

Minutes of a Meeting of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership

11th March 2013 at 3.00p.m.
at Central Campus, University of Wolverhampton

Present:

Stewart Towe	Chairman;
Cllr Shaukat Ali	Dudley MBC
Cllr Adrian Andrew	Walsall MBC;
Paul Brown	Ernst & Young;
Simon Eastwood	Carillion plc;
Tim Hair	Chamberlin plc;
Chris Handy	Accord Group;
Ninder Johal	Nachural Communications;
Cllr Ian Jones	Sandwell MBC;
Cllr Roger Lawrence	Wolverhampton CC;
Prof Ian Oakes	Wolverhampton University;
Vicki Wilkes	Phoenix Calibrations

In Attendance:

Sarah Middleton	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Paul Sheehan	Walsall MBC;
Nick Bubalo	Sandwell MBC;
Paul Doherty	Wolverhampton CC;
Nigel Easom	Black Country Consortium Ltd.

[NOTE: As amended by Minute No. 26/13]

Apologies: Peter Mathews.

14/13 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th January 2013 were circulated.

With reference to Minute No. 01/13, Members noted the letter sent to Birmingham Metropolitan College concerning the proposed merger with Stourbridge College.

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting of held on 28th January 2013 be received and confirmed as a correct record.

15/13 **Current Economic Overview**

The Board received the State of the Sub-Region report presented at the Annual Stakeholders' meeting on 27th February 2013.

16/13 **City Deal – Update**

Further to Minute No. 04/13, Paul Doherty, Wolverhampton Council and Nick Bubalo, Sandwell Council attended the meeting and presented further papers on the skills and land elements of the City Deal proposal. The Board also considered the details of the Core Package of possible flexibilities released by the Government. Paul Sheehan updated on the development of a governance model and informed the Board of the Association of Black Country Authorities' decision to establish itself as a joint committee.

The Board discussed the process for the next phase of submissions to Government and its expectations of the outcomes. The work still to be done in terms of the development of the work around sites, the extent to which European funding could be aligned, the role of apprenticeships within the proposal and extending the skills offer to older workers was discussed.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the next steps in the City Deal process be noted;
- 2) that the papers on skills and land and ongoing work to develop story be noted including:-
 - i) assessing levels of demand on skills;
 - ii) strengthening links to colleges and universities;
 - iii) further work to present and develop proposals for the land elements of the proposal to overcome Government reluctance and build picture of unmet demand for sites and premises;
 - iv) the need be aware of state aid issues and explore applicability of exemption gained by Merseyside;
 - v) the need to consider buildings as well as sites was noted;
 - vi) making clear interrelationship of two elements of the proposal;
- 3) the work on governance and the decision of ABCA to constitute a joint committee was noted.

European Union (EU) Funding - Next Steps

The Board received a report on the Government's proposals to make LEPs the fundamental building blocks for the EU Growth Programme. Under the proposals each LEP area would be given a notional allocation of funding for ERDF and ESF. Allocations would be reviewed and adjusted according to performance and LEPs would be encouraged to collaborate in larger groupings to enable impact, scale and flexibility of their proposed investments. LEPs would be required to identify their proposed portfolio EU investment prospectus alongside their wider investment strategies to be agreed by Government through a national EU Growth Board.

Ministers had written to LEP chairs outlining the next steps for developing the plans, proposed delivery mechanisms, engagement with groups not currently represented on boards and identification of key local needs against the various thematic objectives set out in the draft EU Regulations. The Board considered the next steps to be taken and noted that an ERDF technical assistance project application submitted through Walsall MBC was on the point of being contracted that could establish a small Black Country ERDF team that would help to lead the work on the Investment Strategy. The discussions with West Midlands LEPs concerning joint working were noted.

Agreed:-

- 1) that a working group be established comprising Local authority and key partners to take forward and make recommendations on the development of a Black Country EU Investment Strategy and that a senior officer be nominated to oversee the work;
- 2) that the Black Country ERDF team be utilised to carry out technical work in connection with the preparation of the Strategy;
- 3) that discussions to explore the scope for cross LEP collaboration and that recommendations be submitted with the proposals referred to at (1) above.

Strategic Transport Developments

Further to Minute No. 07/13, Councillor Lawrence reported that, following consideration by the Transport Board at its meeting on 19th February, on 28th February the assurance framework for the Local Transport Body had been submitted to the Department for Transport

(DfT) to help secure the indicative funding of £27.6 million confirmed by DfT 23rd January 2013. DfT had indicated that local transport bodies should plan for +/-33%. The DfT had also notified the Partnership of a payment of £131,579 to help ensure that the necessary capacity and resources were in place to support the devolution of major schemes. Discussions would be taking place with the Department to strengthen the governance arrangements in order to deliver the City Deal. The Board was updated on the progress of discussions with Greater Birmingham LEP and DfT concerning the development of the joint transport City Deal and on the establishment of a working group to define the offers and asks.

He also reported on the work to establish the West Midlands' Joint Committee as the Integrated Transport Authority (ITA) and on the appointment of the Black Country Director of Transport

Agreed:-

- 1) that the submission of the assurance framework to DfT and the further discussions taking place concerning governance arrangements be noted;
- 2) that the establishment of working group to develop offers and asks around joint City Deal with Greater Birmingham and progress of establishment of West Midlands Joint Committee as ITA be noted.

