

Minutes of a Meeting of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership

25th June 2013 at 3.00p.m.

at the Offices of the Hadley Group, Downing Street Smethwick

Present: Stewart Towe Chairman;
Cllr Adrian Andrew Walsall MBC;
Andy Cox Cox & Plant;
Simon Eastwood Carillion plc;
Ninder Johal Nachural Communications
Cllr Ian Jones Sandwell MBC;
Prof Ian Oakes Wolverhampton University;
Jat Sharma Walsall College;
Cllr David Sparks Dudley MBC.

In Attendance: Sarah Middleton Black Country Consortium Ltd;
John Polychronakis Dudley MBC;
Tim Johnson Wolverhampton CC;
Kim Rowlands BIS;
Nigel Easom Black Country Consortium Ltd.

Apologies: Councillors Bird and Cooper, Chris Handy, Councillor Lawrence, Tom Westley and Vicki Wilkes.

47/13 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd May 2013 were circulated. It was noted that the heading need to be amended to read '23rd' not '25th' of May.

Agreed that, subject to the amendment referred to above, the minutes of the meeting of held on 23rd May 2013 be received and confirmed as a correct record.

48/13 **Current Economic Overview**

The Board received the Annual Skills Barometer analysing the four priority areas within the Raising Employability, Education and Skills driver of the emerging Black Country Growth plan. Findings included:-

- i) Skills for the Workforce – there were 1,700 more residents with no qualifications;
- ii) Apprenticeships - 13,380 apprenticeships starts were recorded in 2011-12, an increase of 1,210. 29% of these related to the transformational sectors;
- iii) Skills for the Future Workforce – there had been consistent progress over the last five years in this area with positive implications for the future workforce in the medium term;
- iv) Skills for the Unemployed - unemployment had increased from 11% to 11.2%, 2,644 of 16-18 year olds were not currently in education, employment or training.

Members welcomed the report in that it underlined the policies Partnership was pursuing. In particular discussion highlighted the following as particularly significant:-

- Issues concerning college funding for adult education;
- The need for cultural change in culture of employees/small business in terms of approaches to upskilling/training;
- The need to investigate why school performance could slip back;
- The significance of supply chains as a means of developing skills engagement.

49/13

Growth Plan Development and Lead Roles

Further to Minute No. 05/13, members considered the impact of policy developments since the first draft of the Growth Plan had been considered in January 2013 and how this could inform discussion at the proposed 'away day' session on 22nd July 2013. It was proposed that this session should focus on:-

- i) building an understanding of the implications of the Comprehensive Spending Review and the announcement concerning Heseltine Single Pot;

- ii) building an understanding and commitment to the Black Country Growth Plan, the transformational interventions against thematic areas and the implications of the development of various elements of the Plan including City Deal and the EU Investment Strategy;
- iii) consider the results of the prioritisation of transport schemes and implications for the Growth Plan;
- iv) building an understanding of the elements of a PR Campaign to raise the profile of the LEP and the Black Country;
- v) in defining priorities consider its function as a champion of economic growth in the Black Country – with private investors, Government, and within the Black Country - and holding to account each other to deliver commitments to enable this growth

In addition members received details of the current allocation of Board lead roles and how these might be aligned to the proposed Growth Plan priorities.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the proposed focus and attendees to the ‘away day’ session to be held on 22nd July be approved;
- 2) that the allocation of lead roles be examined in the light of the proposed Growth Plan priority areas and considered further at ‘away day’.

50/13

City Deal – Update

Further to Minute No. 38/13, the Board received a summary of the City deal proposals submitted in the second stage negotiation document with the key matters under development and review following the submission to the Ad Hoc Ministerial Group. The report also set out the current alignment/identification of individual local authority match to the City Deal. It was proposed that following meetings during the summer a common report for all Black Country local authority cabinets would be prepared to capture of the totality of the City Deal, giving certainty and scope to each element of the Deal individually and collectively.

The Board discussed Government concerns over the sites element of the Deal and how best to take the proposals forward including further clarification of level of demand and support from strategic companies.

Agreed that the actions and discussion with local authorities concerning the alignment of resources and capacity to implement the City Deal be noted.

