

Minutes of a Meeting of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership

18th May 2015 at 3.00p.m.
at the National Metalforming Centre, Birmingham Road, West Bromwich

<u>Present:</u>	Stewart Towe Cllr Darren Cooper Andy Cox Simon Eastwood Chris Handy Cllr Khurshid Ahmed Ninder Johal Cllr Roger Lawrence Prof Geoff Layer	Chairman; Sandwell MBC Cox & Plant; Carillion plc; Accord Group; Dudley MBC; Nachural Communications; Wolverhampton CC; Wolverhampton Uni.
<u>In Attendance:</u>	Sarah Middleton Jan Britton Simon Neilson Kim Rowlands Jim Cunningham Craig Wakeman Mark Fulton Paul Mellon Wayne Langford	Black Country Consortium Ltd; Dudley MBC; Walsall MBC BIS; Wolverhampton CC; Birmingham CC; Black Country Consortium Ltd; Black Country Consortium Ltd; Black Country Consortium Ltd.
<u>Apologies:</u>	Paul Brown, Councillors Coughlan and Lowe, Jat Sharma and Tom Westley.	

57/15 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th April 2015 were circulated.

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 20th April 2015 be received and confirmed as a correct record.

58/15 **HS2 Strategy Presentation**

Craig Wakeman, Birmingham City Council attended the meeting and gave a presentation on the proposed Midlands HS2 Growth Strategy to use the development of the line to creating a step change in economic performance, driving growth and significantly improving outcomes for people, business and places. The Board discussed the benefits for businesses and transport in the Black Country, links to airports and links beyond Birmingham.

Agreed that the strategy be supported but that officers be requested to highlight the need to build connectivity and the benefits it will bring to the region into the Strategy.

59/15 **Combined Authority - Update**

Further to Minute No. 49/15, Councillors Cooper and Lawrence updated on the development of the Combined Authority and the likely approach of the new Government and Ministers.

60/15 **Strategic Companies Barometer**

The Board received the regular Barometer highlighting the importance of the Black Country Strategic Companies' to achieving the aims of the Strategic Economic Plan. The Barometer identified the following key actions:-

- The Black Country LEP was leading on intelligence work to develop a suitable portfolio of information on the Strategic Companies in order to engage with and support these firms where possible. This intelligence would be crucially important for the LEP to be able to continue to engage with partners locally, regionally and nationally.
- Further support to do more work on the interventions required to ensure Strategic Companies had the quality of land needed to grow.
- Developing a communications plan to engage all business networks to establish a 'networks of networks' for two way communications.
- Identifying the planned interventions to transform the potential high quality employment land to enable Strategic Companies to grow would be a key activity and should inform the infrastructure plan.

- Intelligence from these companies to support the development of the five strategic propositions would be key.

Agreed that the actions to take forward the findings of the Barometer be supported particularly in informing project pipeline development.

61/15

Mapping Local Comparative Advantages in Innovation

The Board received a summary of the findings of the 'Mapping Local Comparative Advantages' in Innovation' report produced by BIS which sought to provide a consistent body of evidence of comparative innovation strengths in the 39 LEP areas to help LEPs and their partners to marshal their innovation assets .

The Black Country had a total score of 28.6 which ranked the Sub-Region 36th out of 39 LEPs, Greater Birmingham scored 19.5 and was ranked 18th, with Coventry & Warwicks scoring 12.3, ranking the area 7th – the best performing LEP in the West Midlands. The Black Country performed best on the broader environment aspect of the ranking, and was ranked highest of all 39 LEPs for Super-Fast Broadband availability. The Black Country performed well on the percentage of firms' product or process innovation in the Innovation Output strand, ranking 3rd of all LEPs as shown in the table. It was noted that only a limited number of the indicators were available at the more disaggregated LEP level and the geography of LEPs also meant that some areas fared better on some indicators than others. For instance the Black Country only had one Higher Education Knowledge Asset. The report highlighted recent research by the Enterprise Research Centre that showed the Black Country to be one of the better performing LEPs in terms of innovation. The need to discuss the approach to innovation across the three LEP areas was highlighted as was the need to engage with smaller 'lifestyle' companies in the area and deal with environmental factors attracting skilled people to live in the area.

Agreed:-

- 1) that discussions continue with Greater Birmingham and Coventry & Warwicks LEPs to understand the role of innovation within the region's economy;
- 2) that further work be undertaken to assess the impact of the research findings and develop an action plan to address the issues around innovation within the local economy.

62/15 **Policy Update**

The Board received a report on recent policy documents received by the Secretariat including:-

- a) Highways England: Planning for The Future and Facilitating Growth – highlighting changes underpinning name change;
- b) Realising Talent - a skills policy document published by LGA;
- c) Design – delivering local growth Published by the Design Council setting out its offer for Local Enterprise Partnerships;
- d) Go ON Digital – report from Go ON Digital concerning small businesses and digital skills;
- e) Dowling Review – confirming submission of response (see Minute No. 46/15);
- f) LEP Network - First 100 Days leaflet;
- g) Black Country Enterprise Zone – James Bridge Site- Confirming that the National Grid would be commencing work to remove the gas holders at the James Bridge site;
- h) Election results – reporting on changes following local and national elections.

