

Minutes of a Meeting of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership

16th May 2016 at 3.00p.m.
at Walsall College, The Hub, Littleton Street West, Walsall.

<u>Present:</u>	Chris Handy Cllr Adrian Andrew Cllr Khurshid Ahmed Andy Cox Ninder Johal Prof Geoff Layer Tom Westley Lowell Williams	Accord Group (In the Chair); Walsall MBC; Dudley MBC; Cox & Plant; Nachural Communications; Wolverhampton Uni; Westley Group; Dudley College.
<u>In Attendance:</u>	Sarah Middleton Tim Johnson Kim Rowlands Paul Mellon Rachel Goodwin	Black Country Consortium Ltd; Wolverhampton CC; BIS; Black Country Consortium Ltd. Black Country Consortium Ltd.
<u>Apologies:</u>	Stewart Towe, Councillors Bird, Lawrence and Lowe and Simon Eastwood.	

75/16 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th April 2016 were circulated.

It was noted that:

With respect to Minute No. 53/16 (Declaration of Interests), Tom Westley's declaration related to membership of the Institute of Cast Metal Engineers;

With respect to Minute No. 64/16 (MIPIM 2016), the Company referred to was, 'ENGIE');

It was noted that Andy Cox had submitted apologies.

Agreed that, subject to the amendments set out above, the minutes of the meeting held on 25th April 2016, be received and confirmed as a correct record.

76/16 **Policy Update**

The Board received a report on recent policy documents and developments including details of local election results and the LEP Network report on 'What does a good LEP look like?' Members noted that the Partnership lined up well with the elements of what a good LEP would look like.

77/16 **Draft Programme for Policy Planning Away Day**

The Board received a draft programme for the next Policy Planning session on 12th December 2016. Members commented on the need for the session to focus on the direction of travel and emerging issues for Black Country including the economy and skills.

Agreed that the draft programme be revised to incorporate the focus outlined above.

78/16 **Midlands Engine for Growth and Midlands Connect**

Further to Minute No. 48/16 the Board received an update on the progress of the Midlands Engine including governance arrangements and Midlands Connect. The Board noted ongoing discussions to develop Engine and to:-

- a) seek to engage businesses with links across Midlands;
- b) focus on common issues for manufacturing/business
- c) highlight successes and role of universities.

Agreed that the progress of the development of the Midlands Engine governance arrangements and Midlands Connect be noted.

79/16 **West Midlands Combined Authority Draft Combined Authority Strategic Economic Plan (SEP)**

Further to Minute No. 07/16, the Board received the final draft of the proposed Combined Authority SEP for comment. The Plan set out the

vision, objectives, strategy and actions to improve the quality of life for everyone who lived and worked in the West Midlands and focussed on eight priority areas for action:-

- i. New manufacturing economy;
- ii. Creative and digital;
- iii. Environmental technologies;
- iv. Medical and life sciences;
- v. HS2 growth;
- vi. Skills for growth and employment for all
- vii. Housing;
- viii. Exploiting the economic geography.

The final draft would be submitted for the approval of the Combined Authority SEP Board at the end of the month with a view to submitting the document for adoption at the first meeting of the Combined Authority.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the draft Combined Authority SEP be noted and that any comments to be submitted to the Secretariat by no later than 20th May 2016;
- 2) that references to 'housing' in the document be amended to refer to 'housing and construction'.

80/16 **Combined Authority and Midlands Engine Appointments**

Further to Minute No. /16, the Board received details of appointments made by the Combined Authority and Midlands Engine and Connect:-

Midlands Engine:

West Midlands LEP representation would be drawn from Greater Birmingham and Solihull; Stoke and Staffordshire; Coventry and Warwickshire; Marches and Worcestershire LEPs.

