



Minutes of a Meeting of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership

29th October 2012 at 4.00p.m.
at Hadley Industries, Downing Street, Smethwick

Present: Stewart Towe Chairman;
Cllr Peter Bilson Wolverhampton CC;
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.

In Attendance: Sarah Middleton Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Kim Rowlands BIS;
Nigel Easom Black Country Consortium Ltd.

Apologies: Cllrs Mike Bird, Darren Cooper, Roger Lawrence and David Sparks, Peter Mathews, Prof Ian Oakes and Vicki Wilkes.

97/12 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th September 2012 were circulated.

With reference to Minute No. 92/12 (Update on RAF Cosford), it was reported that the Chair of the Marches LEP had written to Ministers regarding the proposals and that a response was awaited. Members were also informed of proposals from EON and Aston University to use some of the hangar space.

The need for local authority attendance at meetings was emphasised and members discussed the development of engagement with LEP activity. The development of governance arrangements would be considered further at the away day on 17th December (see Minute No. 83/12).

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting of held on 25th September 2012 be received and confirmed as a correct record.

98/12 **Current Economic Overview**

The Board received the Black Country Observatory's report summarising the findings of the latest Business Register and Employment Survey including the number of jobs in the region, the ration to working age population and breakdowns by area and sector.

99/12 **Building Social Enterprise**

Chris Handy submitted proposals for the establishment of a Social Enterprise Cabinet, the development of a vision for the development of social enterprise and a series of initial actions to take the vision forward.

The Vision recognised the significance of social enterprise for the Black Country economy and as a place where they could survive and thrive. The vision committed the Partnership to develop places and zones which supported the ambitions and work of social enterprise organisations and work to develop and sustain a flourishing social enterprise sector.

Chris also submitted a paper on the Social Value Act and steps to ensure that the principles of social value were embedded into procurement practices.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the vision and the establishment of the Social Enterprise Cabinet be supported and that regular updates from the Cabinet be submitted to the Board;
- 2) that the social enterprise Lead Board Member take forward the work on the Ethical Investment and Social Value Act;
- 3) that the ongoing work to secure a small fund to support social enterprise development be noted;
- 4) that the Board's thanks for his support for the work to establish the Cabinet be passed on to Kevin Davis, Vine Trust.

100/12 **Meeting of Black Country Enterprise Zone Management Steering Group – 26th September 2012**

The minutes of the meeting of the Management Steering Group held on 26th September 2012 were received.

Agreed that the minutes of the Enterprise Zone Management Steering Group be received and the decisions set out confirmed

101/12 **Transport Update**

The Board received the minutes of the meeting of the Strategic Transport Board held on 4th October 2012 that included discussion on the continuing work on the prioritisation of local transport schemes and the holding of a transport 'summit' conference to bring together relevant local authority leaders or cabinet members and the chair or appropriate business representative from the LEPs in the West Midlands to discuss and confirm commitment to the principles of co-operation on strategic transport issues. The Board had also supported a joint response with Greater Birmingham on the Government's consultation on a framework for aviation policy.

Further to Minute No. 85/12, the Board was informed that the early discussions on a possible Black Country City Deal had identified the need to work at a wider geography than a single Partnership area and that consequently delegates from Greater Birmingham and the Black Country would be meeting with the Minister for Transport to progress discussions on offers and asks.

The Board received papers prepared by the Greater Birmingham LEP on a transport agreement and it was noted that:-

- i. The Black Country needed to articulate its own sufficiently ambitious and clear transport statement (in particular in relation to a rapid transit network connecting strategic centres to each other and to Birmingham).
- ii. The references to rapid transit needed to feature more prominently, rather than; improving metropolitan connectivity to HS2 including 'new metro links between the Black Country, central and East Birmingham and North Solihull, including the two HS2 stations' .

