

Black Country *LEP*

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

22nd September 2014 at 3.00p.m.
at Walsall College, Littleton Street, Walsall

Present:

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| Stewart Towe | Chairman; |
| Cllr Sean Coughlan | 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 Uni; |
| Jat Sharma | Walsall College |
| Cllr Khurshid Ahmed | Dudley MBC; |
| Tom Westley | Westley Group. |

In Attendance:

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| Sarah Middleton | Black Country Consortium Ltd; |
| John Polychronakis | Dudley MBC; |
| Kim Rowlands | BIS; |
| Simon Neilson | Walsall MBC; |
| Keren Jones | Wolverhampton CC; |
| Zoe West | Walsall MBC. |

Apologies:

Councillor Cooper, Andy Cox, Councillors Lawrence and Sparks.

62/14 **Welcome**

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Coughlan to his first meeting since becoming a Member of the Board.

63/14 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21st July and a note of the meeting with the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) held on 24th July 2014 were received. A Member referred to the progress of Talent Match.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the minutes of the meeting held on 21st July and the note of the meeting with the Secretary of State on 24th July 2014 be received and confirmed as a correct record;
- 2) that an update on the progress of the Talent Match project be submitted to the next meeting.

64/14

Current Economic Overview - Delivering Economic Growth – Measuring Impact

Further to Minute No. 50/14, the Board received a framework to measure impact of Growth Deal and other programmes in relation to the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and Black Country Vision. The following key actions were identified to establish an effective framework:-

Alignment - Understanding all activity, by all organisations – public and private that were delivering the SEP and ensuring that they were recorded in the SEP Delivery Plan. The Economic Intelligence Unit would be developing local versions of the Performance Management Framework to enable Local Authorities to incorporate them into their local plans and report back on local actions delivering the SEP.

Governance – Ensuring the appropriate groups and capacity to develop the twelve strategic programmes were in place to ensure the continued development and delivery of the SEP.

Pipeline Development & Impact Required – Ensuring that there was clarity on any additional activity required to deliver the Black Country's ambitions and that a clear project pipeline was in place.

The need to ensure that appropriate leads were in place once a review of supporting group had been completed was emphasised. The move of the social enterprise group to a broader enterprise group was highlighted.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the ongoing work to develop the framework to measure the impact of the Growth Deal and SEP around:-
 - Alignment;
 - Governance;
 - Pipeline Development & Impact;be supported;
- 2) that a paper setting out the structure of supporting groups be submitted to future meeting;
- 3) that the intention to develop the existing social enterprise group into broader enterprise group be noted and a further report be submitted to a future meeting.

65/14 **Policy Update**

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

- Federation of Small Businesses and Centre for Local Economic Strategies – ‘The Future of Local Enterprise Partnerships the Small Business Perspective’;
- Northern Futures – Deputy Prime Minister’s initiative around northern cities;
- Digital Communications Infrastructure Strategy - Consultation by Department of Culture;
- Grant Thornton LLP Report on “Where Growth Happens”
- Key Cities Group and Small Business Outlook
- National Housing Federation Report ‘Broken Market Broken Dreams’.

In discussing the Northern Futures proposals the Chairman updated the Board on discussion by the Association of Black Country Authorities (ABCA) concerning the way the Black Country presented itself as ‘Black Country First’ and on discussion concerning the development of relationships with West midlands’ LEPs and LEPs across the Midlands as a whole,

In relation to the Housing Federation report, the Board discussed activity to raise the numbers of houses completed including the establishment of a housing infrastructure body building on current groups, the impact of rent controls on housing associations and discussion with Birmingham concerning the utilisation of brownfield land to meet its need for additional homes.

Councillor Lawrence also highlighted some of the issues being pursued by the Key Cities Group including the issue of revenue support for Growth Deals.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the discussions at the Black Country Joint Committee around the 'Black Country First' concept be noted and supported;
- 2) that the moves to lead discussions around Midland responses to Northern Futures and developments around the conurbation be noted;
- 3) that a response to the Digital Infrastructure consultation be submitted to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport;
- 4) that further work be undertaken to analyse the findings of the Grant Thornton report and their implications for the Black Country;
- 5) that the establishment of a public/private land group to support work to promote housing development and ensure that brownfield land is developed in advance of green belt be supported.

66/14 **Black Country Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) – 'Team Black Country'**

Further to Minute No. 50/14, Simon Neilson reported on the progress to develop 'Team Black Country' to support the work of the LEP and the Black Country Joint Committee and the development and implementation of the Growth Deal.

Agreed that the progress of the development of the establishment of 'Team Black Country' be noted and that a report setting out proposals to be submitted to the next meeting.

