**REPORT TO CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP**

**BOARD MEETING 21st March 2018**

Subject: CWLEP Performance Review

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Meeting date: 21st March 2018

**Purpose**

1. To update the Board on the recent BEIS/MHCLG assessment of Cheshire and Warrington LEP

**Recommendations**

1. The Board is asked to
* Note the assessment score and the proposed action plan going forward.

**Background**

1. Following the conclusion of this year’s Annual Conversation process, officials in the Cities and Local Growth Unit (BEIS/MHCLG) undertook a Performance Review to look at the performance of each LEP across the Country.

1. The Performance Review looked at performance across three themes; governance, delivery and strategy. The Review also sought to highlight any areas that needed development. LEPs were marked according to the outcome of their Annual Conversation along with information gathered by officials from the LEPs governance process and policies.

**Discussion**

1. Cheshire and Warrington LEP was assessed as follows:

**Governance - Exceptional**

1. Our Local Assurance Framework, the LEP & the accountable body were judged to have clear and accountable governance structures and processes in operation. The review commented that we have agreed systems in place to ensure continual compliance and improvement through an annual review and refresh process and our strong approach to governance was exceptional noting that the Board’s Register of Interests was used as the basis for the national best practice guidance.
2. Going forward we will need to ensure we remain fully compliant with the Ney Review, Governance & Transparency Best Practice Guidance and any modifications to the National LEP Assurance Framework. In terms of specific actions, we have been advised that it will be beneficial to demonstrate the impact of the Overview and scrutiny Committee, continue to develop work around the Finance Director role and continue improvements to the website.

**Strategy - Exceptional**

1. Our Strategic Economic Plan was singled out as being exceptional when compared to other LEPs, noting that the LEP and its partners had invested a substantial amount of time in developing an effective vision. The assessment concluded that this work would benefit the development of our Local Industrial Strategy
2. The LEPs role in influencing both within Cheshire and within Whitehall was also noted with officials suggesting we look to strengthen our strategic engagement across the Northern Powerhouse, which is something that we have in train.

**Delivery - Good**

1. The assessment acknowledged the good progress being made across the key investment programmes (Local Growth Fund, the Growth Hub, the Enterprise Zone etc.) and acknowledged that we have in place good risk management at project, programme and corporate level.
2. However, concerns were raised around late starting projects and the impact these could have on programme spend and outputs. The assessment suggested drawing upon a contingency project pipeline as well as setting in place evaluation of projects.

**Conclusion**

1. While the assessment is positive and acknowledges that work that the LEP has done to ensure processes and systems are robust and transparent, it is clear that we need to put in place a plan for tackling the concerns around delivery. It is also important to note that officials commended the work of our Accountable Body and the positive relationship that we enjoy. It will be important that we continue to work closely, to ensure we are ready to respond swiftly to the LEP Review once it is published.

**Next Steps**

1. Subject to the Board’s agreement, the Executive would propose developing an action plan to address the areas of concern. The key elements of that action plan would comprise:
* Developing an investment pipeline of projects that can be called on as necessary. The LEP is already discussing possible approaches to this, which could include the establishment of a Investment Board to agree a sub-regional project pipeline.
* Revisit our investment criteria and decision-making processes to ensure investment decisions are sound and stand the best chance of delivering the expected outputs on time.
* Setting in place a Growth Deal Evaluation Framework to review the efficiency and effectiveness of projects in achieving their desired outcomes and impacts after project completion. This will enable future projects to replicate and enhance on previously documented successes and ensure any lessons are learned.