

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

**22<sup>nd</sup> July 2013 at 12 Noon**  
**at the Science Park, Wolverhampton**

**Present:**

Stewart Towe	Chairman;
Cllr Adrian Andrew	Walsall MBC;
Paul Brown	Ernst & Young;
Andy Cox	Cox & Plant;
Chris Handy	Accord Group;
Cllr Roger Lawrence	Wolverhampton CC;
Ninder Johal	Nachural Communications;
Cllr Ian Jones	Walsall MBC;
Prof Ian Oakes	Wolverhampton University
Cllr David Sparks	Dudley MBC;
Tom Westley	Westley Group;
Vicki Wilkes	Phoenix Calibration.

**In Attendance:**

Paul Linton	Employment & Skills Board
Peter Suddock	Visit THE Black Country Partnership;
Sarah Middleton	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Jan Britton	Sandwell MBC;
John Polychronakis	Dudley MBC;
Paul Sheehan	Walsall MBC;
Simon Warren	Wolverhampton CC;
Tim Johnson	Wolverhampton CC;
Simon Neilson	Walsall MBC;
Phil Coyne	Dudley MBC;
Keren Jones	Wolverhampton CC;
Mark Lavender	Walsall MBC;
Philippa Smith	Sandwell MBC;
Kim Rowlands	BIS;
Laura Shoaf	Wolverhampton CC;
Delma Dwight	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Wayne Langford	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Nigel Easom	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Lee Shostak	Shared Intelligence;
Phil Swann	Shared Intelligence.

**Apologies:** Councillors Bird and Cooper and Simon Eastwood.

57/13

## **Away Day Session – Presentation and Discussion**

### **1, Introduction Purpose and Structure of Away Day**

The focus of the meeting was to:

1. Build an understanding of the Governments 'Great Expectations' of the LEP and as such an opportunity to decide how to exceed these expectations on behalf of the Black Country.
2. Build understanding and commitment to Black Country Economic Growth proposals via the Strategic Economic Growth Plan; and
3. Defining what the LEP would be doing in 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016 and over the next 5, 10 and 15 years.
4. In defining these priorities to consider its function 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 (limited) resources that the LEP controls to enable growth; and
  - Acting as the catalyst for joint working by others to enable growth.

### **2. Local Growth Plans and Deals**

Sarah Middleton reported on the implications for the LEP of the announcements by the Government in the Comprehensive Spending Review, the preparation of strategic economic growth plans and City Deal. Keren Jones reported on the progress of the preparation of the EU Investment Strategy. The timetable for the submission of the draft plan and strategy were noted.

The Board also noted progress of the Association of Black Country Authorities' (ABCA) discussions on governance and on the changes in transport governance at the West Midlands level. The continuing need to secure a greater proportion of transport investment was noted as an ongoing objective.

**Agreed:-**

- 1) that a Sub-Group of the Partnership be established to consider the draft EU Investment Strategy;
- 2) that the Chairman and Chief executive be authorised to determine the membership of the Group,

**3. People, Business and Place. Where We are Now and Where We Want to Be.**

Sarah Middleton updated on the current position and progress in working towards ambitions for business, people and place. Tim Johnson reported on the position of work around the role of centres and Laura Shoaf reported on transport issues and long term ambitions in terms of connectivity.

**Agreed:-**

- 1) Business:-
  - a) Need to emphasise to Government significance of R& D taking place in the Black Country and highlight ways in which official and other statistics underestimate this importance;
  - b) Evidence available to be incorporated within latest Witty Review iteration;
  - c) Mapping, supporting and bringing together R&D activity to be key focus for Growth Plan;
- 2) Place – group drawn from local authorities, housing association and private sector to be brought together to consider steps necessary to bring forward sites;
- 3) People - raising school attainment to remain key focus.

**4. What are the Big Ticket Items We Need to Focus On?**

The Board considered an outline of the initial programme of interventions for inclusion in Strategic Economic (Growth) Plan following initial workshops with officers.

**Agreed** that work continue to develop Strategic Economic Growth Plan taking into consideration following:-

## Green Growth Plan

- 1) Small Low carbon working group to be established to explore a feasibility study around ways in which the development of 'local secure energy' can bring long-term benefits to the Black Country economy by using funding allocated for power stations to develop localised investment in energy reduction and energy micro-generation at local levels taking into consideration ongoing work by local authorities, the scope for co-ordinated LEP activity and the need for an ECO investment prospectus

## Business Growth

- 1) Focus of LEP activity to be enabling role bringing together knowledge partnerships and supply chains to give impact and facilitate role for SMEs and innovators;
- 2) That Plan include proposals to seek to develop champions to lead on foreign direct investment;
- 3) Catapult Centre proposals supported.

## Skills

- 1) Development of skills factory concept and bringing together HE/FE/employers to promote value and develop level training and apprenticeships supported;
- 2) Discussions to develop ideas (including schemes developed by London local authorities) to improve level of careers advice and accessibility of information including discussion with EBPs to continue noting the national issues around this area;
- 3) Lobbying to continue to raise awareness of issues and to seek further consideration of ABCA proposal around Jobcentre Plus.

## Infrastructure - Transport

- 1) The results of the devolution of transport funding prioritisation exercise were supported and work was continue to examine funding support for sustainable transport, Public Works Loan Board funding and other initiatives (including development of brown signs);

Alongside (1) above, the Black Country should seek to reaffirm commitment to need for major investment to deal with connectivity in the Black Country and wider region.

#### Infrastructure - Centres

- 1) The need to review roles of centres was supported noting the need for input into the draft Growth Plan and EU Investment Strategy.

#### Overall – Ambition

- 1) Further work to be undertaken to refine ambition and focus of Strategic Economic Growth Plan to focus on small number of key areas;
- 2) Meeting of Board in September to include time to consider revised draft to ensure that it adequately reflects the strategic ambitions of the Black Country.

#### **5. How do we communicate?**

Ninder Johal updated on communication activity and the progress in appointing PR company to take forward work in this area.

#### **Agreed:-**

- 1) That further work needed to be undertaken to promote LEP activity with business and promote positive image of Black Country;
- 2) the opportunities presented by development of i54/JLR and positive views of the partnership with civil servants were noted;
- 3) That new media should be base for development of Comms Strategy once PR company is in place.