- iii. The promotion of the Stourbridge/Walsall Freight Line needed to be put in a Black Country perspective rather than as a means of releasing rail capacity within Birmingham.
- iv. There was no reference to the transport strategy supporting the delivery of economic growth throughout the 'City region' area other than largely beyond M42 Growth Corridor and Birmingham City Centre. It needed to reference the Black Country Strategy of Strategic Centres and Growth Corridors.
- v. Section 'G (of the report) - Facilitating the delivery of multi-modal connectivity to key growth was the weakest section in terms of both offer and ask and potentially one which should be of importance to any Black Country set of asks.
- vi. To deliver the Black Country Strategy and the Black Country Core Strategy, connectivity improvements were required to and from Brierley Hill, with a priority for the delivery of rapid transit connectivity to accelerate its growth and enhance its economic contribution to the Black Country and West Midlands as the new Strategic Centre in the Midlands (building on its status as the second biggest shopping centre in the Midlands and the Waterfront business area).'
- vii. In broader economic terms a City Deal for transport at a 'city region level' should be looking reflect the economic opportunities of the Western side of the conurbation, building on existing national motorway and rail connectivity with major development opportunities along defined Regeneration Corridors and network of Strategic Centres (supported by output, jobs and floorspace data) as a driver of transport priorities.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the work on prioritisation of schemes be supported and that a further report to be submitted on the next stages of the process;
- 2) that the observations on the Greater Birmingham transport paper be supported and that continuing discussions with Greater Birmingham concerning a strategic alliance be supported on the basis that relationship should be a partnership of equals;
- 3) that the decisions of West Midlands' Leaders not to proceed on a combined authority basis but to look at how to move forward collectively on issues including local transport bodies and to continue to use the mechanisms in existence at the metropolitan level, and keep options open, while working to respond to the Government's agenda be supported;

- 4) that the arrangements for the proposed transport summit be supported;
- 5) that the announcement of a second phase of Pinchpoint schemes be welcomed;
- 6) that a joint response with Greater Birmingham in response to the consultation on the Aviation Policy Framework be supported.

102/12 **Growing Places Update**

Further to Minute No.88/12, the Board considered the recommendations of the Growing Places Board Sub-Group to try and ensure that the Growing Places allocation was spent and was maximised to support opportunities to stimulate growth in the Black Country. The proposals had been discussed with the Departments for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) who had not raised any objections subject to ensuring that the Black Country continued to endeavour to identify schemes in commercially viable areas where loans were the preferred funding route and that it could be demonstrated that the Fund was being used as effectively as possible in the current market conditions.

Agreed:-

- 1) that a more flexible combination of loan and gap funding for applications based on project appraisal, state aid and best value for the fund be supported;
- 2) that a second call for projects, reflecting a more flexible combination of loan and gap funding, be undertaken as a matter of priority;
- 3) that further negotiations be undertaken with existing applicants to kick start stalled projects, where possible;
- 4) that financial appraisals of applications should be undertaken in advance of full due diligence;
- 5) that the guidance for applicants be amended to include a specification that ensures that projects which are eligible for European Regional Development Funding are pointed to the Black Country Property Investment Programme so this programme is not undermined and that Walsall MBC and DCLG be requested to expedite sign off of the Programme;
- 6) that the secretariat, local authority and BIS officers explore the scope for common appraisal processes in respect of Growing Places and European funding.

103/12 **Access to Finance Update**

Paul Brown reported on the outcome of the third Regional Growth Fund (RGF) bidding Round and updated on the progress of Round Two projects and on a further round of Advanced Manufacturing Supply Chain Initiative (AMSCI) funding.

Five Black Country applications had been selected for funding in the third round securing a total of £28m. In addition two regional/national projects supported by the Board had been approved. These were the Green Bridge covering the Greater Birmingham, Black Country and Coventry and Warwickshire LEPs and Steel Enterprise UK Ltd covering designated steel regions of England affected by changes in the industry - these were broadly Tees Valley, Derwentside, West Cumbria, South Yorkshire/Sheffield City Region, parts of Humberside, the Black Country, Stoke on Trent and Corby. Details of a revised process established by BIS to take successful applicants through the contracting/due diligence stage of RGF approval were set out.