51/13 **European Structural and Investment Fund Strategy**

Further to Minute No. 39/13, the Board received a summary of the Partnership's role in the development and delivery of a Black Country European Investment Strategy for 2014 -2020, a summary of the project plan and key milestones to be put in place to meet government deadlines.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the focus and priorities for 2014 – 2020 European Structural funds and the progress of work by Government on management structure for funding was noted.
- 2) that the provision for the draft strategy to be presented to the Board in September be noted.

52/13 **Meeting of West Midlands LEP Chairmen including Development of National LEP Chairs Organisation and Witty Review**

The Board received a report on the meeting of West Midlands' LEP Chairmen held on 5th June 2013 where discussion included EU Investment Strategies, an emerging national LEP Chairs Organisation and the Witty review of universities and growth. The Chairman updated on the discussion at a meeting of the national '39 LEPs' on 5th June 2013 and on a meeting of the West Midlands, LEP Chairmen with Vice-Chancellors of West Midlands' universities on 18th June 2013. A response to the Witty Review of the role of universities in promoting economic growth was submitted.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the development of the '39 LEPs' organisation be noted and that its development continue to be monitored to see how it responds to concerns over organisation and structure;
- 2) that the proposed response to the Witty review be supported and further report be submitted on initial findings;

- 3) that the commitment of the West Midlands' LEP Chairmen and Vice-Chancellors to develop closer working relationships be welcomed and that work continue to map university provision against priorities.

53/13 **Black Country Strategic Transport Board Update**

Further to Minute No. 42/13, the Board was informed that fourteen applications for transport funding seeking just over £110m in funding had been submitted to the Strategic Transport Board. The supporting Transport Officers Group had appointed a panel of experts to undertake an independent prioritisation of the schemes seeking funding and a timetable for the prioritisation and consideration of the schemes by the Transport Board was submitted. The outcomes of this process would be brought to the Partnership's 'away day' session on 22nd July.

The Transport Board had also considered the appointment of a Vice-Chair following the death of Councillor Ansell.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the progress and timetable towards the establishment of a prioritised major scheme funding programme be noted;
- 2) that the appointment of Cllr Andrew, Walsall MBC as Vice Chair of the Black Country Strategic Transport Board be supported

54/13 **Growing Places and Regional Growth Fund (RGF)**

The Board received the minutes and recommendations of the meeting of the Growing Places Sub-Board held on 11th June 2013 and an update on discussions concerning proposals for Growing Places funding for broadband provision, an overview of a Black Country outline application to the European Regional Development Fund for £5m to provide grants to companies to bridge gaps in funding. The objectives of the programme would be to create jobs, improve turnover and increase GVA. Members were also updated on arrangements for a Black Country 'Meet the Funder' event on 17th July 2013.

The Growing places Sub-Board had considered:-

- i) a revised application from Jessup Bothers for Growing Places funding for the Noirit site in Littleton Street West, Walsall that the

Sub-Board recommended for approval subject to a number of conditions set out in the minutes submitted to the Board;

- ii) Growing Places Project Updates;
- iii) RGF – Sandwell MBC had confirmed the amount of funding that remained in the pot and an application process for utilising this funding will be taken to the next Sub-Board meeting;
- iv) PR and Communications – a press release would be launched to promote the approved Growing Places and RGF projects.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the recommendations of the Growing Places Sub-Board be approved including that set out at Minute No. 3/13 of the Sub-Board that Sandwell MBC enter into a funding agreement with the applicant to provide Growing Places grant funding of up to £225,298 in respect of the Noirit site, Walsall subject to the terms and conditions set out in the minute;
- 2) that it be noted that the Growing Places Capital fund is now over-subscribed and that the Sub-Board will be considering a report on an outline process for the consideration and scoring of applications for Growing Places revenue funding at their next meeting;
- 3) that the progress of discussions with Government and others concerning the Broadband Growing places application be noted and that a further report be submitted following their completion.

55/13

PR and Communications Update

Members received the update on communications activity for May 2013. Ninder updated on the progress of the establishment of updated Black Country websites and that the new site was now live. He also reported on meetings that he had attended on behalf of the Partnership. Members noted that a briefing meeting with MPs had been arranged for 10th July 2013. He also updated on the progress of appointing a PR company.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the lunch of the revised website be noted and that members to submit comments on content to the Secretariat or Board lead;
- 2) that the progress in appointing a PR company be noted.

56/13 **Date of Next Meeting**

22nd July 2013 commencing at 12 Noon.

(The meeting closed at 4.40 p.m.)