67/14 **Black Country SEP Delivery Plan Including Growth Deal Implementation Plan**

Further to the discussion at Minute No. 64/14 above, the Board received a draft Implementation Plan setting out how the Growth Deal would be made operational through clearly identified activities, responsibilities and milestones, with the aim that the Growth Deal was fully ready for delivery by April 2015. The Board was also informed of Government's proposals for an Assurance and Accountability Framework to govern Growth Deal delivery.

In addition the Board was informed of an opportunity for additional funding. LEPs had been asked by Government to indicate their aspirations for the funding including step changes in delivery and preferred framework. It was also reported that the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) was proposing to make available an additional £60m for higher level apprenticeships; £40m to be spent via colleges, £20m via higher education institutions.

The Board also noted that an application for judicial review had been made in respect of the Government's decision to award Growth Deals.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the proposals for an accountability and assurance framework be noted and that a further report be submitted once firm details have been circulated by Government;
- 2) that the actions being taken to revisit the submitted Outline Business Cases and approach pipeline projects in order to develop cases for additional funding be supported;
- 3) that the submission of a proposal to BIS be approved by electronic means following any necessary consultation with Joint Advisory Board/Joint Committee members;
- 4) that the proposal for additional SFA funding to support doubling of existing higher apprenticeships be supported and that discussions take place with the University and Colleges concerning scope for delivery.

68/14 **EU Investment Strategy – Update**

Further to Minute No. 51/14, Keren Jones reported on arrangements being put in place for the governance and delivery of the Black Country European Investment Strategy including the proposed make up and management of a Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Area Committee, the progress of opt-in agreements with national agencies and programme and the provision of technical assistance and development of voluntary and community sector capacity via the BIG Lottery fund,.

Agreed:-

- 1) that proposed membership and terms of reference for the Local Area Committee be approved;
- 2) that discussions with Government continue to secure representation for FE/provider sector;

- 3) that the Chairman and Cllr Lawrence be authorised to agree the detailed terms of reference and membership of the Local Area Committee;
- 4) that the Chairman be authorised to agree the submission of the final Implementation Plan;
- 5) that the approach to the development and negotiations in respect of opt-ins and capacity building be supported and the Chairman authorised to authorise final agreements.

69/14

Housing Development and Regional Opportunities

Chris Handy reported on work to explore forthcoming opportunities to expand and develop housing, community opportunities and employment to assist with economic growth within the Black Country and submitted the minutes of the most recent meeting with private developers. He noted in particular some of the issues such as skill shortages, planning issues, supply chain issues and lack of stockpiled materials, the lack of response from smaller builders that had been mentioned by developers and that had inhibited their ability to respond to the upturn in the housing market.

The meeting with developers had also received a presentation from MADE on their plans to make the garden city a Black Country project which would provide 10,000 dwellings plus facilities and open space within a Black Country location and which had been submitted as an entry in the Wolfson Economics prize competition. MADE would be collaborating on the project and were putting together a proposal for the Garden City project which would be presented to the Partnership for consideration

The report highlighted an approach from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to local authorities to participate in the creation of housing zones funded from Public Works Loan Board and Sarah Middleton updated on an initial proposal for an area around Coseley and Tipton with possible link to Bilston which would provide a site meeting the criteria of a minimum of 750 dwellings.

Work was continuing to establish a cross Local Authority Land Group identifying the barriers to delivery and potential opportunities to develop within the region. The needs and opportunities of the region needed to be investigated thoroughly in order to ensure the maximum potential for development opportunities within the region.

Agreed:-

- 1) that principle of a housing zone in Tipton/Coseley/Bilston area be supported in principle and that discussions continue with developers and local authorities to identify the scope for the Zone;
- 2) that MADE be invited to make a presentation to a future meeting on its garden city proposals when specific policy options have been developed;
- 3) that the work continue to develop a cross local authority Land Group and that a further paper on the make-up of the Group be submitted to a future meeting.

70/14 **Black Country Enterprise Zone – Phoenix 10 – Update**

Further to Minute No. 73/13, the Board received a letter from the Chief Executive, Walsall MBC to the Chief Executive of the HCA setting out the next steps to achieve the reclamation of the site.

Agreed that the steps outlined in the letter to the HCA to bring forward reclamation of the site be supported and that a further report be submitted to the November Board meeting.

