

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

**24<sup>th</sup> March 2014 at 3.00p.m.**  
**at City Campus, University of Wolverhampton, Wolverhampton**

<b><u>Present:</u></b>	Stewart Towe Cllr Adrian Andrew Cllr David Sparks Paul Brown Simon Eastwood Chris Handy Ninder Johal Prof Geoff Layer Cllr Roger Lawrence Jat Sharma Tom Westley	Chairman; Walsall MBC; Dudley MBC; Ernst & Young; Carillion plc; Accord Group; Nachural Communications; Wolverhampton Uni; Wolverhampton CC; Walsall College; Westley Group.
<b><u>In Attendance:</u></b>	Sarah Middleton Tony Bray John Polychronakis Simon Warren Nigel Easom	Black Country Consortium Ltd; BIS; Dudley MBC; Wolverhampton CC; Black Country Consortium Ltd.
<b><u>Apologies:</u></b>	Councillors Bird, Cooper and Andy Cox.	

13/14 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2014 were circulated.

With reference to Minute No. 08/14 (International Trade Update), it was noted that a meeting was taking place with UKTI to discuss the elements of the Memorandum of Understanding and a report would be submitted to the next meeting.

With reference to Minute No. 11/14 (Board Member Appraisal) it was noted that Board Members whose term of office had expired had expressed a willingness to serve a second term.

**Agreed** that the minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2014 be received and confirmed as a correct record.

#### 14/14 **Communications from Government**

The Board received:-

- a) a letter from the Minister for Cities setting out his view of the work necessary to complete the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) prior to submission to Government (see Minute No. 15/14 below);
- b) a letter from Government setting out this next stages in the development of EU Strategic Investment Frameworks (EUSIF) and additional detail required (see Minute No. 74/13).

**Agreed** that a further report on next steps in the development of the EUSIF be submitted to the next meeting.

#### 15/14 **Black Country Strategic Economic Plan**

Further to Minute No. 03/14, received latest draft of the Black Country SEP. It was reported that a 'challenge' session with the Minister, Greg Clark had taken place in London on 6th March and one of the key messages from the session was that Government wanted to see the Partnership's 'Top 10 Projects' costed and highlighted within the Plan. As part of the SEP preparation process a call for projects and business cases has been circulated to stakeholders and partners and the submissions considered by an independent appraisal panel. The appraisal was based on value for money, jobs for learners and number of houses. Work was ongoing work to clarify match funding, responsibility and deliverability of projects particularly in view of the Government's focus on spend in 2015/16. Transport schemes had been presented separately in terms of their 'spendability'. Work was continuing to refine the presentation of the Plan including the executive summary and a statement on cross-LEP activity.

Board Members emphasised need to develop a pipeline of projects and to align resources across the Black Country to work on projects including consideration of the appointment of a Programme Manager.

**Agreed:-**

- 1) that, subject to any amendment required as a result of ongoing process of clarifying and scoping the submission, the inclusion of the proposed priority projects and the non-financial 'asks' of Government be supported for inclusion within the SEP;
- 2) that work continue to develop the pipeline of projects to support the ongoing development of the SEP;
- 3) that, in conjunction with the Joint Committee, work continue to develop a team and align resources to support project development and management in relation to the Growth Fund, EU SIF and City Deal including consideration of the appointment of a Programme Manager;
- 4) that the draft SEP be supported and that, subject to any comments from the Joint Committee, the Chairman and Leader of Wolverhampton CC be authorised to approve the final draft of Black Country SEP, including executive summary and cross-LEP statement, for submission to the Government as part of the Single Local Growth Fund process.

16/14

### **Use of the Remaining Funds and Revolving Elements of the Growing Places Fund**

The Board received a report setting out options for the use of the remaining funds and revolving elements of the Growing Places Fund, including details of a proposal for mezzanine funding for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), the outstanding projects under development and setting out proposed local priorities for the Broadband Plan project.

The report set out three options for the use of the remaining funding:-

- a) A joint mezzanine financing scheme for SMEs with Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP – the Board received details of the proposed scheme including the scope of any programme, the demand for mezzanine funding and details of the operation of the fund;
- b) Funding existing projects in the pipeline – there were currently four projects being developed for consideration for funding; the Black Country Broadband Plan, Bilston Urban Village, Wolverhampton City Centre and Dudley Guest Hospital;
- c) Open a further round of applications for funding. The report recommended that this option should only be considered if there were unallocated funds after allocation of funding to existing projects and/or mezzanine funding.

In relation to the Black Country Broadband Plan, the board was informed that the aim of the Plan was to maximise coverage in the Black Country to reach the Broadband UK (BDUK) target of 95% coverage, maximising business coverage as far as possible given the commercial viability of enabling each Primary Connection Point and ensuring that there was 100% coverage in strategic centres. BDUK had identified areas of the Black Country (parts of Sandwell, Dudley and Walsall- specifically the Enterprise Zone) as problem urban areas that needed to have direct funding allocated to resolve market failure. In addition to poor high speed provision, Sandwell and Walsall were positioned poorly in terms of household broadband take-up. The latest published Ofcom data (UK Fixed Broadband Map 2011) showed that both Sandwell and Walsall were ranked four out of five for Broadband take up, with only 55% and 58% of households taking up the services available. Dudley was ranked three and also had a relatively low take up rate of 62% when compared to other metropolitan areas and large counties.

The report set out the benefits that would flow from implementation of the Plan. The Plan proposed the following local priorities for interventions:-

- 1-Priority spatial corridors including an approach to the Enterprise Zone.
- 2-Business density areas;
- 3-Growing company locations;
- 4-Deprived areas spatially overlapping with priority corridors:-
  - 4a – The worst 10% deprived areas ahead of:
  - 4b – The worst 20% deprived areas;
- 5 – Deprived areas outside priority corridors
  - 5a – The worst 10% deprived areas ahead of:
  - 5b – The worst 20% deprived areas.

In considering the options for the use of the Growing Places funds Members were of the view that, subject to the timescales for the preparation of individual projects they needed to be further appraised in terms of likely returns, value for money and number of jobs to be secured.

**Agreed:-**

- 1) that the consideration of the options for the use recycled or any remaining funds be deferred, subject to any individual project deadlines, to enable the projects to be further appraised in terms of likely returns, value for money and number of jobs to be secured and a further report submitted to the Board and Growing Places Sub-Group as appropriate;
- 2) that pursuant to (1) above, the development of the Broadband Plan be supported and the local priorities for the Broadband Plan be supported;

(Simon Eastwood declared an interest in the Wolverhampton Interchange and City Centre Project and Chris Handy declared interests in the applications relating to Dudley Guest Hospital and took no part in the discussions in respect of the projects.)

17/14 **Meeting of Chairmen of West Midlands' LEPs – 5th February 2014**

Members received the update on communications activity and the Board.

18/14 **Meeting of Chairmen of West Midlands' LEPs – 5th February 2014**

The Board received the draft minutes of a meeting of the Chairmen of West Midlands' LEPs held on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2014. The meeting included a discussion with Greg Clark MP, Minister of State for Cities.

19/14 **Item of Business for Black Country Consortium Ltd. Directors - Draft Black Country Consortium Ltd Business Plan 2014/16**

Members considered this item of business as Directors of Black Country Consortium Ltd. and the minute is set out separately.

20/14 **AoB - Black Country Joint Committee**

**Agreed** that Ninder Johal be appointed as the named alternate to the Chairman on the Black Country Joint Committee.

21/14 **Date of Next Meeting**

28<sup>th</sup> April 2014.

(The meeting closed at 4.20 p.m.)