

Minutes of a Meeting of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership

23rd May 2013 at 3.00p.m.
at Walsall College, Wiseman Campus, Walsall

<u>Present:</u>	Stewart Towe	Chairman;
	Cllr Adrian Andrew	Walsall MBC;
	Paul Brown	Ernst & Young;
	Andy Cox	Cox & Plant
	Simon Eastwood	Carillion plc;
	Tim Hair	Chamberlin plc;
	Chris Handy	Accord Group;
	Ninder Johal	Nachural Communications
	Cllr Ian Jones	Sandwell MBC;
	Cllr Roger Lawrence	Wolverhampton CC;
	Prof Ian Oakes	Wolverhampton University;
	Jat Sharma	Walsall College;
	Cllr David Sparks	Dudley MBC;
	Tom Westley	Westley Group
<u>In Attendance:</u>	Sarah Middleton	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
	Jan Britton	Sandwell MBC;
	Annette Roberts	Dudley MBC;
	Laura Shoaf	Wolverhampton CC;
	Kevin Postones	BIS;
	Nigel Easom	Black Country Consortium Ltd.
<u>Apologies:</u>	Councillors Bird and Cooper and Vicki Wilkes.	

35/13 **Welcome**

The Chairman and members welcomed Andy Cox and Tom Westley to their first meeting.

36/13 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd April 2013 were circulated.

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting of held on 23rd April 2013 be received and confirmed as a correct record.

37/13 **Current Economic Overview**

The Board received a summary of findings of business survey commissioned by local authorities covering over 1,400 Black Country companies. Findings included:-

- i) overall, business confidence was high; 47% of businesses expected their turnover would increase in the coming two years;
- ii) around one third of businesses claimed to belong to a specialist network that helped keep them up-to-date with emerging technologies and processes;
- iii) around one third of Black Country businesses are servicing the local area;
- iv) 8% of businesses main customer base was overseas. 21% of Black Country businesses currently exported at least some of their products and services;
- v) almost one half of businesses (47%) indicated they would be in a position to offer structured in-house training to employees, such as apprenticeships, within the next two years;
- vi) over one fifth of businesses (22%) were considering upsizing or relocating in the next five years; 81% expected to remain within the Black Country.

38/13 **City Deal – Update**

Further to Minute No. 28/13, the Board received feedback from the presentation to the Ad Hoc Ministerial Group on 20th May 2013.

Areas where further discussions with departments were necessary were noted and the apparent impact of forthcoming Spending Review on Ministers' views was discussed. Next steps in preparing the Deal included:-

- further work to analyse the position of Government and implications for proposals including the DWP response to proposals relating to the over 25 years old unemployed;
- developing discussions with DCLG over sites;
- ensuring that local MPs supported the proposals.

The Board was also informed of an invitation to 'City Deal Leaders' to meet with the Deputy Prime Minister on 27th June 2013.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the comments and initial feedback from the presentation to Ministers be noted;
- 2) that the initial proposals concerning next steps be supported and that discussions continue with ABCA and other partners to take them forward;
- 3) that the proposals for further engagement proposed by the Deputy Prime Minister be noted.

39/13

European Structural and Investment Fund Strategy

Further to Minute No. 17/13, the Board received an update on the progress of the working group established to take forward work on the development of the Black Country EU Investment Strategy.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the national discussions concerning capacity and an initiative around housing retrofit be noted;
- 2) that the need to ensure that the Black Country is in a position to secure delivery including cross-LEP engagement where necessary be noted;
- 3) that tenders be invited for the appointment of consultants to undertake work in connection with the preparation of the EU Investment Fund Strategy and that the secretariat take all necessary steps to facilitate the tender process including, if necessary the use of Core Funding, pending the availability of the funding from Government.

40/13

Regional Finance Forum

The Board received a report on the ongoing arrangements for the management of former Advantage West Midlands' (AWM) venture capital and loan funds by Capital for Enterprise, a company wholly owned by BIS, and on changes in the membership and make-up of the Regional Finance Forum that advised on the use of the funds to reflect the role of local enterprise partnerships.

The Regional Finance Forum was originally established by AWM to advise on the use and management of these funds. BIS/Capital for Enterprise had agreed that the same rules would apply to the AWM money and that regional funds would continue to be reinvested in the region. The Forum, had now reorganised itself to reflect the establishment of LEPs. The membership had been changed to include a representative from each LEP and removed other members. It had also created a cross-LEP group consisting of the LEP representatives alone under an independent chair. The role of the cross-LEP Group would be to agree cross-LEP developments, drive changes, help to develop cross- LEP finance instruments and the route to market for the agreed instruments

Agreed:-

- 1) that Paul Brown be authorised to act as the Partnership representative on the Regional Finance Forum and its cross-LEP Group;
- 2) that updates on the work of the Forum be submitted to the Board via the Access to Finance Group.

