**LEP STRATEGY PROGRAMME BOARD – AGENDA ITEM 7**

Subject: Life Sciences

Author: Philip Cox and LEP Strategy Team

Meeting date: 25th March 2022

**Purpose**

To provide an overview of the recently commissioned Life Sciences research study, alongside other life sciences sector considerations, and to discuss strategic policy implications for the Cheshire and Warrington economy and linkages with the Strategy Programme Board work programme.

**Recommendations**

The Strategy Programme Board is asked to: -

1. Note the report, in the context of the LEP’s evidence base update and strategic policy direction for the life sciences sector, and to provide any comments or steer to officers who will be considering how to bring the life sciences agenda together in the coming weeks.

**Background**

The LEP commissioned a Life Sciences Mapping and Gapping Research exercise in 2021, which concluded early in 2022. The work was overseen by a strategic cross border Life Sciences sector group with relevant stakeholders from Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region alongside Cheshire and Warrington. The commission was won by a company called 7i Group, and their full research findings report can be found in the papers for this meeting.

The findings are being incorporated into the LEP’s evidence base update and will be considered in any future strategy work agreed by the Strategy Programme Board.

**Summary of Life Sciences Mapping and Gapping Report Findings and Recommendations**

1. Our research (on the life sciences industry in C&W/GM/LCR) is telling us that fragmentation in the eco-system can/is holding us back as a region – it is generally felt that collaborations/networking within individual science parks is good but it breaks down between different science parks and across the region. We could do more to bring the NW cluster together to actively facilitate collaboration.
2. Access to funding/venture capital, although improving, is still a barrier in the North West/North – with the majority of VCs still in London/the south, which is inhibiting growth in the sector.
3. We need a coherent and consistent brand/marketing campaign to become recognised as a global life sciences hub and to help us communicate the size and strength of our cluster to government and inward investors.
4. We need to make collaborations between the key elements of the cluster/eco-system much easier – i.e. between universities and the private sector, different parts of the supply chain and with funders/finance.
5. In Cheshire and Warrington (and into GM and LCR) the life sciences sector is much bigger, more complex and integrated than we previously thought – or than what is acknowledged through traditional SIC (Standard Industrial Classification) codes.
6. Our vision is for Cheshire and Warrington, with our partners in the North, to be a global leader in the full life sciences lifecycle. In our area we have significant capabilities in drug discovery, development, and diagnostics. This is complemented by our growing digital health sector and expertise in the manufacturing of complex medicines.
7. This has never been more important – for example Astra Zeneca and the Lighthouse Lab in Alderley Park have been leading the fight against Covid19 through vaccines and testing.
8. There are ‘gaps’ across the region in:
	1. Incubators and business support (opportunity to meet with investors, public and private sources of funding, business and growth support, networking)
	2. Business infrastructure (laboratory space, flexible workspace, critical mass of the eco-system, costs of business)
9. Some of our key strengths as a life sciences cluster include:
	1. access to and links with universities and academia – both in terms of research but also the number of life sciences graduates the region produces
	2. business costs
	3. quality of life
	4. transport infrastructure
10. The consultancy report recommended to set up workstreams to develop a more action-focused implementation plan on the following topics:
	1. Employment factors
	2. Business support
	3. Business infrastructure
	4. Place-based factors

**Other Considerations**

The report recommendations need to be seen alongside the announcement that Greater Manchester will be working with BEIS to establish an Innovation Accelerator in the area (announced in the Levelling Up White Paper). We have agreed with GM that we will look at how Cheshire and Warrington can be part of that.

This links with the investment that the LEP is making in a Life Sciences Fund 2 with Bruntwood and GMCA on a pari-passu basis. This fund will cover the whole of Cheshire and Warrington and GM and run for a 15-year period with a five-year investment period.

Recently, the Getting Building Fund allocation of c.£4-5m for the proposed CAT 3 Virology Laboratory project at Alderley Park has been brought to a premature close as it was no longer deliverable at the price. At present the money has been put into Blocks 22-24 at Alderley Park via the Enterprise Zone, but there is an opportunity for the LEP to repurpose the money into an alternative project that would significantly enhance life science facilities and could support and link to the Government and GM’s Innovation Accelerator initiative.

LEP officers are planning to meet to draw all the strands together and map out how to take this agenda forward over the coming weeks.