

Black Country LEP

Note of an 'Away Day' Session of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership

10th December 2013 at 12 Noon
at The Hawthorns, West Bromwich

Present:

Stewart Towe	Chairman;
Cllr Adrian Andrew	Walsall MBC;
Paul Brown	Ernst & Young;
Simon Eastwood	Carillion plc;
Chris Handy	Accord Group;
Ninder Johal	Nachural Communications;
Cllr Ian Jones	Sandwell MBC;
Prof Geoff Layer	Wolverhampton University
Jat Sharma	Walsall College;
Cllr David Sparks	Dudley MBC;
Tom Westley	Westley Group.

In Attendance:

Paul Linton	Employment & Skills Board
Peter Suddock	Visit THE Black Country Partnership;
Mike Keoghan	BIS;
Helen Kaczmarek	BIS
Kim Rowlands	BIS;
Prof David Bailey	Aston University;
Sarah Middleton	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Nick Bubalo	Sandwell MBC;
John Polychronakis	Dudley MBC;
Paul Sheehan	Walsall MBC;
Simon Warren	Wolverhampton CC;
Keren Jones	Wolverhampton CC;
Corin Crane	Wolverhampton CC;
Laura Shoaf	ABCA
Delma Dwight	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Wayne Langford	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Colin Parker	Black Country Consortium Ltd;

Nigel Easom
Phil Swann

Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Shared Intelligence.

Apologies: Councillors Bird and Cooper and Andy Cox.

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Away Day Session – Presentation and Discussion

1, Introduction Purpose and Structure of Away Day

The focus of the meeting was to:

1. Build understanding of Governments expectations of LEPs and how the Partnership intended to respond to this agenda.
2. Build understanding of the Black Country Strategic Economic Plan including contributions from the City Deal and the BC EUSIF;
3. Define the Partnership's propositions for the Single Growth Fund and priorities for its inaugural year of funding in 2015/16 and the 5 years beyond to 2020/21.
4. In defining these priorities to consider the Partnership's functions as
 - The provider of strategic leadership for economic growth in the Black Country – with private investors, Government, and within the Black Country;
 - Holding to account each other to deliver commitments to enable this growth;
 - Using the resources that the LEP directs to enable growth; and
 - Acting as the catalyst for joint working by others to enable growth.

2. An introduction to the Black Country Supply Chain/ Here and Now Opportunities for the Black Country Supply Chain

The Chairman presented an overview of the Black Country supply chain and recent developments within the automotive/aerospace sectors and the opportunities that were available to the Black Country economy more generally. The constraints acting on the public sector were also highlighted

3. Global Challenges for HVM – An overview Opportunities for growth

Professor David Bailey attended the meeting and gave a presentation on the drivers for change in the global automotive industry and their implications for the Black Country. He highlighted the following key message and questions:-

- What production increase could be realistically expected in Black Country over next 5 years?
- What reshoring could be realistically expected in Black Country over next 5 years?
- What financing would be needed for this reshoring, and what would the impact be in terms of jobs
- What was the likely skills gap and what investment in skills was needed? What would the economic impact be?
- What space and sites were needed and what support would be needed for remediation. What would the economic impact be?
- How could FDI be encouraged into the supply chain so as to reshore and globalise?

4. A Government Perspective

Mike Keoghan, Director Vocational Skills, BIS and senior Whitehall sponsor for the Partnership and his colleagues from BIS, gave the Government's perspective on the progress of the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and EU Investment Plan and its expectations of Local Growth Fund and Growth Deal proposals. It was noted that:-

- a) Minister for Cities was open to challenges and asks needed to reflect scale of challenges but this needed to be balanced by Ministers' views of direction and that shouldn't seek to recreate approaches that had been discarded;
- b) Document need to be clear over arrangements and timescale for deliverability;
- c) Ministers looking for robust investment plans demonstrating how money would deliver jobs on the ground;

- d) Particularly in relation to sites and premises there was concern at 'speculative' developments, approaches needed to demonstrate that they were business led;
 - e) In relation to skills, noted that Ministers were considering moving to support via the tax system rather than through direct funding.
- 1) That the phrasing of SEP document be re-examined to ensure that it reflects the approach and deal with the issues that are being raised by Ministers/

5. Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) – Pitch and Plan Sessions

General

- 1) The approach to the structure and direction of SEP based around pillars of people, place and business and spatially focussed on strategic corridors and centres was reaffirmed.

Place

- 1) Direction of travel of asks around place including land and premises, connectivity, housing, culture and environment and low carbon economy were supported;
- 2) Noted view of Government around 'speculative' land assembly and need to build case that deals with that perspective;
- 3) support for prioritised transport scheme was reiterated and noted that may look for additional opportunities to utilise funding or maximise deliverability;
- 4) further work to develop collaborative arrangements and approaches between public and private sector to facilitate housing development and develop low carbon initiatives was supported.

Skills

- 1) The asks and offers in respect of skills were supporting in principle subject to;
 - a) Further consideration of whether scale of ambition and 'asks' matches scale of issues the Black Country is facing and

- whether existing institutional arrangements are fit for this purpose;
- b) Further development of mechanisms for engagement with private sector including relationships with governors, etc.;
 - c) Simon Warren to facilitate meeting with Geoff Layer, Jat Sharma and other appropriate bodies to ensure that appropriate collaborative arrangements are in place to maximise use of resources and development of programmes to meet the skills issues faced by the Black Country and West Midlands..

Business

- 1) That success of Growth Hub proposals be welcomed and supported
- 2) That asks and offers in respect of international trade be supported;
- 3) That outline of proposals by University be welcomed and that it be requested to ensure that it is developed to inform the SEP submission and that it be discussed further at meeting convened by Simon Warren if necessary;
- 4) That work continue to develop suitable arrangements to ensure that former AWM investment funds are available for use to support the West Midlands economy and establish the costs and implications of any necessary arrangements;
- 5) That asks and offers in respect of socila enterprise be supported.

Overall – Ambition/Direction

- 1) That Further work to be undertaken to ensure that SEP reflects the integration of the area with wider region and adjoining LEPs particularly around housing and supply chains;
- 2) That further consideration be given to the framing of the SEP document in the light of the feedback from Government in terms of the nature of the ambitions and asks that might be expected to be included in the Plan.

6. Governance

- 1) That establishment of Joint Committee and ongoing discussions concerning alignment of capacity be noted;
- 2) That Chief Executives be approached concerning any capacity issues in relation to preparing SEP for submission by 19th December.