

Minutes of a Meeting of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership

20th April 2015 at 3.00p.m.

at the Gorway Campus, University of Wolverhampton, Walsall

<u>Present:</u>	Stewart Towe Paul Brown Andy Cox Simon Eastwood Chris Handy Cllr Khurshid Ahmed Ninder Johal Cllr Roger Lawrence Prof Geoff Layer Jat Sharma Tom Westley	Chairman; Ernst & Young; Cox & Plant; Carillion plc; Accord Group; Dudley MBC; Nachural Communications; Wolverhampton CC; Wolverhampton Uni; Walsall College; Westley Group.
<u>In Attendance:</u>	Sarah Middleton Sarah Norman Simon Neilson Kim Rowlands Colin Parker Paul Mellon Wayne Langford	Black Country Consortium Ltd; Dudley MBC; Walsall MBC BIS; Black Country Consortium Ltd; Black Country Consortium Ltd; Black Country Consortium Ltd.
<u>Apologies:</u>	Councillors Cooper, Coughlan and Lowe.	

44/15 **Welcome**

The Chairmen welcomed Sarah Norman to her first meeting of the Board

45/15 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd March 2015 were circulated.

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd March 2015 be received and confirmed as a correct record.

46/15 **Policy Update**

The Board received a report on recent policy documents received by the Secretariat including:-

- a) Localis Report: The Next LEPs: Unlocking Growth for Our Localities;
- b) Dowling Review of Government Support for the Development of More Effective Collaborations between Businesses and University Researchers – submission of response;
- c) Local Growth Fund – Profile;
- d) Extension of the Black Country Enterprise Zone;
- e) Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) Catapult Invitation for Expressions of Interest in Regional Delivery.

In respect of item (d), Members considered the next steps following receipt of confirmation from the Government that the application for the extension of the Zone had been unsuccessful.

Agreed:-

- 1) that consideration be given to further approaches to the Government concerning the extension of the Enterprise Zone following the General Election;
- 2) that an expression of interest in the regional co-ordination of Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult Centre be supported and a further report submitted when a response has been received.

47/15 **Black Country Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) - Theme Advisory Groups – Next Steps**

Further to Minute No. 34/15, the Board consider the next steps to establish the Groups including:-

- a) LEP Board Member attendance/representation
- b) Appointment of Chairs;
- c) Frequency of meetings;
- d) Recruitment of private sector members.

It was noted that within the proposed People Advisory Group provision would need to be made for the appointment of private sector training

providers and that the terminology for social enterprise representatives in the Business Group needed to be amended.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the lead member arrangements and proposals for private sector LEP Board representation at the Theme Group meetings supported;
- 2) that further consideration be given to the appointment of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen once wider private sector appointments have been made;
- 3) that Theme Group meetings should be held quarterly and that the calling of the Competitiveness Group should be an immediate priority;
- 4) that the proposals for recruiting private sector members to the Groups.

48/15 **Feedback from Business Engagement Event**

The Chairman and members reported back on the discussion and responses to the annual business engagement event held on 15th April. Members noted the positive responses and the topics discussed which included:-

- Support to SMEs and new businesses;
- Funding for transport schemes and the role of the private sector;
- The role of the Chamber of Commerce in supporting the Growth Hub;
- Business crime;
- The role of business in developing a Combined Authority;
- Work to attract international investment;
- The steps necessary to double the size of the Black Country economy by the end of 2033;
- Access to finance for small businesses.

Access to Finance was highlighted as a particularly prominent theme along with business crime. The Chairman reported that he would be meeting the Police Commissioner in the near future.

49/15 **Combined Authority - Update**

Councillor Lawrence updated on the ongoing work to develop final proposals for the establishment of the Combined Authority and the

Board also noted the joint LEP working to support and engage with the proposed Authority.

50/15 **Regional Growth Fund/Growing Places – Minutes of Meeting of Sub-Group held on 23rd March**

The Board considered the recommendations made by the Growing Places/Regional Growth fund Sub-Board at its meeting on 23rd March 2015. The meeting had considered:-

- a) the terms of reference and title of the Sub-Group;
- b) revised arrangements for the governance and delivery of the Growing Priority Sectors in the Black Country Growth Deal ('Growth Deal') Programme;
- c) an update on the current position of the PWLB City Deal Investment Loan Fund where it was noted that that there had been no change to the requirement from HM Treasury for six monthly interest payments to be made by Sandwell Council for each loan drawn down via PWLB;
- d) an update on the current position of the Growing Places Fund and projects.

