

Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Wednesday 3rd March 2020
Virtual Meeting via Teams**

Present: Cllr Steve Parish (Chair), Tracey Walsh, Catherine Barber-Brown, Helen Nellist, Cllr Paul Donovan, Cllr Laura Crane

Also In Attendance:

- Philip Cox - Cheshire and Warrington LEP
- Ian Brooks – Cheshire and Warrington LEP
- Phil McCabe – Cheshire Business Group
- Yvette Hastings – Cheshire Business Group
- Jennie Cordwell – Warrington Borough Council (secretariat)

45. Apologies

Apologies were received from Rob McKay.

46. Declarations of Interest

Nil.

47. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held on the 2nd December 2020 were received as a correct record.

48. Terms of Reference and Appointment of Chairman

The following points were noted;

- Councillor Steve Parish would remain as Chair until further notice
- The Terms of Reference were still relevant but clarification of the drafting was needed with respect to quorum.
- It was noted that terms of appointment are for 18 months, which means extensions will need to be confirmed at the meeting in June.

ACTION: SP/JC to include on agenda.

49. Recovery Plan (Covid 19 & Brexit)

The Committee received a presentation from Philip Cox on the above. The following key points were highlighted;

- Cheshire & Warrington LEP are finalising their recovery plan, for publication as a consultation draft, in relation to the current Covid pandemic which had been adjusted to meet requirements from the Brexit transitional period
- The plan would be initially issued in advance of purdah and would detail short and long term plans to support employment
- A series of discussions were to take place with local authorities' business sector and voluntary sector representatives after the elections to enable a final version to be published. This would stand as a sub-regional plan to set out what the LEP and local authorities' were able to support
- The plan would build on underlying strengths, outlined in the Local Industrial Strategy including support for clean energy technology
- Strategic Objectives were discussed with the committee. PC said the LEP had supported businesses to adapt and overcome Covid with £1million of grant funding available. The average distributed had been £2500 which had helped numerous businesses to keep trading
- It had been recognised how challenging the impact of the pandemic had been on mental health, with owners of small businesses hugely impacted. Discussions continue within the Resilience structures of how best to provide mental health support for owners and their employees
- Opportunities were emerging that would enable Cheshire & Warrington to be the heart of the green revolution
- The impact on the younger generations regarding work was highlighted, with vulnerable people with uncertain incomes at high risk
- The Furlough Scheme had been extended until September which will help hold down and delay levels of unemployment, however this may result in a peak of unemployment towards end of year
- The scheme has been welcomed, however, for a younger person on a zero hours or irregular earnings contract, it is likely to be sometime before regular employment is secured as they will be entering the labour market with little or no experience. The LEP is working close with the Workforce Recovery Group to highlight opportunities available
- Additional resources for Growth Hubs in 2021-22 are expected to be announced with support to navigate through Brexit and continuing challenges from Covid
- Connectivity and Infrastructure projects are continuing and have a practical programme to get the economy back on track

The committee asked the following questions regarding the recovery plan

- There is already a disproportionate impact on women in employment – how can the LEP address this? A whole series of groups of people have been effected by Covid and the LEP will need to research to identify who needs supports. The issues surrounding a lack of women on Boards, for example, existed prior to the pandemic therefore there is still certainly a part to play in bringing about change
- There has been an impact on small service business owners who pay themselves from dividends as grants not available, can the LEP provide any support? LEP grant schemes are limited to capital grants due to the way LEPs funded

- Start Ups – what extent of the recovery plan will encourage new business start-ups? This is a key area the Growth Hub has been tasked to provide support with £150k of funding available. This will enable a Peer to Peer Programme to be run which will allow approx. 10 companies in each peer network to share best practice and support new start-ups.

50. Feedback on MHCLG Annual Performance Review of the LEP

The committee received a report that provided details of the most recent review undertaken by the MHCLG. The review had focused on 3 key themes

- 1- Governance – How does it work and ensure compliance with national framework. The review reported that good structures for governance were in place and that the LEP is working well and constructively with Section151 officer and auditors
- 2 – Delivery – MHCLG is primarily focused on Local Growth Funds, because it is in its' final year. There is a keen interest to ensuring projects are contracted and funding is claimed which reflects on the LEP as a delivery body. Discussions included how Local Growth Funds will be monitored and resourced going forward
- 3 - Strategy – This covered the wider programme that the LEP is involved with and was a chance to showcase the work of The Pledge, Enterprise Zone and loan facilities and areas of the broader strategic agenda and consultation processes.

A summary of action items were shared with the committee.

51. Peer Review

The following points were noted;

- The Peer Review is due to take place on 16th March 2021
- This year, Cheshire & Warrington LEP had been paired with Enterprise M3 – which supports the areas of North West Surrey and North Hampshire. The economy in these areas are comparable to Cheshire & Warrington
- The theme of review will include how can LEP recovery plans help their areas to come out of Covid
- The review will be moderated by Centre for Governance & Scrutiny
- A number of stakeholders will be invited to offer comments on the LEP

It was agreed that the outcome of the peer review will be reported at the next meeting of the committee scheduled for June, with a briefing note detailing initial findings circulated to the committee as soon as possible following the conclusion of the review.

52. Public Participation

To receive questions from members of the public in accordance with Governance Procedure Rule 6. A total period of 15 minutes will be allocated for members of the public to speak at Panel meetings. Each member of the public shall be limited to a period of up to 5 minutes speaking.

An action was taken for the LEP to check how it is publicising the committee meeting dates and to ensure links from the website operate as expected.

ACTION: IB

Nil

53. Work Programme

It was agreed that the Work Programme would be updated to note the following;

Item 1 - *Review the decision making of each of the sub committees & Board of the LEP*

The Chair of each of the LEP committees to be invited to attend a LEP Scrutiny Committee to explain how the committee makes their decisions and provide recent examples.

The Chair of the Local Transport Board and Chair of the Business Growth Committee to be invited to attend at the next meeting taking place in June.

54. AOB

Members asked whether the executive had managed to progress the proposal for a facilitated review of the committee effectiveness. IB confirmed that an approach had been made to the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, but it needed to be followed up. Members would welcome some support in identifying lines of inquiry.

ACTION: IB to contact CfGS

55. Future Meeting Dates

Decision – The following dates were noted, all due to commence at 2.00pm, via Teams.

2 June 2021

1 September 2021

1 December 2021

56. Part II – Matters to be discussed in private

Nil

