



**LEP Strategy Committee
MINUTES**

Thursday 16th July 2015, 2pm, LEP Office, Richmond House

Present:

Robert Davis (Chair)

Louise Morrissey

Aidan Manley (Item 5)

Pete Waterman

Nigel Schofield

Karen Tierney

Philip Cox

Andy Hulme

Robert Mee

Charlie Seward

Apologies:

Andy Farrall

Caroline Simpson

Presenting:

N/A

Agenda Item 1: Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Robert Davis welcomed members to the meeting including new Strategy Committee member Robert Mee. Apologies were received from Caroline Simpson (Cheshire East Council – represented by Karen Tierney) and Andy Farrall (Warrington BC).

Agenda Item 2: Minutes, Actions and Matters Arising.

All actions were either completed or covered by the Agenda. It was noted that the session on unconventional oil and gas issues was initially arranged for 16th July but postponed due to unforeseen circumstances.

Matters Arising:

Pete Waterman asked for specific reference in the minutes be made to his comments during the discussion on the Quality of Place brief regarding enhancing Wi-Fi coverage across the sub region.

The minutes of the Strategy Committee meeting held Wednesday 6th May 2015, as amended, were approved.

Agenda Item 3: Strategy Discussion Paper

Robert Davis presented a discussion paper arising from his most recent 1-2-1 with the LEP Chief Executive. The paper set out what he considered to be four key issues impacting on the overall prosperity of the sub-region as a means of stimulating discussion within the Strategy Committee around the SEP refresh.

The Strategy Committee had a prolonged discussion on the issues raised in the paper, particularly around worklessness, during which it became clear that work is ongoing at an individual local authority level, including the nationally recognised Community Budget pilot in Cheshire West and Chester.

The Committee thought that we should seek to include this approach, along with other good practice identified in our LEP area, and indeed beyond, in our SEP as a key area of future focus. In addition the Committee supported the aspiration to have the lowest long term unemployment in the UK.

Reference was made to the emerging work streams developing as part of the activity to develop a devolution-linked growth deal. Following a suggestion by the LEP Chief Executive Philip Cox, the Strategy Committee agreed that a private sector Board Member should be allocated to each growth deal workstream to provide a business perspective to the ideas being generated.

Pete Waterman volunteered to support the connectivity work stream.

A number of actions were agreed arising from the discussion: -

Action: Nigel Schofield to supply details of a current Chambers of Commerce survey on skills needs, for circulation to the Committee.

Action: Andy Hulme to contact Steven Broomhead (Warrington BC) regarding a study he led into how economic development could be done better across the sub-region.

Action: Julian Cobley to scope out a project on Wi-Fi provision as part of the Connecting Cheshire programme.

Agenda Item 4: Strategy Work Programme

Updating the SEP progress report

Philip Cox updated Committee members on progress of the work programme being undertaken to refresh the SEP. Discussions have taken place with local authority partners on a revised economic objective – growing the economy to £50 billion a year by 2040 (£38 billion by 2030). This avoids any perceived conflict with current local plan timescales.

Place-specific plans for Crewe, Chester / Dee and Warrington would be at the heart of this revised ambition, but as part of a generally more holistic approach.

Philip noted that both energy and science featured in the Chancellor's 'Productivity Plan' which suggests our SEP will be well aligned with national priorities. It is intended to take the revised SEP to the September Board.

Developing the evidence base

Andy Hulme confirmed that the **Atlantic Gateway Science and Innovation Study** being undertaken by SQW was progressing well. A Steering Group made up of the three AG LEPs plus other key stakeholders has been established and met for the first time in June. The consultants are currently progressing a series of scoping interviews including amongst others Ged Barlow in his position as Chair of the LEP's Innovation Board.

Mickledore Ltd has been appointed to undertake the **Energy Sector Study**, following a competitive tender process. Value of the contract is £39,997.00. An inception meeting has been held and initial scoping interviews will be taking place in the next few weeks.

There was a further discussion on the proposed Quality of Place Study. The Committee agreed that the study should proceed to tender, subject to provision of final comments by Nigel Schofield.

Action: Nigel Schofield to provide comments on the brief directly to Andy Hulme.

Agenda Item 5: Growing Places Fund Options Paper

Aidan Manley presented a paper summarising work undertaken on behalf of the LEP into options for future deployment of the Growing Places Fund.

The report highlighted that Cheshire and Warrington had until now taken a more cautious approach to the type of activity supported through GPF, and maintained the view that it should be utilised as repayable funding (some other areas have also used elements of GPF for grant).

There was agreement that the level of awareness of the fund needs to be improved. In terms of whether to retain the existing lending criteria, or adopt a more diversified approach, it was agreed that further investigation of local demand and market failure issues would be of benefit in reaching a balanced range of options. This is to include the LEP's Business Growth Strategy Group, Place Team Chairs and Lead Officers as well as representatives of groups and agencies who will have an interest or view in the Fund's future application such as other local public sector bodies, property agents, fund managers.

Action: Aidan Manley to liaise with Martin Forbes (Local Partnerships) on additional work required to complete the study.

Action: Nigel Schofield to include GPF Options discussion on the next Business Growth Strategy Group agenda

Action: Results of the additional work to be considered by next meeting of the Strategy Committee

Agenda Item 6: Any Other Business

The Strategy Committee agreed to invite Matthew Stevenson-Dodd, Chief Executive of 'Street Step' to future meetings. – check with Robert

Agenda Item 7: Date, Time and Venue of next meeting.

Wednesday 9th September, 2pm at the LEP Offices, Richmond House, Gadbrook Business Park. (note change of date).