



**LEP Strategy Committee
MINUTES (DRAFT)**

Meeting Held: 7th February 2020
LEP Board Room, Wyvern House, Winsford

Present:

Robert Mee (Chair)
Graeme Bristow
Peter Skates
John Downes

Nicola Dunbar
Robert Davis
Andy Hulme

Philip Cox
Steve Park
Charlie Seward

Apologies:

Frank Jordan

Attending:

Pat Jackson (A13 only)

Agenda Item 1: Welcome, Introductions & Apologies

The Chair welcomed members and guests to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Frank Jordan (represented by Peter Skates).

Agenda Item 2: Declarations of Interest

Robert Davis declared a pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 6. The Committee agreed that as no financial decisions were involved in relation to this Agenda Item, that it would be appropriate for Mr Davis to remain and contribute to the discussion.

Agenda Item 3: Presentation – Employer Skills Board Update

Pat Jackson, Head of Skills and Education, provided an update on the progress of delivering the priorities set out in the Education and Skills Strategy.

95% of secondary schools and 300 employers have now engaged in **The Pledge**. Nine Pledge Boards are in place. The Pledge involves development of a coherent programme of activities aimed at facilitating more targeted skills advice and engagement with local employers. The programme, which is funded principally through the European Social Fund and Careers Enterprise Company, is working through Youth Federation to engage young people outside of school.

Pledge Boards consist of employers, local authorities and local colleges.

John Downes asked about the level of engagement from schools and teachers. Pat advised this was mixed. Some schools have engaged really quickly.

Robert Davis recommended contact with Denise Massey at Energy Innovation Centre in Ellesmere Port (access to 2000+ SMEs).

Action: Pat Jackson to share details of current Pledge Boards.

Action: Pat Jackson to share programme of activity so that employers can be encouraged to get involved.

Cheshire and Warrington is one of six **Digital Skills Partnership (DSP)** pilots in England. There is a dedicated resource within the LEP to lead on this, working with The Pledge and Accelerate programmes. Since commencing activity last summer, the DSP has successfully worked with companies like Google who ran workshops for over 700 young people as part of a summer school programme. A Communications Plan is being developed in order to raise awareness and maximise impact.

The **Accelerate Programme** focuses on upskilling and re-skilling existing employees. It operates virtually, funded by £15m of ESF with 60% match from employers. 19,000 workers will benefit from the programme over the next three years and an initial pilot of 400 learners is starting at Bentley Motors in the next few weeks. The programme includes three independent brokers, sat within the Growth Hub, runs through to March 2023.

Pat referenced work funded by DfE to improve data and labour market information to better inform the skills needs of the local economy and help local colleges better develop their curriculum.

Further practical action on skills and education has been the deployment by the LEP of £xm of Local Growth Fund (Skills Capital Funding) to support deployment of equipment for use to underpin digital and STEM training across the sub-region.

Agenda Item 4: Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The Committee approved the Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 20th December 2020. All actions were either completed or covered on the Agenda.

Matters Arising: AI7 – Business Case Development

Philip Cox advised the Committee that further to the discussion at the December meeting, the LEP was now keen to commit the first tranche of funding for Business Case development from the 2020/21 budget. A paper is being prepared for discussion but was not ready for the February meeting. However, the April meeting is likely to be too late if schemes are to 'hit the ground running'.

The Committee discussed potential for a separate discussion in advance of the Board meeting on 26th February, or whether the paper should be considered by the full Board on this occasion. It was agreed that a 30-minute slot would be added in immediately before the Board meeting to discuss this issue.

Action: Strategy Committee to meet 4:30pm – 5:00pm on Wednesday 26th February 2020 to discuss 2020/21 Business Case development activity.

Agenda Item 5: Public Speaking Time

No members of the public were in attendance.

Agenda Item 6: Strategy Update

The contents of the report were noted.

It was noted that further to the paper circulated with the Agenda, the Digital Infrastructure ITT had now been uploaded to the LEP website, with a deadline for submissions of 21st February.

The Natural Capital Audit work should be issued for tender by the end of February. It was confirmed that, subject to funding, the scope for the work will be extended to incorporate work to develop a Natural Capital Investment Plan.

There was a short discussion on the main areas of risk within the Strategy Delivery Plan. It was agreed that future versions would include indicators to show whether progress was improving, worsening or remaining the same.

Agenda Item 7: Local Industrial Strategy

Andy Hulme provided a verbal update on the current position regarding the Local Industrial Strategy (LIS).

Good progress is being made towards production of a near-final fully formatted draft. As yet there is no clear indication as to when the LIS might be published, but a Ministerial speech on 30th January made clear that government is supportive of industrial strategy moving forwards.

Agenda Item 8: Government Announcements

Steve Park and Peter Skates provided a brief update on progress with their Stronger Towns Fund programmes in Warrington and Crewe, respectively. Both places have now established Town Deal Boards and are engaging with the public to develop priorities for each place.

It was noted that an announcement on the future of HS2 is expected before the end of February.

Government has announced a competition to establish the UK's first 'Electric Bus Town' with up to £50m available to support a switch from diesel- and gas-powered buses to electric. Warrington is expected to submit proposals to the Fund.

Part B Agenda Items (Non-Public Items)

Agenda Item 9 – Non-Public Items

There were no items considered under Part B of the agenda.

Agenda Item 10 – any Other Business

The Committee noted the revised Forward plan for 2020.

Agenda Item 12 – Date and Time of Next Meeting

Next meeting: Friday 3rd April 2020, 9:00am, Wyvern House.

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