19/13

Proposed Black Country Development Fund

Further to Minute No. 07/13, the Board received a report setting out proposals to promote the Growing Places Fund, Black Country Regional Growth Fund, Black Country Business Property Improvement Programme and Advanced Manufacturing Supply Chain Initiative are promoted as one pot of funding of £32m.

Applicants for funding would complete one expression of interest form and submit to one panel that would review requests for funding and determine which pot (if any) applicants qualified for. The process would therefore be a seamless one from the applicant's perspective and they would be supported and well advised to help them secure the appropriate funding.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the proposal to treat Growing Places Fund, Black Country Regional Growth Fund, Black Country Business Property Improvement Programme and Advanced Manufacturing Supply Chain Initiative as one pot of funding with single application process agreed (including the Green Bridge if and when appropriate) be approved;
- 2) that a further report be submitted on how process will be managed, administered and resourced.

20/13 **Regulation for Growth Pilot**

The Board was informed that the Partnership had been chosen by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and Better Regulation Delivery Office as one of four Midlands' LEPs to further pilot and roll-out the Regulation Supporting Enterprise initiatives. The pilot would integrate the regulation and growth agenda in the following ways:-

- Identifying local issues/concerns with regulatory delivery;
- Drafting an action plan detailing how issues/concerns would be addressed;
- Developing regulatory and business partnerships;
- Demonstrating commitment to the Better Business for All programme.

The Partnership had been awarded a grant of £20,000 for the Pilot that it was proposed to utilise to pay for workshops and engagement events and staff time provided by the Black Country Chamber, LEP secretariat and the four local authorities.

Agreed:-

- 1) that participation in the Regulating for Growth pilot and budget for use of allocation of £20,000 be supported;
- 2) that further consideration to be given to nominating a 'champion' for the pilot.

Operational Plan 2012/13

21/13 Growing Places Update

The Board was informed that The Black Country Growing Places Sub-Board had met on the, 2013 to consider the following:

- a) YMCA Growing Place Fund Application (see Minute No. 07/13);
- b) Progress on Opus Blueprint (see Minute No. 59/12);
- c) Revised working for Canalside Quarter and implications (see Minute No.88/12);
- d) Alignment of funding streams (including RGF, AMSCI and PIP);
- e) PR & Communications.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the application for funding for the revised YMCA, Western Gateway project for the refurbishment and partial rebuild/extension of the YMCA premises located at Carters Green, West Bromwich in the sum of £3.4 million including a grant element equating to £1.4 million be approved subject to all other sources of funding having been secured and evidence provided to Sandwell MBC;
- 2) that the proposal by the private sector developer to submit a revised application in respect of the Noirit site be noted.
- 3) that the application in respect of the Castle Hill project will be resubmitted with Dudley Zoological Gardens rather than the Dudley MBC as applicant and will then be reappraised be noted;
- 4) that the decision of the Sub-Board to request that the Secretariat consider and propose a process for bidding for revenue funding for a percentage of the Fund be noted.

(Councillor Ali declared a non-pecuniary interest in the application in respect of Castle Hill, Dudley and took no part in the discussion.)

22/13 Access to Finance Update

Further to Minute No. 103/12, the Board received an update on the progress of the Round 3 applications for the Regional Growth Fund (RGF), the Growing Priority Sectors in the Black Country RGF Programme, Advanced Manufacturing Supply Chain Initiative, the

European funded Black Country Property Investment and GOLD and Growing Key Sectors proposals and the Growth Accelerator.

In respect of Round 4 of RGF, the Board was informed that several bids were being developed for submission including:

- Black Country Growing Priority Sectors top up of funding;
- Robinson Brothers- Resubmission of Round 3 bid;
- Metafin- Resubmission of Round 3 bid;
- Social Enterprise- A programme to provide grant funding to social enterprises;
- Tooling- potential for joint RGF or AMSCI bid;
- Wolverhampton Interchange- Resubmission of Round 3 bid.

Agreed that work to develop the proposals for funding from Round 4 of the RGF set out above be supported.

22/13 PR and Communications Update

Members received the update on communications activity for January and February 2013. Ninder updated on the progress of the development of the Marketing Strategy and for changes in the management of Black Country websites.

23/13 Governance Matters

The Board was informed that Tim Hair and Peter Mathews had indicated that they would stand down from the Board at the end of this March and April respectively at the expiry of their terms of office. The Chairman and members paid tribute to Tim's work as a member of the Board.

Further to Minute No. 12/13, the Board noted the response from Colleges concerning the appointment of a representative on The Partnership Board.

Agreed:-

- 1) that best wishes and thanks be passed on to Tim Hair and Peter Mathews for their work in support of the Partnership;
- 2) that the process of recruiting new Board Members to fill the vacancies left by the retirement of Tim Hair and Peter Mathews be commenced.

24/13 **AoB – Enterprise Zone**

Tim Hair and Councillor Andrew updated the Board on the progress of proposals for the Phoenix 10 site in the Enterprise Zone.

25/13 **Date of Next Meeting**

28th February 2013 – Annual Stakeholders Meeting

(The meeting closed at 4.40 p.m.)