

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership**

**14<sup>th</sup> July 2015 at 3.00p.m.**  
**at the GTG Centre, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton**

<b><u>Present:</u></b>	Stewart Towe Paul Brown Simon Eastwood Cllr Khurshid Ahmed Ninder Johal Cllr Roger Lawrence Prof Geoff Layer Tom Westley	Chairman; Ernst & Young; Carillion plc; Dudley MBC; Nachural Communications; Wolverhampton CC; Wolverhampton Uni; Westley Group.
<b><u>In Attendance:</u></b>	Sarah Middleton Kim Rowlands Zoey West Katherine Birch Phil Calcutt Mark Fulton Paul Mellon	Black Country Consortium Ltd; BIS; Walsall MBC; Black Country Consortium Ltd; Black Country Consortium Ltd; Black Country Consortium Ltd; Black Country Consortium Ltd.
<b><u>Apologies:</u></b>	Andy Cox, Councillors Bird, Cooper and Lowe, Chris Handy and Jat Sharma.	

72/15 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2015 were circulated.

**Agreed** that the minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2015 be received and confirmed as a correct record.

73/15 **Policy Issues**

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

- a) LEP Network Annual Dinner;
- b) Midlands 'Engine';
- c) The Productivity Puzzle;
- d) Enterprise Zones;
- e) Final Report of Davies Commission.
- f) Summer Budget

In respect of item (b) the Board noted the need to clarify the relative expectations and requirements of the Combined Authority and the Midlands Engine.

In respect of item (e), the need to pursue the extension of i54 was highlighted.

The difficulties in blanket analyses of productivity and need to examine detail in relation to sectors were noted in relation to discussion around item (c).

#### 74/15 **Policy Planning Away Day 22nd June 2015**

A note of the discussions at the Board Away Day on 22<sup>nd</sup> June was received.

#### 75/15 **Local Growth Deal Pipeline Generation**

Further to Minute No. 74/15 above, the Board considered proposals for the utilisation of up to £2m over programming of the Local Growth Fund (LGF) 2015/16 capital grant allocation to invest in dedicated resources alongside private sector secondment opportunities to facilitate and accelerate pipeline generation through a creative alliance of knowledge and skills taking forward the decisions at the away day. Simon Eastwood updated on discussions with possible private sector partners and the changing investment climate was noted.

#### **Agreed:-**

- 1) that the LGF 2015/16 capital grant allocation to be over-programmed by £2m to fund private sector interventions in pipeline generation:-
  - a) £1m to be allocated for technical feasibility work;

- b) £1m to be allocated (in reserve) for technical expertise to support development;
- 2) that a further update on provision of private sector resource to be submitted to the next meeting.

76/15 **Draft Communications Strategy**

Further to Minute No. 74/15 above, Ninder Johal submitted the draft Communications Plan which provided a strategic framework and action plan for the LEP to manage its reputation and increase the effectiveness of its communications. The presentation also aimed to signal the start of a new approach reflecting governmental changes and emerging new partnerships following the General Election. Ninder highlighted the growing expectations of the LEP and the challenges that it faced in terms of building networks and acting pro-actively to communicate its messages.

**Agreed:-**

- 1) that the draft Strategy be supported;
- 2) that members' individual feedback be welcomed;
- 3) that the Secretariat ensure that signage is used wherever possible to highlight the LEP's contribution to projects.

77/15 **PR and Communications Update**

The Board received the regular update on PR activity since the last meeting. A process to attract potential women Board Members was also outlined.

78/15 **Combined Authority – Update – Statement of Intent**

Further to Minute No. 59/15, the Board received the Combined Authority Statement of Intent. The Board noted the timeline for the establishment of the Authority and supported the proposed lead role for LEPs in producing a Combined Authority SEP. The priority of Public Sector Reform and the role of the proposed Commissions was noted. The role of schools was highlighted as a possible area for the Skills Commission to examine.

79/15 **EU Structural and Investment Fund Strategy – Update**

The Board received an update on the 2014 - 2020 European funding programme for the Black Country and the recent calls for project proposals for both the ERDF (European Regional Development Fund) and ESF (European Social Fund) funding. The report also highlighted the next steps in the roll out of the full programme and a timetable of activity for the Black Country.

The report also informed Members of a proposal circulated by European network of industrial towns, citizen participation for sustainable future development.