41/13

Social Enterprise Cabinet Update

Chris Handy updated on the progress of the social enterprise cabinet including the establishment of social enterprise zones, discussions with local authority economic development teams and work on the establishment of a social enterprise vision statement. Further actions included:-

Further actions were planned including:

- A social enterprise summit for the 13th September 2013

- A prospectus following the summit to promote social enterprise opportunities and get support for the social enterprise agenda
- Local hub roadshows supporting existing and the formation of new social enterprises across the Black Country, rolled out during 2013 and 2014.
- The creation of a Black Country social enterprise website signposting potential social entrepreneurs to available support
- Future extension of University of Wolverhampton's Green Shoots programme in future RGF bidding round specifically to cover social enterprise
- Explore potential links with the School for Social Entrepreneurs which plans to open a school in the West Midlands region
- Development of metrics around creation and sustainability of social enterprises in the region.

The Board were also informed of proposals to establish a group to explore the implications of the Social Value Act that required Councils to take into account "social value" in commissioning services.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the progress of work of the Social Enterprise Cabinet be noted;
- 2) that the proposed future areas of activity be supported in principle;
- 3) that the establishment of a task and finish group including LEP members, third sector representatives from the LEP focus group and members of the Social Enterprise Cabinet be supported to approach the four Black Country Councils with a view to discussing how the Social Value Act and the principles of social value could be embedded into purchasing practices across the Sub-Region and report back to the LEP Board within two months.

42/13

Strategic Transport Developments – Meeting of Strategic Transport Board held on 9th May 2013

Further to Minute No. /13, the Board received a report on the first formal meeting of Strategic Transport Board on 9th May 2013 and the progress of the prioritisation of schemes submitted under the arrangements for devolved funding. Members discussed the need to

demonstrate the capacity to deliver the schemes under the new arrangements and noted the work undertaken to develop the management process for scheme development.

Members were also updated on the progress of the development of the revised West Midlands Joint Committee governance arrangements for the Integrated Transport Authority and the proposed Transport City Deal with Greater Birmingham and Solihull. Members discussed the impact of the changes in West Midlands' transport governance and the capacity it would bring to influence strategic transport decision making. The assessment of the impact of the recent announcement concerning the removal of fees for members of the Road Haulage Association was highlighted as an area where these changes could support and facilitate discussions.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the formal establishment of the Strategic Transport Board, work on transport priorities and the timetable for major scheme funding prioritisation be noted;
- 2) that the decisions taken by the West Midlands Metropolitan Leaders in relation to the Integrated Transport Authority be noted.

43/13

Black Country Core Strategy Conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework

Annette Roberts, Dudley MBC attended the meeting and reported on the steps that the Black Country planning authorities were taking to ensure that the Core Strategy conformed to the National Planning Policy Framework.

Local Authorities had undertaken a self-assessment that had demonstrated that the policies in the Core Strategy were in conformity with the Framework and that a partial review of the plan was not required. Councils could therefore continue to give full weight to the Core Strategy in decision making and continue to support the regeneration of the Black Country building on the momentum that had been secured by having an adopted, growth focused strategy.

Agreed that the local authorities' view that the Black Country Core Strategy is in conformity with the National Planning Policy Framework be supported.

44/13 **PR and Communications Update**

Members received the update on communications activity for April 2013. Ninder updated on the progress of the development of the changes in the management and presentation of Black Country websites, the appointment of a PR Company and a number of events including recent trade delegation to India, a further briefing meeting with MPs on 10th July 2013 and activity around the visitor economy. Members referred to the short notice given of the dates of trade delegations by UKTI.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the proposal for the new website to be live by 7th June be noted;
- 2) that the need for adequate notice of trade missions be emphasised with UKTI;
- 3) that following the launch of website further consideration be given to activity to raise the Partnership's profile.

45/13 **Governance Matters**

Further to Minute No. 33/13, the Board was informed that Andy Cox and Tom Westley had now accepted the invitations to join the Partnership Board. Andy Cox would act as the Board lead on international trade and Tom Westley would act as lead on the Enterprise Zone.

The Board was asked to consider the appointment of a Chair to the Enterprise Zone Management Steering Group and a lead member to support work on the Regulation for Growth Pilot.

Agreed:-

- 1) that Tom Westley be appointed as the Chair of the Enterprise Zone Management Steering Group;
- 2) that private sector Board members be approached to act as champion for the Regulation for Growth Pilot;

- 3) that the current allocation of all Board Member lead roles be submitted to the next meeting.

46/13 **Date of Next Meeting**

25th June 2013.

(The meeting closed at 4.20 p.m.)