



Minutes of a Meeting of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership

25th September 2012 at 3.00p.m.
at Walsall College, Wiseman Campus, Littleton Street West,
Walsall

Present:

Stewart Towe	Chairman;
Cllr Adrian Andrew	Walsall MBC;
Paul Brown	Ernst & Young;
Simon Eastwood	Carillion plc;
Chris Handy	Accord Group;
Tim Hair	Chamberlin plc;
Ninder Johal	Nachural Communications;
Cllr Ian Jones	Sandwell MBC;
Prof Ian Oakes	Wolverhampton Uni;
Vicki Wilkes	Phoenix Calibration.

In Attendance:

Ian Binks	BT;
Sarah Middleton	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Simon Warren	Wolverhampton CC;
Kim Rowlands	BIS;
Nigel Easom	Black Country Consortium Ltd.

Apologies:

Cllrs Mike Bird, Darren Cooper, Roger Lawrence and David Sparks and Peter Mathews.

81/12 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd July 2012 were circulated.

Agreed that, subject to the inclusion of Cllr Andrew in the list of those present, the minutes of the meeting of held on 23rd July 2012 be received and confirmed as a correct record.

82/12 **Delivering Superfast Broadband in the Black Country**

Further to Minute No 70 /12, Ian Binks, Regional Partnership Director, BT attended the meeting and gave a presentation on the development and provision of broadband in the Black Country.

Following the presentation Ian left the meeting and the Board gave further consideration to the allocation of to £40,000 of Growing Places revenue funding to undertake a required Feasibility Study, including financial and technical modelling, to provide vital detail in support of the Black Country Draft Local Broadband Plan. The board also discussed the need for an allocation of up to £500,000 of capital resources as the likely cost of implementing the plan.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the allocation of £40,000 of revenue from the Growing Places fund to support the feasibility study for the Black Country Broadband plan be supported;
- 2) that the allocation of up to £500,000 of capital resources from the Growing Places fund to implement the plan be supported in principle subject to the outcome of the feasibility study and to the results of the application and due diligence process.

(Councillors Jones declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of the application.)

83/12 **Current Economic Overview**

The Board received the Black Country Observatory's report that focussed on a resiliency index based on 'Business', 'Community', 'Place' and 'People' developed by Experian to assist the LEP Network's analysis of LEP Area resiliency. The region was classed as the least resilient LEP area by virtue of being bottom of the headline resilience table, finishing 39th out of 39 LEP areas. However, it was noted that a more recent fDi Intelligence report stated that there are so called 'weak locations' that had potentially good LEPs as well as attractive locations with weak LEPs, therefore highlighting the importance of policy development across LEP areas in addition to measures of resiliency. The Black Country LEP was ranked 29th of the 39 LEPs in the report.

The Board discussed the need to revisit the Partnership's strategy to focus activity on steps to address issues raised in the report.

Agreed:-

- 1) that an away day be held in November to reconsider the Partnership's strategic priorities, map and assess the effectiveness of current activity and consider how to maximise and direct activity and investment within public, social and private sectors to ensure that it was addressing the issues raised by the report;
- 2) that inward investment – in terms of the offer and bringing forward sites; skills, marketing and perception and the use of core funding be included as topics for discussion at the event.

84/12 **Invest Black Country and Marketing**

Further to Minute No. 79/12, Ninder Johal updated the Board on the work he was undertaking to bring together marketing and communications activity to ensure that they worked together to promote the Black Country. He highlighted the need to move from reactive to promotional activity and make sure that effective use was made of the Marketing Birmingham funding. He drew attention to the recommendation of the All Party Parliamentary Group that LEPs needed to widen and deepen engagement with a broader spectrum of local businesses and with key sectors in the local economy, industry and the community. Work had commenced to develop a marketing framework to ensure that the Black Country had a cohesive approach to marketing the Black Country investment offer.

Agreed that the summary marketing brief and framework be noted and that work to ensure that activity is co-ordinated and given direction be supported as a key priority and given further consideration at the away day referred to at Minute No. 83/12 above.

85/12 **City Deal – Update**

Further to Minute No. 72/12, The Board was updated on the progress of the Association of Black Country Authorities' (ABCA) discussions around the City Deal. The Partnership had now been informally approached by Greater Birmingham LEP to participate in discussions concerning a transport City Deal. The Board considered the need to

bring forward sites for inward investment as outlined in the ABCA discussion document.

Agreed:-

- 1) that a local authority leader be requested to take the lead in briefing the Partnership on developments on City Deal;
- 2) that an overview of steps needed to bring forward sites for development including those within the Enterprise Zone should form part of the agenda for the way day referred to at Minute No. 83/12 above.

