

# Minutes of a Meeting of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership

**17<sup>th</sup> September 2013 at 3.00p.m.**  
**at Walsall College, Wisemore Campus. Littleton Street, Walsall**

**Present:**

Stewart Towe	Chairman;
Cllr Khurshid Ahmed	Dudley MBC.
Cllr Adrian Andrew	Walsall MBC;
Andy Cox	Cox & Plant;
Simon Eastwood	Carillion plc;
Chris Handy	Accord Group
Ninder Johal	Nachural Communications
Cllr Ian Jones	Sandwell MBC;
Jat Sharma	Walsall College;
Tom Westley	Westley Group

**In Attendance:**

Sarah Middleton	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Kim Rowlands	BIS;
Simon Neilson	Walsall MBC;
Keren Jones	Wolverhampton CC;
Wayne George	Dudley MBC;
Laura Shoaf	Director of Transport;
Nigel Easom	Black Country Consortium Ltd.

**Apologies:** Councillors Bird, Cooper, Lawrence and Sparks, Paul Brown and Geoff Layer.

## 58/13 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 25<sup>th</sup> June and 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2013 were circulated.

**Agreed** that the minutes of the meetings held on 25<sup>th</sup> June and 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2013 be received and confirmed as a correct record.

59/13 **Black Country Strategic Economic (Growth) Plan Development**

Further to Minute No. 57/13, Members received the latest draft of the Strategic Economic (formerly Growth) Plan (SEP) taking into account the outcomes of the 'away day' session held on 22<sup>nd</sup> July and continuing discussions with partners. The Board was also informed that the Government had released a pro forma to update on the development of the Plan and progress being made. The deadline for submission of the return was 25th October 2013.

In addition, it was reported that ABCA chief executives had commenced a process of reviewing and considering the options for de-risking the delivery process including the requirements of programme management especially for the three significant programmes arising from the EU Strategy, the SEP (including transport) and the City Deal. The possible scope for using ESF funding for the development of the skills elements of the Plan was noted.

**Agreed** that the draft Black Country SEP be supported and the Chairman and a local authority leader authorised to sign off the submission of the Plan Progress Update to Government subject to the circulation of the final version to Board members for comment.

60/13 **City Deal – Update**

Further to Minute No. 50/13, the Board the Chief Executive outlined the results of discussions with Cabinet Office and Government Departments concerning the various elements of Deal.

In discussing the feedback from Government and next steps the Board noted discussions that had taken place outside the City Deal process concerning apprenticeships and over 25s, the initial picture concerning the take up of adult loans, the scope for further resources/flexibilities if early progress was made on Deal elements. In order to support early delivery of work on sites the need for a profile of spend on sites was noted.

**Agreed:-**

- 1) that the revised principles and parameters of the individual elements of the Government's City Deal response be confirmed;

- 2) that the negotiations with Government be drawn to a conclusion to move on to delivery and the demonstration of success via the SEP process.

61/13 **Draft European Structural and Investment Fund Strategy**

Further to Minute No. 57/13, the Board received the minutes of the meeting of the Partnership Sub-Group set up to examine the draft strategy held on 6<sup>th</sup> September and the latest draft of the Plan. Keren Jones updated on the progress of the preparation particularly around the 'opt-ins' being offered by Agencies. A possible role for the Growth Accelerator in supporting this work was noted. The Sub-Group would be meeting again at the end of September prior to the initial submission of the Strategy to Government in early October. The Board also received a summary of the proposed response to the review of assisted area status that was being undertaken by the European Commission.

**Agreed:-**

- 1) that the decisions of the European Investment Fund Strategy be supported;
- 2) that the draft strategy and the ongoing activity to finalise the plan and in particular to establish 'opt-ins' and a pipeline of deliverable projects to take the programme forward be noted;
- 3) that a copy of the submitted plan be provided to MEPs.

62/13 **Membership and LEP Capacity - Establishment of Black Country Joint Committee and LEP Co-Operation**

Further to Minute No. 60/13 above, the Board received the local authority cabinet report recommending establishment of the Black Country Joint Committee. Members noted that the proposal had been approved by Walsall MBC's Cabinet.

The Chairman also reported on discussions with the Minister for Cities and the Chairmen of Greater Birmingham and Coventry and Warwicks LEPs concerning co-operation to ensure that the Partnerships collectively could ensure that the conurbation secured the share of resources that the common strategic goals of the Partnerships required.

