

Minutes of a Meeting of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership

23rd March 2015 at 3.00p.m.

at Wolverhampton Science Park, Glaisher Drive, Wolverhampton

<u>Present:</u>	Simon Eastwood Cllr Sean Coughlan Andy Cox Chris Handy Cllr Khurshid Ahmed Cllr Roger Lawrence Prof Geoff Layer Jat Sharma Tom Westley	Carillion plc (In the Chair); Walsall MBC; Cox & Plant; Accord Group; Dudley MBC. Wolverhampton CC; Wolverhampton Uni; Walsall College; Westley Group.
<u>In Attendance:</u>	Sarah Middleton Paul Sheehan Jim Cunningham Heather Clark Kim Rowlands Paul Mellon Wayne Langford Delma Dwight	Black Country Consortium Ltd; Walsall MBC; Wolverhampton CC Wolverhampton CC BIS; Black Country Consortium Ltd; Black Country Consortium Ltd; Black Country Consortium Ltd.
<u>Apologies:</u>	Chairman, Councillors Cooper and Lowe, Paul Brown and Ninder Johal.	

32/15 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th February 2015 were circulated.

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 26th February 2015 be received and confirmed as a correct record.

33/15

Policy Issues - Annual Economic Review

The Board received the regular annual survey of the economic position of the Black Country.

In discussing the findings the Board:-

- noted the need to ensure that Black Country residents benefited from the business upturn;
- asked officers to look at ways to publicise GVA improvements;
- noted the likely impact on colleges of an increasing focus on apprentices;
- noted the need to consider ways to bring back medium sized developers/builders into the market;
- noted the possible impact of Enterprise Zone developments.

Agreed that the annual survey be received and that the issues outlined above be considered further as the Partnership's work develops over 2015/16.

34/15

Assurance Framework

Further to Minute No. 23/15, the Board received a revised draft Black Country Assurance Framework for the Board's approval incorporating initial comments from the Accountable Body's s151 Officer and others.

Principal changes included:-

- a) changes in the scope of the application of Access to Information rules which would now only apply to Partnership Board meetings;
- b) a reduction in the number of appendices;
- c) the insertion of a full description of the Programme Office;
- d) the expansion of paragraphs on scrutiny and audit to clarify roles in relation to Accountable Body procedures. A revised complaints procedure had also been established and included as appendix;
- e) changes to the wording of paragraphs on due diligence in Section 5 and on the relative roles of the Programme Office and Accountable Body.

Agreed that the Assurance Framework be approved subject to any final comments from the Accountable Body s151 Officer, individual Board Members and other officers.

Black Country Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and Growth Deal - Monitoring Dashboard and Pipeline Development

The Board received a one page 'dashboard' to support monitoring of Growth Deal projects. Paul Mellon, Interim Programme Director also reported on the scale of the challenge faced in extracting full value from Local Growth Deal for 2015/16 and subsequent years highlighting two issues:-

- i. final discussion with approved projects had revealed an underutilisation of Grant available in 2015/16 in the range £1m - £7m, and this would result in;
- ii. a shortfall in committed outputs against jobs and business assists targets agreed with BIS.

He also highlighted a number of factors that inhibited an agile response to challenges and opportunities:-

- a) there was no over programming inherent in approved projects, resulting in no "call off" additional projects to immediately fill gaps in grant utilisation and outputs targeted.
- b) there was no delegated authority to approve low value projects that could rapidly fill any gaps in grant utilisation and outputs targeted.
- c) there was no change control authority in the Secretariat Programme Office to vary individual contract cost & performance within a defined tolerance.

The Board discussed the appropriate level of delegation in respect of these issues. Kim Rowlands reported that the Partnership would be receiving an indicative profile of annual grant payments from 2016-17 onwards and that Government would be considering undertaking a 'stocktake' in September or October to assess progress.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the over-programming of 20% of Local Growth Fund Grant allocation be adopted for each grant year;
- 2) that the Consortium Chief Executive work with the Chair of the Working Group to develop and establish mechanisms, within the Black Country Assurance Framework, which would authorise the

Consortium Chief Executive to bring forward smaller projects (scale to be defined) within a suggested tolerance of 10% of in year grant award;

- 3) that, subject to the outcome of the discussions at (2) above, the proposal to approve the Secretariat Programme Office being given approval to deploy change control processes, with clearly stated range of project tolerances, proposed at 10% maximum, applied to 'in-flight' projects be supported in principle.

36/15 **EU Structural and Investment Fund Strategy (EUSIF)**

Further to Minute No. 24/15, the Board received an update on the upcoming call for proposals for the EUSIF Programmes and the Black Country's strategically important projects that would be submitted in the first and second bidding rounds.