86/12 **National LEP Network Event – 18th/19th September 2012**

Paul Brown reported on the discussion at the National LEP Network event held on 18/19th September including the speech made by the new Minister of State in the department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), Michael Fallon. He reported that the view was that the Network should focus more on providing support for LEPs in co-ordinating the various activities that they had been tasked to undertake and noted, in particular that the Chair of Liverpool LEP had agreed to circulate a paper on the lessons of the first wave of City Deals.

87/12 **Black Country Enterprise Zone - Business Rate Uplift Agreements**

Further to Minute No. 74/12, the Board received on the key benefits of business rate receipts from within the Black Country Enterprise Zone and proposals for agreements between the Black Country authorities, the Partnership and other interested parties about the processes for the collection of receipts and their retention and redistribution for investment.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the Secretariat officers be authorised to take all necessary steps to enter into the two proposed memorandum of understanding concerning i54 and non-i54 sites within the Enterprise Zone;
- 2) that a further report be submitted to a future meeting on the criteria for the application of a Zone Investment Fund.

88/12 **Growing Places Update**

Further to Minute No. 70/12, the Board received further details of the proposed allocation of up to £600,000 to support the relocation of LPG facilities at the Canalside project in Wolverhampton.

The Board also considered the lessons from the first round of applications.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the allocation of up to £600,000 by way of grant or loan for the relocation of LPG facilities to support the Wolverhampton Canalside project be supported subject to the following conditions:-
 - a) repayment of loan including interest to be made, where possible, through identified uplift derived upon the sale of Council owned assets within the HSE consultation Zone;
 - b) a base value to be agreed with the Council for assets in their ownership at the outset of agreement and set out in an asset schedule;
 - c) repayment against base value at a rate of 75% of any uplift (not 100% so as not to remove incentive for value to be maximised), payable upon granting/transfer of any interest in Council owned land/property within the agreed Asset Schedule;
 - d) other terms and conditions to be agreed;
- 2) that a further call for projects be undertaken;
- 3) that a sub-group of four private sector members be established to make recommendations to the Partnership Board on applications and the maximisation of the use of the fund.

89/12 **Planning Update**

Further to Minute No. 44/12, Simon Eastwood and Chris Handy updated on the progress of their work around the planning theme and to bring forward housing development.

90/12 **International Trade Plan**

Consideration of this item was deferred.

91/12 **Regional Growth Fund (RGF) – Update**

The Board received an overview of the potential impact of Regional Growth Fund (RGF) in the Black Country. As a result of RGF Round 2 seven companies had been offered £9.6 million of funding, with the potential of creating over 800 and safeguarding over 220, direct and indirect jobs. Thirteen Black Country applications had been shortlisted for RGF Round 3. If successful these bids would receive £70 million of funding, support approximately 68 Black Country companies, creating over 5,200, and safeguarding over 8800, direct and indirect jobs. The Board also received details of the two successful Black Country applications within the Advanced Manufacturing Supply Chain Imitative Fund (AMSCI) that would together create 192 jobs, safeguard a further 92 and secure £1.1 million of funding. BIS agreed to provide an overview of the AMSCI process at the next meeting. BIS officers agreed to provide an overview of the AMSCI process at the next meeting.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the Partnership make representations to BIS to seek a simplification of the ASMCI process should further rounds of funding be opened;
- 2) that BIS be recommend to make further resources available via AMSCI to meet demand for funding in the Black Country;
- 3) that officers examine further how Growing Places and RGF might be aligned in the Black Country to maximise their impact and submit a further report to the Partnership Board.

92/12 **AoB – Confidential Item**

This is item is confidential by reason of the commercial sensitivity of the matters discussed

93/12 **Growth and Innovation Fund (GIF) – National Skills Factory**

Further to Minute No. 62/12, Ian Oakes reported that the full application requesting £1m grant for the development of the National Skills Factory proposal had been submitted to the UK Commission for Education & Skills (UKCES) on 20th June 2012 and was considered by the Commission's GIF Investment Board on 14th August. The Commission had subsequently written to the Black Country Consortium confirming that it was keen to invest in the proposal subject to agreement as to the level of investment and further information relating to other aspects of the application. Discussions had taken place with the Commission to provide the additional information and the final application would be considered by the Commission at its November meeting. The Board discussed the arrangements for governance of the project and the mechanisms for business engagement and involvement.

Agreed that the decision of the UKCES be welcomed and that a further report be submitted to the November meeting on the implementation of the proposals.

94/12 **PR and Communications Update**

Members received the update on communications activity for July and August 2012.

95/12 **AoB - Core Funding**

Sarah Middleton reported on the Government's announcement of core funding for LEPs. She reported that it was anticipated that this would amount to £125,000 for this year and £250,000 for the next two years. The Chairman emphasised that the funding needed to be used effectively.

Agreed that the priorities for the use of the funding be considered at the away day referred to at Minute No.83/12 above.

96/12 **Date of Next Meeting**

29th October 2012

(The meeting closed at 5.45 p.m.)