LEP, to join up the narrative and get traction, which can be done with evidence of actual delivery rather than rhetoric. The University is partnering with University of Cambridge to green the University estate and become an exemplar. It was also noted that the quality of place agenda is critically important in the new sustainability agenda, is a key asset for the subregion, and there is a need to involve business in place creation and connectivity. The NWBLT is looking at place and has asked LEP's to look at this.

There was a discussion about how the LEP needs to consolidate and communicate what is going on around this agenda and give clarity to business for example with policies on the website, short papers, as well as through strategy. Members discussed the merit in the LEP identifying its own ESG position, albeit as a small organisation. IB stated officers will be reviewing and improving LEP policies and frameworks. We need to see effective dissemination of information at the level of what it means for different types of businesses and also an ability for business to influence strategic discussions.

Agenda Item 9: Part B - Non-public items

Growing Places Fund Opportunity – Sustineri Fuels

The Growing Places Fund has been operated and managed by the LEP since 2014 and operates as a revolving loan fund or grant fund. An enquiry has been received relating to a waste to biofuels facility. When considered against other potential opportunities in the pipeline, SPB decided that the scale and risks associated with the project were disproportionately high. It was agreed to support and signpost but not to invest directly.

Agenda Item 10: AOB

Members noted the relevant Government Strategies that had been issued since the 29th June meeting (outlined on the agenda). There were no items for discussion under this agenda item.

Agenda Item 11: Date and Time of Next Meeting

Confirmed that the tentative meeting in the diary for 10th December would be cancelled. The next meeting is expected to be held early in 2022. Meeting schedule to be confirmed.