63/15 **Black Country LEP Manifesto**

The Board received a proposed ‘manifesto’ summarising the Partnership’s achievements to date and current priorities and propositions to shape future developments to support briefings with MPs and Ministers. The Board discussed means to develop more effective communications with MPs. It was noted that a communications plan would be considered at the Board policy planning session on 22nd June.

64/15 **Black Country Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) - Growth Hub – Way Forward**

Further to Minute No. 37/15, the Board received the results of a facilitated session held with the Hub partners to consider the outstanding issues and next steps. The session sought to address the following challenges:-

- Partnership working - particularly the alignment of individual partners’ activities with the Growth Hub.
- Understanding the national business support offer and avoiding competition.

- Progression from a transactional relationship with local businesses to relationship based model.
- Reconciliation between the Lancaster Contract and the 'Red Book' City Deal.
- Simplification Agenda – leading a joint piece of work with the Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP on the mapping and simplification of local business support.
- Reflecting the local context /freedoms and flexibilities of the Black Country in the programme

Agreed:-

- 1) that the commitment to working collaboratively to agree a way forward for the next stage in the development and operation of the Black Country Growth Hub be reaffirmed;
- 2) that the proposed membership of the Hub board be approved with a private sector Board Member acting as chair;
- 3) that the next steps and work programme for the development of the Hub board set out in the report including the preparation and submission of proposals for ERDF funding be approved;
- 4) that the Hub Director take the steps necessary to develop the application for ERDF funding.

65/15

Local Growth Fund – Delegation of Authority

Further to Minute No. 35/15, the Board was asked to consider revised proposals for delegation of authority to institute a change control process and bring forward small schemes following legal advice from the Accountable Body.

Agreed that the Joint Committee be requested to delegate authority to the Executive Director for the Economy and Environment, Walsall Council in consultation with: the Chief Executive of the Black Country Consortium, the authorised representative from the Accountable Body, the Head(s) of Regeneration for the appropriate geographical area/s and the Chair of the Joint Committee to:-

- 1) make changes to Joint Committee approved projects subject to a maximum of change of up to but not exceeding 10% of the total approved project funding, such changes to be reported to the next available Joint Advisory Board and Joint Committee meetings;
- 2) to approve projects that have not been previously approved by the Joint Committee that have a value up to but not exceeding 10%

total value of in-year LGF Grant, any such projects to be reported to the next available Advisory Board and Joint Committee.

66/15 **Black Country Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) and Growth Deal - Monitoring Dashboard and Pipeline Development**

The Board received the regular update on the Programme:-

- Projects were now in a mixture of start-up and implementation
- All project allocations had been baselined
- The Programme Office was completing initial meetings with all projects
- Project Movements:-
 - Bentley Lane - removed;
 - Science, Technology & Prototyping Centre baselined for 2015/16;
 - Woods Lane start accelerated into 2015/16;
 - FAB Kit split into 3 separate projects.

Agreed that the update be received and the changes to the timing and make up of projects supported.

67/15 **Cross – LEP Working Draft Protocols**

Pursuant to the discussion at Minute No. 59/15 above, the Board received draft protocols to provide principles to strengthen the working arrangements between Partnerships who might fall within the final Combined Authority area. The basis of the protocol was that joint working should add value to LEP activity through the development of:-

- a. Shared priorities including support of key growth sectors (e.g. High Value Manufacturing (HVM)).
- b. Better delivery against shared LEP growth targets such as;
 - Net increase in private sector jobs
 - Net increase in Gross Value Added (total and per head)
 - Decrease in unemployment
- c. Improved benefit from future 'Deals' with Government;
- d. A stronger collective voice to help drive economic growth in the area both through the LEPs and the developing Combined Authority; and
- e. Ensuring a strong input from the business community and education sector (HEIs and FE) into the Combined Authority priorities with a focus on removing the barriers to business growth.

Agreed that the draft protocol be approved as the basis for continuing discussions with Greater Birmingham and Coventry & Warwicks and other West Midlands' LEPs concerning continuing cross-LEP working in the context of the development of the Combined Authority.

68/15 **PR and Communications Update**

The Board received the regular update on PR activity since the last meeting including feedback on workshop on promoting the Queens Award for Enterprise to Black Country businesses.

Ninder also updated on the work initiated by Greater Birmingham LEP to identify how the area and its regional partners should promote the area internationally to businesses, tourists, the media and other organisations across the world. Members discussed the impact of the project on the Black Country strapline and its role within the proposals.

Agreed that the Marketing Birmingham proposals be noted and that discussions continue to ensure its commissioners understand how the Black Country economy can add value to the Birmingham region.

69/15 **Draft Agenda – LEP Policy Away Day – 22nd June 2015**

The Board received the draft programme for the policy planning 'away' session on 22nd June 2015. The need to further develop and confirm leads on part three of the session was noted.

70/15 **Decisions of the Black Country Executive Joint Committee held on 22nd April 2015**

The decisions of the Black Country Joint Committee made at its meeting on 22nd April 2015 were noted.

71/15 **Date of Next Meeting**

Policy Planning Session 22nd June 2015.

(The meeting closed at 4.55 p.m.)