It was noted that there had been areas where the LEPs had already and continued to co-operate effectively, e.g.:-

- supply chains particularly in relation to JLR and the level of the Company's investment benefitting all three areas;
- transport – where commuting patterns and travel to study routes, for example, were not confined within the borders of any one LEP;
- shared bids – AMSCI, Business Development programme, Green Bridge;
- shared priorities - support for sectors like advanced manufacturing, growing Birmingham Airport and maximising the benefits of HS2. The Partnerships also shared a number of challenges, such as improving skills levels, elements of which could be addressed on a larger spatial footprint.

However, arguably, the Partnerships had not received the share of resources in relation to other urban areas (particularly in relation to transport funding) that their size and the issues they faced merited and that there were opportunities arising from securing economies of scale. The discussion with the Ministers and Chairmen had therefore resulted in a proposal that could bring the three LEPs together to work on issues where it made sense to do so to address shared priorities and maximise potential funding and powers from Government, whilst maintaining their integrity and identity and ability to respond to local needs and opportunities.

**Agreed:-**

- 1) that the establishment of the Black Country Joint Committee be supported;
- 2) that the principle of developing a more formal working arrangement with Coventry & Warwicks and Greater Birmingham LEPs to build on current levels of co-operation to raise the conurbation's profile, work more effectively to secure resources and secure economies of scale be supported provided that any relationship is based on equality between the Partnerships, respects their integrity and enables individual partnerships to continue to reflect the unique issues and policies of the individual Partnership areas;
- 3) that discussions continue with partners and stakeholders concerning the most effective way of developing this relationship.

63/13

### **Membership Matters**

The Board was informed that Vicki Wilkes had submitted her resignation from the Board to the Chairman. Vicki was continuing to serve on the Employment and Skills Board and the Skills Factory Management Board. It was also reported that the University of Wolverhampton had notified the Partnership Secretariat that it wished to change its representation on the Board. Professor Oakes would stand down as the University's lead representative and he would be succeeded by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Geoff Layer.

The Board was also asked to consider appointments to a number of bodies.

#### **Agreed:-**

- 1) that the resignation of Vicki Wilkes be noted and that a report on filling the vacancy to be submitted to the next meeting;
- 2) that the appointment of Prof. Geoff Layer as the University representative on the Partnership Board be confirmed;
- 3) that the Board pass on its best wishes to Professor Ian Oakes and its thanks for his work and support for the Partnership since its inception;
- 4) That in respect of the various outside bodies:-
  - a) Vicki Wilkes be nominated to acts as the 'Champion' for the Regulation for Growth Pilot;
  - b) Tom Westley be nominated to serve on the AMSCI Investment Panel in succession to the Chairman;
  - c) public sector officers be approached to take up the role in relation to the cross-LEP Green Bridge Investment Board.

64/13

### **Black Country Strategic Transport Board Update**

The Board received an update on the work of the Strategic Transport Board (LTB) including:-

- a) Funding Allocations – further to Minute No. 57/13, following the announcement by the Government of the establishment of the Single Local Growth Fund that would include local transport funding, local authorities were seeking a commitment from the

Partnership that the £18.4 million would be allocated, as recommended by the Strategic Transport Board, to the named schemes. This would give the scheme promoters the confidence to continue to design the projects and to ensure that they would be ready to be delivered beginning in 2015;

- b) Growth Deal – it was proposed to utilise some of the Transport Board’s core funding to clearly articulate the economic benefits of transport priorities to strengthen the case for investment. This work would be taken in conjunction with the development of the SEP. A leaflet setting out the Black Country Transport Priorities for Growth had been finalised and would be used in a campaign to raise the profile of these schemes as well as the Black Country Growth Plan. The Transport Board would be asked to utilise some of its core funding to help roll out this campaign;
- c) Role of the Black Country Strategic Transport Board – the establishment of emergence of Growth Deals had changed the nature of the terms of reference of the Board as funding would in future flow through the LEP via the SEP. In order to reflect this change it was proposed that it would act as the transport advisory board to the LEP. This would ensure that the group had a direct input into the Growth Plan and integrated into new decision making structures, with minimal disruption to delivery.
- d) Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) – pursuant to Minute No. 57/13, the Board was asked to support the submission to the Treasury of the business case for Wolverhampton Interchange

The Board was also updated on the progress of the preparation of The leaflet setting out the Black Country transport priorities for growth and informed that the bid for Cycle City Ambition Grant had been unsuccessful. Officers and partners would now consider strengthening the bid based on feedback from the Department for Transport and for inclusion within the European Programme subject to eligibility.