The report also set out proposals by Wolverhampton to engage with EUROCITIES - a network for major European cities and act as a platform for sharing knowledge and exchanging ideas (range from attending data-sharing workshops, to responding to funding calls and partner searches to draw down funding).

The Board was also informed of work being undertaken by Birmingham Science Cities and Universities West Midlands to prepare a cross-LEP proposal.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the position of the calls for projects be noted;
- 2) that a further report to be submitted to a future meeting on Birmingham Science City/Universities West Midlands proposals for a cross-LEP project;
- 3) that Wolverhampton CC's engagement with EUROCITIES be supported and updates on progress submitted to future meetings.

37/15 **City Deal Stocktake**

The Board received feedback on the outcome of a session with Cabinet Office on the progress of the various elements of the City Deal. The following were among the points emerging from discussion:-

Growth Hub

- The ratio of private sector investment: growth hub grant was 6:1 – one of the highest ratios in the country.
- The simplification agenda and work undertaken with Greater Birmingham and Solihull was a great example of cross-LEP working.
- Cabinet Office advised officers to seek input from colleagues in social care and other areas about how they had championed a personalised service agenda in their areas, and use this to promote such an approach for the Growth Hub offer.

Working Together Pilot

- Cabinet Office felt the capturing of/honesty around lessons learned was very valuable and would like to share it more broadly.

Public Works Loan Board (PWLB)

- Cabinet Office feedback that they felt the Black Country had been very pragmatic and flexible in relation to PWLB.

Apprenticeships

- The 1500 additional apprenticeships target was seen as aspirational

Evaluation

- the Black Country should share more broadly the logical approach taken to evaluation, both for the City Deal and the wider SEP.

Agreed that the results and feedback from discussions with Cabinet Office be noted.

38/15 **Midlands Connect – Next Steps**

Further to Minute No. 26/15, the Board received costings for the various elements of proposed Midlands Connect activity which amounted to a proposed contribution of £10,000 in 2014/15 and 2015/16.

Agreed that, subject to clarification of details of the request for the current year, the contribution of £10,000 in 2014/15 and 2015/16 be approved.

39/15 **Brownfield Land Centre of Excellence – Emerging Thinking**

The Board considered a paper on emerging thinking on the emerging concept of a centre of excellence for brownfield land. This would form the next phase of action to drive economic growth in the Black Country and the ambition to do more to exploit the extensive supply of brownfield land in the area to enable genuine place-changing including the provision of high quality sites for business growth and new urban “garden villages”. The paper set out a proposal for a feasibility study which would test whether:-

- the centre would meet a need that existing centres did not meet;
- a centre of excellence could develop innovative practices which would either enable the market to operate more effectively and/or enable more cost-effective public sector interventions;
- there was commercial and academic interest in supporting and investing in the centre;
- councils in other areas would be interested in learning and commissioning support from the centre.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the proposal be supported subject to the outcome of discussions with the Working Group;
- 2) that a further paper be submitted to the Board on the next steps including market testing to assess the possible costs and availability of suitable agencies to undertake the study

40/15 **PR and Communications Update**

The Board received the regular update on PR activity since the last meeting and discussed the ‘open rate’ for the regular e-newsletter. Members asked that the interpretation of these rates be clarified.

41/15 **Items of Business for Black Country Consortium Ltd. Directors -**

Members considered the following items of business as Directors of Black Country Consortium Ltd. and the minutes are set out separately:-

- a) Minutes of the Meeting held on 17th November 2014;
- b) Audit Committee – Membership and Minutes of Meeting Held on 28th January 2015;
- c) Black Country Consortium Ltd Business Plan – 2015/17.

42/15 **AoB – LEP Funding**

Pursuant to Minute No. 41/15 above, the Board considered the report on the Consortium's Business Plan for 2015/17 which set out details of the LEP's Core and Strategic Funding for 2015/15 including provision for the Interim SEP Director and the recruitment of the Permanent SEP Director at an estimated cost of approximately £55,000, and proposals for the application for funding in 2015/16 of £250,000 for each of the core and strategic funding.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the current status of LEP Core Funding and Strategic Funding spend for the 2014/15 year be noted;
- 2) that the further utilisation of the balance of Development Funds in the Strategic Funding for the Interim and permanent SEP Director be approved;
- 3) that the proposed budget for the 2015/16 funding be approved.

43/15 **Date of Next Meeting**

20th April 2015
15th April 2015 - LEP Annual Event.

(The meeting closed at 4.35 p.m.)