**Agreed:-**

- 1) that the report be noted and that a further update on the applications received for funding be submitted to the next meeting;
- 2) that the scope for engagement with European Association for Local Democracy to be explored and a further report submitted to a future meeting if necessary.

80/15 **Local Growth Fund - Programme Dashboard**

The Board received the regular dashboards on the progress of LGF projects.

**Local Growth Fund - Project Approval Recommendations**

81/15 **Managing Short Trips – Additional Schemes**

The Board considered proposals to fund a number of additional towpath improvements as part of this project.

**Agreed** that an LGF allocation of £712k in 2015/16 to enable greater accessibility in the Black Country by improving cycling and walking infrastructure be approved and referred to the Black Country Executive Joint Committee for consideration.

82/15 **Specialist Equipment for Advanced Manufacturing Technology Training**

The Board considered proposals to enable Sandwell Training Association to invest in new equipment and software for a range of design, manufacturing and inspection software.

**Agreed** that an LGF allocation of £30k in 2015/16 for the purchase of a range of new equipment and software be approved and referred to the Black Country Executive Joint Committee for consideration.

83/15 **Black Country Assurance and Accountability Framework – Modification for Transport Projects**

The Board considered proposals for the addition of an appendix to the Assurance Framework concerning arrangements for the management of transport schemes to provide a framework to enable the Director of Transport and Transport Officers Group to drive the step change in approach and capability for the next stage of SEP delivery.

**Agreed** that the additional appendix to the Assurance Framework be approved subject to any comments from the Accountable Body and its s151 Officer.

84/15 **JESSICA Urban Development Fund Proposal – Ex Ante Assessment**

Further to Minute No. /15, the Board received further details of the proposed cost of the ex-ante assessment for the JESSICA Development Fund proposal.

**Agreed** that a contribution of up to £4,166 towards the costs of the JESSICA study be approved.

85/15 **Elite Centre Feasibility Study Steering Group Notes of Meeting held on 16th June 2015 – Results of Consultation Exercise**

Further to Minute No.27/15, the Board received the notes of the meeting of the Elite Centre Feasibility Study Steering Group held on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2015. The Steering Group had considered the responses received to the consultation exercise in respect of the Centre proposals.

**Agreed** that the notes of the Steering Group be received and the recommendations set out approved including the proposed responses to the consultation on the Elite Centre proposals.

86/15 **LEP Funding**

Sarah Middleton reported on the situation regarding Government funding for the Local Enterprise Partnership which is paid to Walsall MBC as accountable body under section 31 and the current position of Black Country Consortium Ltd expenditure and claims for those funds.

**Agreed:-**

- 1) Subject to the confirmation of the Local Authority drawdown by the accountable body, and recognising that the same in year provisions have been made for 15/16, agreed to earmark the underspend of £134,559 of the 2014/15 Strategic funding for future utilisation by the LEP:-
  - a) to refresh the Black Country Strategic Economic Plan and any commissions required to develop the West Midlands Combined Strategic Economic Plan;
  - b) in the absence of being able to find a permanent SEP Director, to provide flexibility and headroom to continue with interim arrangements should the need arise;
- 2) that the further utilisation of LEP Growing Places revenue subject to the identification of such funds being available be supported.

87/15 **LEP Governance**

The Board was informed that Black Country principals had agreed that Lowell Williams, Principal Dudley College, would succeed Jat Sharma as the Further Education representative on the Board with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015.

**Agreed:-**

- 1) that the appointment of Lowell Williams, Principle, Dudley College as Further Education Representative on the Board was confirmed;
- 2) that the Board placed on record it's thanks to Jat Sharma for his work in support of the Partnership.

88/15 **Decisions of the Black Country Executive Joint Committee held on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2015**

The decisions of the Black Country Joint Committee made at its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2015 were noted.

89/15 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**Agreed** that the public and press be excluded from the rest of the meeting to avoid the possible disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

90/15 **Local Growth Fund - Project Approval Recommendations - Walsall Waterfront - Lex Site Remediation**

**Agreed** that an LGF allocation of £415,000 for the remediation of the Lex site at Walsall Waterfront to be re-profiled to enable commencement in 2015 /16 be approved and referred to the Black Country Executive Joint Committee for consideration.

91/15 **Date of Next Meeting**

21<sup>st</sup> September 2015.

(The meeting closed at 4.50 p.m.)