**Agreed:-**

- 1) that the commitment to the allocation of the £18.4 for major schemes as prioritised by the Black Country Strategic Transport Board to be confirmed to scheme promoters;
- 2) that the Transport Board to be requested to consider utilising its core funding to:-

- a) commission additional information on key schemes in the Growth Deal to ensure that the Black Country can articulate its contribution to the Black Country's growth ambitions;
- b) to contribute to a bespoke campaign to raise the profile of transport priorities and the Black Country SEP;
- 3) that role of the LTB be extended to act as the advisory board on transport, including approving the transport elements of the Growth Deal and to consider cross LEP collaboration and alignment of offers and asks on transport in Growth Deals in the West Midlands;
- 4) that the business case for the proposal to utilise the Public Works Loan Board for the funding of the Wolverhampton Interchange Project be submitted to the Treasury for consideration.

65/13

### **Growing Places and Regional Growth Fund (RGF)**

The Board received the minutes and recommendations of the meeting of the Growing Places Sub-Board held on 23<sup>rd</sup> July and 12<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

The Growing places Sub-Board had considered:-

1. Bentley Court Retirement Village – an application for Growing Places loan funding for loan funding to deliver phase I of a 155 bedroom Extra Care Retirement Village at Bentley Court
2. Castle Hill, Dudley - a revised application for Growing Places grant funding for the provision of an approximately 600 space car and coach park to support the development of a leisure-led mixed use visitors' attraction at this location. A revised application by Dudley Zoological Gardens replacing the previous applicants Dudley MBC
3. Growing Places Revenue Funding - the Sub-Board considered the establishment of a process for determining applications for Growing Places revenue funding. Process for distributing £500,000 of Growing Places Revenue Fund.
4. Sherwood Steel – an application for Growing Places grant funding to facilitate the extension of manufacturing space to the rear of an existing building in the ownership and operated by Sherwood Stainless Steels Limited.

5. Dudley Advance – an application by Dudley College for Growing Places grant funding to enable delivery of an enterprise and innovation centre function within the proposed new Dudley Advance Centre to be constructed on Priory Road, Dudley.
6. Dudley Guest Hospital – an application by Wates Construction for Growing Places grant funding to support the refurbishment and conversion of a number of locally listed buildings contained within the Dudley Guest Hospital site, together with new build properties within the site
7. Regional Growth Fund (RGF) – the Sub-Board considered and recommended support for applications for funding from the following companies - Ace Forming, Furmanac, Hayfield and Kimber Drop Forgings and supported an application for increased funding by Fortel Construction Ltd. The Sub-Board also considered updates on the Growing Priority Sector RGF Programme including the process for Round Two applications, as well as an update on the LEP led RGF Round 4 and ERDF applications.

**Agreed:-**

- 1) that the following recommendations of the Growing Places Sub-Board be approved:-
  - a) that the application made by Stanley Developments Ltd. in relation to Bentley Court Retirement Village be rejected for the reasons set out in Minute No. 4/13 of the Sub-Board dated 23rd July 2013;
  - b) that Sandwell MBC be authorised to enter into funding agreements with the following applicants: -
    - i) grant funding of up to the sum of £300,000 to Dudley and West Midlands Zoological Society subject to the terms and conditions set out in Minutes Nos. 5/13 and 21/13 of the Sub-Board;
    - ii) loan funding up to £732,605 to Sherwood Steel subject to the terms and conditions as set out in Minute No. 22/13 of the Sub-Board;
    - iii) grant funding to Dudley College up to the sum of £798,360 subject to the terms and conditions set out in the Minute No. 23/13 of the Sub-Board;
  - c) that the application for grant funding by Wates Construction be supported subject to the applicants satisfying the conditions

set out in Minute No. 24/13 of the Sub-Board and also taking into account that funding assistance cannot be ultimately guaranteed to be available due to the competitive nature of the Fund;

- 2) that the allocation and process for determining applications for Growing Places revenue set out at Minute No. 8/13 of the Sub-Board be approved;
- 3) that the recommendations of the Sub-Board concerning applications for RGF funding set out at Minutes Nos. 7/13 and 26/13 be supported.

(Chris Handy declared an interest in the application for Growing Places funding in respect of the Dudley Guest Hospital site, took no part in the discussion and did not vote thereon.)

#### 66/13 **PR and Communications Update**

Members received the update on communications activity and highlighted particularly issues around the progress of website development, the launch of Twitter feed and the progress of discussions with Marketing Birmingham concerning support for visitor economy development and the proposed development of a new visitor economy strategy.

**Agreed** that the update be received.

#### 67/13 **AoB - RAF Cosford**

The Chairman updated on the outcome of BIS discussions with the Ministry of Defence concerning the continuing use of the site.

#### 68/13 **AoB – Talent Match**

The Board received an update on the progress of the Talent Match.

#### 69/13 **Date of Next Meeting**

28<sup>th</sup> October 2013.

(The meeting closed at 4.40 p.m.)