Midlands Connect

Nominations for members of both the Connect Strategic Board and the Steering Group were endorsed at the Inaugural meeting of the Connect Partnership Advisory Board on 16th December 2015. The agreed representation for West Midlands LEP Chairs was:

Graham Wynn – Chairman Marches LEP;

David Frost – Chairman Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire LEP;

Stewart Towe – Chairman Black Country LEP – Confirmed Alternate Member.

Combined Authority

Combined Authority Representative - Stewart Towe (Ninder Johal nominated alternate);

Combined Authority SEP Board – Stewart Towe (Ninder Johal nominated alternate) and Cllr Lowe (Black Country Local Authority Leader).

Agreed:-

- 1) that the position concerning appointments to the Midlands Engine and Connect bodies be noted;
- 2) that the appointments to the Combined Authority bodies be confirmed.

81/16

Black Country Strategic Economic Plan – Local Growth Fund

The Board received the Local Growth Fund (LGF) Programme update including the regular dashboards on the progress of projects. The following key points were noted:-

- Forecast year end Claims – The Accountable Body had confirmed that project spend incurred during April to June 2016 would be charged to the 2015/16 allocation. The ‘in-flight projects’ dashboard forecasted a spend of £26.27m compared to available grant of £24.35m, an over utilisation of £1.92m. The Programme Office had confirmed that this could be charged in part or whole against underspend on LGF /LTB funded transport schemes. The balance would be charged on 2016/17 LGF. currently £15.18m of LGF. The Board was informed that claims had been paid against £23.53m submitted by projects. This compared to the fully committed spend, notified by projects, of £24.35m. Projects had indicated that they expected to spend up to £26.27m LGF, in 2015/16
- The ‘in-flight projects’ dashboard also included the funding to Walsall College to support the establishment of a Microsoft Associated College (see Minute No. 10/16) where members had been consulted by email on a revision to the level of funding to £150,000 to allow for provision for VAT.
- Pipeline Development for 2016/17-20/21 – The Board noted the progress of the development of the pipeline of project that was now approaching £0.5bn. Discussions around the next steps to evaluate

and prioritise schemes including discussions with the Combined Authority were noted. Members also discussed the role of the performance management framework in identifying gaps and focus for future development.

- Over Programming in 2016/17 – Following consultation with Funding Sub-Board members, over-programming of £5.5m was proposed based on 15% of a LGF Grant award of £37.5m for 2016/17. This currently suggests a balance of £2.9m available to apply against additional schemes seeking LGF funding in 2016/17.
- Accessing Growth allocation – Pursuant to Minute No. 32/16, detailed proposals for the funding of two schemes:-
 - i) City East Gateway - A454 Willenhall Road Corridor, Wolverhampton (£150,000)
 - ii) City North Gateway - A449 Stafford Road Corridor, Wolverhampton (£150,000);
had now been submitted.

Company in Voluntary Arrangement – The Board was informed of a submission for funding of £27.5k from a company in a Voluntary Arrangement with Creditors.

Members also requested that arrangements be made to enable them to be able to inspect submitted proposals.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the forecast year end claims to the value in respect of £24.35m including revised figures for Walsall College IT Academy, be noted;
- 2) that the progress in evaluating LGF Pipeline priority schemes be noted;
- 3) that the:-
 - a) over-programming of £5.5m (15%) against LGF Grant of £37.5m for 2016/17.
 - b) allocation of £300k of the 2016/17 Accessing Growth funding to the two schemes outlined above;
be approved;
- 4) that the position concerning a submission from a company in a Voluntary Arrangement with its creditors be noted and a further report submitted as necessary;
- 5) that officers seek to establish arrangements to enable Board members to have access to LGF proposals in process.

(Tom Westley declared an indirect interest in this item insofar as it related to the Elite Centre for Manufacturing Skills.)

82/16 **Draft Mayoral Scheme for the West Midlands Combined Authority**

Further to Minute No. 58/16, the Board received the Draft Scheme for the establishment of a Mayoral West Midlands Combined Authority and the Governance Review of the West Midlands Combined Authority which set out details of membership, functions, finance and scheme of delegation for the establishment of a Mayor for the Authority.

