

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

23rd June 2014 at 12.30pm
at GTG Centre, Bearings Drive, Wednesfield

Present:

Stewart Towe	Chairman;
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 University
Cllr Roger Lawrence	Wolverhampton CC:
Jat Sharma	Walsall College;
Cllr David Sparks	Dudley MBC;
Tom Westley	Westley Group.

In Attendance:

Paul Linton	Employment & Skills Board
Doug Allen	MOOG;
Kim Rowlands	BIS;
Paul Sheehan	Walsall MBC;
Sarah Middleton	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Nick Bubalo	Sandwell MBC;
Phil Coyne	Dudley MBC;
Mark Lavender	Walsall MBC;
Tim Johnson	Wolverhampton CC;
Laura Shoaf	ABCA
Delma Dwight	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Wayne Langford	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Nigel Easom	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Phil Swann	Shared Intelligence.

Apologies:

Councillors Bird and Cooper and Andy Cox.

47b/14 **Away Day Session – Presentation and Discussion**

1, Purpose of Away Day

The focus of the meeting was to:

- Take stock of current 2015/16 Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and the Partnership's progress to date
- Develop the business base to develop supply chain propositions for SEP 2016/17+
- How could the LEP Board function more effectively?
- Understand and develop delivery capacity.

2. Black Country SEP – Twelve Programmes

Sarah Middleton presented a summary of the proposals contained within the SEP submission, their likely impact in terms of gross value added (GVA), jobs and houses and compared to the Black Country's targets for 2021 and 2033. Kim Rowlands summarised the initial feedback from Government, the overall national position in relation funding for Growth Deals and the ongoing discussions concerning freedoms and flexibilities.

Members noted concerns that there had been no direct negotiations with Government and that it was the intention to allocate all the resources allocated for Growth Deals. The need for flexibility to move funding to projects that could deliver was emphasised.

3. Developing our Business Base

Simon Eastwood introduced discussion by looking at GVA figures per head nationally and highlighting the extent to which the Black Country had still to engage with business and the opportunities this offered. Delma Dwight presented an analysis of the structure of Black Country business and the opportunities for growth this presented. Doug Allen and Paul Linton then presented details of their companies' experiences and requirements in developing growth plans for their sites in the Black Country, highlighting:-

- Extent of global networks/supply chains
- Scope for localisation
- Internal competition within company groups
- Importance of short term returns/cost factors
- Skills shortages.

- 1) That objective of next iteration of the SEP should be to focus more closely on support for companies and their barriers to growth and development;
- 2) That should seek to utilise intelligence to develop closer engagement with focussed group of companies using variety of methods such as focus groups, seminars and one to one engagement by Board members to develop measures and proposals for inclusion within the SEP based around specific company/sector needs;
- 3) That where necessary the Board should look to use results of engagement to engage the LEP Network, MPs and national bodies and groupings to seek changes in Government policy;
- 4) That the evidence concerning the extent of supply chain networks and the potential benefits from supporting investment to bring them together be noted for development as a message to support case to Government and other agencies for addressing issues around barriers to Company growth.

4. Working Together More Effectively/Delivery

Messages from discussions included:-

- Need for holistic approach to regeneration with explicit links across various agency/organisation plans;
- Better use and sharing of evidence;
- Need to move from generalities to focussed/integrated sector offers and be clear about what can and cannot do;

- Use of simpler language;
- Need for more effective lobbying;
- Reassess lead roles
- Develop more direct relationships with key private sector companies with private sector Board Members taking more direct role;
- Look to promote success more strongly;
- Utilise political intelligence more effectively;
- Black Country should speak with one voice

Kim Rowlands updated on expectations of Government concerning SEP delivery and that will want to see progress in in organising delivery and aligning capacity and benefits to business from SEP projects.

Local authority leaders and officers updated on progress in establishment of Integrated Transport Authority and other areas of joint working and on the alignment of capacity and resources to support delivery. The ongoing work to refine the business case process used for the SEP and EUSIF and to ensure that processes and responsibilities have been allocated to take forward approved projects and programmes was noted

- 1) That a delivery plan be developed to take forward the actions outlined in discussions with specific responsibilities and timelines and understanding of groups and organisations necessary to engage and co-ordinate/integrate into activity;
- 2) That progress and commitment to integrate and focus resources to maximise capacity and focus on the delivery of black Country objectives and programmes be welcomed;
- 3) that progress on these areas should be one of main items for discussion at the next session.

Session closed at 4.15pm.