71/14 **Regional Growth Fund Growing Priority Sectors - Wave 5**

The Board received the recommendations of the meeting of the Growing Places Sub-Board held on 1st September 2014 when consideration was given to applications for Regional Growth Fund, Growing Priority Sectors, Wave 5 Fast Track funding. The Sub-Board had considered seven applications. The applications had been appraised by officers using a pre-determined scoring matrix (developed by external technical experts). Applicants were required to reach a minimum score threshold of 23 in order to be approved for funding. One applicant failed to meet the meet the minimum threshold and was not therefore considered for approval. One other applicant met the minimum scoring threshold, but had not been recommended for approval, because the project was seen as high risk with other funding potentially being available to the company.

Members were also informed that, following the Sub-Board meeting one of the applicants, Wiggle Ltd, had approached the Secretariat and Wolverhampton Council seeking early confirmation of the Sub-Board's decision by the full LEP Board in advance of the Company's Board on 4th September meeting when it was making a final decision concerning

the investment for which funding had been approved. Board members were therefore consulted electronically and no objections were received to the proposal to approve the application subject to the conditions set out in the minutes of the Sub-Board.

The Chair of the Sub-Board also referred to the need to assess the progress funding position of the Growing Places fund.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the recommendations of the Sub-Board to approve following applications for Growing Priority Sectors, RGF Funding having exceeded the minimum score threshold be supported:-

HS Marston Aerospace Ltd;
Millennium Assemblies Ltd;
Genee World Ltd;
Smart Waste Ltd;

- 2) that the decision to approve the recommendation of the Sub-Board in respect of the application by Wiggle Ltd be confirmed;
- 3) that a report be submitted to the next meeting on the contractual and payment status for each of the approved Growing Places projects.

72/14

Smart Specialisation – Development Work with Birmingham Science City

The Board received an updates on discussions with Birmingham Science City concerning a cross-LEP approach to the Smart Specialisation initiative and the development of Growth Hubs. Consideration was being given to the support Science City might give to the Growth Hubs, and how best this should be constituted and resourced. One of the routes was through the governance and/ or project development support with possible scope for Technical Assistance funding from European Programmes being explored.

Agreed that work continue to explore a cross-LEP approach to Smart specialisation support.

73/14

Black Country Broadband Plan – Update

Further to Minute No. 55/14, the Board received an update on the Black Country Local Broadband Plan and the roll out of the fibre broadband

infrastructure across the Black Country including arrangements for '90 day mobilisation' and the official launch of the Programme by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. The report also set out proposed arrangements to extend the Birmingham voucher scheme to targeted businesses within the Black Country.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the completion of the contract with BT and the next phase of the Broadband Plan be noted;
- 2) that the arrangements for the public launch of the Plan on 30th September 2014 be supported;
- 3) that the application of the Birmingham Voucher scheme to parts of the Black Country via a targeted campaign be approved.

74/14 **National College for Manufacturing Skills – Submission of Expression of Interest**

Sarah Middleton reported on the progress of the development work around the Elite Manufacturing Centre following the Growth Deal award. The Black Country had also been strongly encouraged to prepare a submission where the Elite Centre would in effect be enlarged to become a National College but as part of a wider National Manufacturing College. An Expression of Interest in the National College has been submitted to meet the deadline of 5th September.

An action plan had been developed to take forward the study comprising the following:-

- i) Discussions had commenced with the Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC), the University & other FE colleges about the composition of the training centre. The preferred approach was to establish a 'joint venture' between the leading partners of the MTC, the University of Wolverhampton and the LEP.
- ii) The development of a detailed potential curriculum and equipment requirements was being co-ordinated by the Skills Factory team in consultation with employers and employer trade bodies. The Skills Factory was also co-ordinating a bid to the UKCES Futures Programme to develop and pilot a bite-sized Supply Chain Management and Leadership program to be used at the Elite Centre.
- iii) Due to the positioning of the 'Elite College' as part of a national resource, it was important that the College was located in close

proximity to a national transport hub. Potential sites near to Wolverhampton Station had been investigated with the University and Wolverhampton CC. A preferred location had been identified and the University had agreed in principle to this site being utilised for the Elite Centre.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the progress of work on the feasibility study for the Elite Centre be noted;
- 2) that the submission of the Expression of Interest in the establishment of a National College in the Black Country be confirmed and that a further report be submitted once feedback has been received from UKCES.

75/14 **PR and Communications Update**

Members received the update on communications activity for July and August 2014. Ninder Johal emphasised the need for Board Leads to continue to feed in potential news items.

76/14 **AoB – Caterpillar**

Members noted the work being undertaken by Wolverhampton CC, College and the Skills Factory to mitigate the impact of the recent announcement concerning the future of the Caterpillar works in Wolverhampton.

77/14 **Date of Next Meeting**

27th October 2014.

(The meeting closed at 4.45 p.m.)