The Chair of the Sub-Group noted the need to consider the capacity to support Growing Places delivery.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the recommendations of the Sub-Group be approved;
- 2) that a further report be submitted to the Board on the capacity required to support Growing Places delivery.

51/15 **PR and Communications Update**

The Board received the regular update on PR activity since the last meeting. Pursuant to Minute No. 40/15 clarified the position concerning 'open rates' and outlined proposals to review the communications strategy to ensure that it kept up-to-date with developing technology and techniques.

The update also set out a proposed framework for dealing with communications for the implementation of the Broadband Plan.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the need for a review of the communications strategy to further develop levels of engagement noted;
- 2) that the Broadband Plan communication framework be approved.

52/15 **Minutes of Meeting of West Midlands Chairmen – 2nd April 2015 (including feedback on Midlands LEP Chairmen’s Discussion on Midlands Connect)**

The Board received the draft notes of a meeting of the West Midlands LEP Chairman held on 2nd April 2015. The notes included feedback on a meeting of East and West midlands LEP Chairmen that had confirmed support for proposals to develop Midlands Connect and further engagement with East Midlands’ partnerships.

The Board also noted that Jackie Sadek, Chief Strategy Officer for Regeneration Investment Organisation (RIO) had attended the meeting and as a result of the discussions had asked officers to examine the development of larger scale propositions to attract inward investors into the area.

53/15 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Agreed that the public and press be excluded from the rest of the meeting to avoid the possible disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

54/15 **Elite Centre Feasibility Study – Options Report of the Steering Group**

Further to Minute No. 25/14, the Board received the report prepared by consultants setting out the initial findings of the study to examine the feasibility of the establishment of an employer – led elite centre for manufacturing skills (ECMS). The report included a demand assessment, a financial model to examine the ‘base case’ for income and expenditure, possible capital and equipment costs and options for structure and location. The recommendations had been supported by the Feasibility Study Steering Group at its meeting on 14th April 2015.

The Board discussed the estimates of the likely commercial income, the possible role and support from the National Manufacturing Technology Centre and availability of funding from the SFA.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the following be noted:-
 - a) the assessment of potential demand from employers for the new ECMS and the assumptions made;
 - b) that evidence from the feasibility study indicates that a relatively solid five year business case can be made to establish the Elite Centre based on evidence of employer demand in the Black Country and the West Midlands for the five training areas identified in the consultant's report, dependent upon on capital and revenue funding from Government in addition to receiving employer contributions to training;
 - c) that, following the application of scoring criteria devised by the consultants, the strongest option was for a hub at Wolverhampton and two spokes, at Thos. Dudley Ltd/Dudley Advance, and in West Bromwich at the National Metals Centre;
- 2) that the following next steps be supported:-
 - a) a limited consultation process where comments are invited on the strongest option at (1c) above;
 - b) initial work to be undertaken by architects to establish an outline design and likely costings;
 - c) a detailed appraisal of the recommended option resulting in a more detailed business case, which could be submitted to BIS/SFA for approval by September 2015;
 - d) the partners for the preferred option to be invited to produce an acceptable ownership and governance model that is also state aid compliant;
 - e) initial discussions with SFA and BIS concerning the development of the business case and revenue support.

55/15 Invest Black Country – MIPIM Feedback and Future Working

The Board considered a report detailing the activity undertaken at the MIPIM property show and highlighting areas for improvements and future suggested activity including:-

- The development of compelling propositions of sufficient scale - £50m plus;
- Embedding future Combined Authority drivers into the approach to attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) and place marketing;

- Increasing the resources available for this activity;
- Increasing the participation of key companies in future approaches to FDI;
- an early decision on inclusion in MIPIM UK '15 and MIPIM '16.

The Board also noted the recommendation of West Midlands' LEP Chairmen that consideration should be given to pooling resources so that the region could make a larger impact at events such as MIPIM.

The report also set out details of the future options for Invest Black Country (IBC) currently being discussed with partners. Three potential delivery scenarios were outlined:-

- a) sustain IBC in its current form;
- b) widen the remit of IBC and embed further into local authority teams – IBC Team Black Country;
- c) embed IBC into a larger delivery vehicle – e.g. Marketing Birmingham.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the feedback from MIPIM event be noted;
- 2) that discussions to take place with Marketing Birmingham concerning future events;
- 3) that further work be undertaken to develop propositions taking into consideration decisions and views of the West Midlands' LEP Chairmen;
- 4) that the work on housing proposals be noted;
- 5) that work to continue to develop options for the development of Invest Black Country be supported.

56/15 **Date of Next Meeting**

18th May 2015.

(The meeting closed at 4.15 p.m.)