In respect of the progress of Round Two applications it was reported that of the seven successful companies four companies had signed the funding agreements, two companies had received the final offer from BIS and one company had withdrawn.

In relation to AMSCI it was reported that two companies had been approved for funding in and were in receipt of conditional funding agreements from Finance Birmingham. The Board was also updated on proposals for an additional stream of funding of around £10m to be made available to automotive and aerospace supply chain companies in the Black Country, Greater Birmingham and Solihull, Coventry and Warwickshire, and Liverpool LEP areas.

Paul Brown also reported on the progress of the Growth Accelerator project to provide mentoring support to growing SMEs. Members discussed the next steps in the development and co-ordination of business advice

Agreed:-

- 1) that the announcement of the successful RGF Round Three projects be welcomed and the progress of Round Two projects be noted;
- 2) that the establishment of the Growth Accelerator project be supported and that further updates on progress in terms of the

- LEP objectives and priority sectors be submitted to future meetings;
- 3) that further consideration be given to developing and co-ordinating business advice at the away day.

(Tim Hair declared an interest in this item and took no part in the discussion.)

104/12 **Apprenticeship Plan**

The Board received a report on proposals for the development of an apprenticeship skills plan using £14,600 of funding allocated by National Apprenticeship Service. The plan would include proposals to

- drive a marketing campaign around the Growth pledge including a launch event featuring case studies/profiles on local companies who had successfully taken on apprenticeships and focussing on key issues.
- Investigate Supply Chain Apprenticeship Models in the key sectors.
- Provide Information, advice and guidance – raising the profile of apprenticeships to people in school

Agreed that the proposals for the development of an apprenticeship skills plan be supported.

105/12 **PR and Communications Update**

Members received the update on communications activity for September 2012. The Board discussed the need to explore the development of more proactive and higher quality coverage of the area.

106/12 **City Deal Update**

Further to Minute No. 85/12, the Chairman reported back on the event that had taken place earlier in the day where the Deputy Prime Minister had announced the second wave of City Deals including the Black Country. Proposals had to be submitted by 15th January 2013.

The Board noted that two initial papers on a Black Country Land Development Fund and Employability, Education and Skills had been received positively by Cabinet Office and were the areas where activity would be focused. The Board discussed the need for the right

personnel and organisations to be involved in task and finish groups to support work and meet Government and for a draft proposal to be considered at the away day on 17th December.

Agreed that the announcement of the second wave of City Deals be noted and that work continue to ensure that appropriate personnel and organisations are engaged in developing the Black Country submission to ensure that a draft proposal can be considered at the away day.

107/12 **Meeting of West Midlands LEP Chairs – 21st September 2012**

The Board received the minutes of the meeting of Chairmen of West Midlands LEPs held on 21st September 2012.

108/12 **Meeting with Black Country MPs – 21st November 2012**

Further to Minute No. 84/12, the Board noted the proposed arrangements for the meeting with Black Country MPs to be held on 21st November 2012 at the House of Commons.

The Board was also informed of proposals for the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to visit i54 on 19th November and that the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills would be opening the new facilities at Dudley College on 21st November.

109/12 **Meeting with Black Country MPs – 21st November 2012**

The Board received proposals for a series of breakfast/lunch events to engage with the business community to be held between January and March 2013.

Agreed that the proposed programme and format of the engagement events be supported.

110/12 **AoB – Events**

The Board was informed of the following events:-

- a) 7th December – Patent event in association with University of Wolverhampton;
- b) 13th November and 11th December – International Trade Development Clinics.

111/12 **Dates of Future Meetings**

Agreed that meetings be held on the following dates:-

17th December (Away Day – 12-5.00pm);
28th January (previously agreed);
15th February (Friday 8.30am Approx – Annual Stakeholders meeting);
11th March;
29th April;
23rd May (Thursday);
25th June (Tuesday);
22nd July;
23rd Sept;
28th October;
25th November;
16th December
at 3.00pm.

112/12 **Date of Next Meeting**

26th November 2012

(The meeting closed at 6.00 p.m.)