Agreed that the Draft Scheme and Review be noted and that members submit any further individual comments to the Secretariat.

83/16 **Draft Minutes of the Place Making and Land Theme Advisory Board**

The Board received the draft minutes of the meeting of the Place Making and Land Theme Advisory Board held on 21st April 2016. Further to Minute No. 13/16 of the Advisory Board, it was noted that the proposals for the Black Country Blue Network had now been approved. The Board welcomed the progress of the development of the Board.

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting of the Advisory Board held on 21st April 2016 be received and its recommendations confirmed

84/16 **Area Based Review of Post-16 Education and Training**

Further to Minute No. 68/16, the Board received an update on the outcomes from the first meeting of the Review Committee held on 29th April 2016. The meeting had taken the view that no major restructuring was required but that there was a need for tighter collaborative working. Colleges had been asked to look at five specific areas in greater detail:-

- Apprenticeships;
- Low Skills/High Skills;
- Special needs;
- Mathematics and English attainment in the context of NEETS.

The Board received an update on the Colleges' work around the Review and discussed the distortions in provision that could arise from the need for 'box ticking'.

Agreed that the outcomes of the first meeting of the Review be noted.

(The Board noted the indirect interests of Ninder Johal, Lowell Williams and Tom Westley in the Review.)

85/16 **Black Country Digital Strategy**

The Board received a report on the development of the Black Country Digital Strategy, a digital approach to address the digital needs of the Black Country and an update on the progress of the Broadband Programme. The Strategy acknowledged the importance of Smart Cities and the role that they would play for the region. The Strategy adopted some of the terminology used within the Smart Cities' analysis. The data gathered within the Black Country Digital Strategy would be utilised to assist the preparation of a Black Country Smart Cities Strategy.

It was reported that the Broadband Programme had now passed 1,292 homes. Following an agreed change control, the financial assumptions for the Programme had been revised with the result that:-

- o 160 additional structures/cabinets would be built, delivering an additional 6,784 THP, over an additional two project phases.
- o BT would bear all the additional cost (£3.5m).
- o This would bring Superfast Broadband Coverage across the Black Country to 99.3%, excluding Wolverhampton City Centre

Marketing activities around these proposals involving senior representatives from the project were being arranged.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the Black Country Digital Strategy be endorsed;
- 2) that regional initiatives to bring together Digital Activity on a West Midlands Combined Authority level, to ensure that the digital needs of the Black Country are addressed be supported;
- 3) that the progress on the Black Country Broadband Programme be noted.

86/16 **Membership of Advisory Boards**

The Board received details of expressions of interest in joining the Place Making and Competitiveness Advisory Boards.

Agreed that the applications by Charles Addison, Made in the Midlands and James Hill, Dunton Environmental to become members of, respectively, the Competitiveness and Place Making Advisory Boards be supported.

87/16 **Items of Business for Black Country Consortium Ltd. Directors -**

Members of the Board, as Directors of Black Country Consortium Ltd., received the minutes of the meeting of the Consortium's Audit Committee held on 21st January and 14th April 2016. The decisions made by the Committee were noted and confirmed.

88/16 **Decisions of the Black Country Executive Joint Committee**

The Board received a record of decisions undertaken by the Black Country Executive Joint Committee, 20th April 2016.

89/16 **PR and Communications Update**

The Board received the regular update on PR activity since the last meeting and updates on work to improve response rates to e-communications from the LEP. Concerns over the use of Combined Authority logos were also noted.

90/16 **Stakeholders Event – Feedback**

Members noted the positive feedback and good attendance at the event on 11th May 2016. The need to stimulate more debate was noted as a possible area for further consideration for future events.

91/16 **Date of Next Meeting**

13th June 2016 – Policy Planning Session
18th July 2016.

(The meeting closed at 4.25p.m.)