

Minutes of a Meeting of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership

21st September 2015 at 3.00p.m.
at the National Metalforming Centre, 47 Birmingham Road West
Bromwich

<u>Present:</u>	Stewart Towe Cllr Adrian Andrew Paul Brown Simon Eastwood Cllr Tim Crumpton Ninder Johal Tom Westley Lowell Williams	Chairman; Walsall MBC; Ernst & Young; Carillion plc; Dudley MBC; Nachural Communications; Westley Group; Dudley College.
<u>In Attendance:</u>	Sarah Middleton Jan Britton Zoey West Jim Cunningham Stuart Everton Kim Rowlands Colin Parker Rachel Goodwin	Black Country Consortium Ltd; Sandwell MBC; Walsall MBC; Wolverhampton CC; Director of Transport; BIS; Black Country Consortium Ltd; Black Country Consortium Ltd.
<u>Apologies:</u>	Andy Cox, Councillors Bird, Cooper Lawrence and Lowe, Chris Handy and Prof. Layer.	

92/15 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th July 2015 were circulated.

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 14th July 2015 be received and confirmed as a correct record.

93/15

Draft West Midlands Strategic Transport Plan – Presentation

Laura Shoaf, Strategic Director for Transport, West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority (ITA) attended the meeting and gave a presentation on the Authority's draft Strategic Transport Plan.

In discussing the plan the Board emphasised:-

The need for economic development priorities to be emphasised throughout the Plan;

The need to stress the importance of connectivity particularly in relation to HS2;

A clearer focus on specific issues and outcomes would help to demonstrate the effectiveness of proposals;

A greater emphasis on the role of smart technology would help improve the attractiveness and flexibility of the transport system;

Attractive alternatives needed to be in place before car use could be discouraged too much.

The Director of Transport reported that it was intended to submit a joint Black Country response to the consultation.

Agreed that a joint Black Country response incorporating the points set out above be supported.

94/15

Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Presentation

Anne-Marie Simpson and Steve Holland of HCA attended the meeting and gave a presentation on the role of the Agency in supporting regeneration in the Black Country.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the officer housing group be asked to consider HCA's proposal:
- 2) that a further report be submitted to the Board setting out specific proposals for support to bring forward sites in accordance with SEP priorities.

95/15

Meeting of West Midlands LEP Chairmen held on 15th July 2015

The notes of the meeting of West Midlands Chairmen held on 15th July were received and the decisions were noted, these included:-

- a) Agreement to lead on 'Super' SEP;
- b) In principle agreement to allocate £20,000 per LEP to support Midlands Engine work;
- c) Support for discussions over joint approach to MIPIM.

96/15

Strategic Economic Plan for Combined Authority Area

Further to Minute No. 95/15 above, the Chief Executive updated and outlined work on the 'Super' SEP including the role of the Steering Group and the modelling work based around an approach based on a mixed programme around productivity gains and jobs growth.

The Chairman and Local Authority Members also updated on progress of Combined Authority and 'Devo Deal' discussions. They reported that under the proposals being discussed LEPs would have non-constituent member status.

Agreed:-

- 1) that proposed strategy for the development of a 'Super' SEP be supported;
- 2) that LEP non-constituent membership of the Combined Authority be supported in principle subject to submission of the final details of the proposed structure and governance of the Authority

97/15

Local Growth Fund (LGF) – Pipeline Update and Project Approval Recommendations

The Board received an update on the progress of applications for funding that had been the subject of an electronic consultation with Board Members, updated on the development of site investigation proposals and submitted two further proposals for consideration.

In order that the proposals could be submitted to the September meeting of the Joint Committee, Members support to the following proposals had been sought electronically:-

- i) Wolverhampton City Centre Coach station - £500,000 from Access to Growth funds to deliver accelerated upgrade of Coach Station facilities to support the major Wolverhampton Interchange Programme.
- ii) City of Wolverhampton Campus Realignment Feasibility study £300,000 – for a study to evaluate all of the potential solutions

and deliver a business plan for realigning the Paget Road Campus.

- iii) Dudley Town Centre Buildings & Sites improvement - £425,000 - for townscape heritage initiatives, improvements to King Street parade, & minor infrastructure improvements to car parking.

No objections had been raised to the proposals and they had accordingly been submitted and approved by the Joint Committee.

The following additional pipeline projects were submitted for consideration:-

- a) Walsall College – Improving Engineering Capacity £200,000 in 2015/16. The project aimed to deliver welding and hydraulics / pneumatics equipment with the required building installation and adaptation costs;
- b) M6 J10 Resilience package of junction improvements £300,000 in 2015/16 and £1.25m in 2016/17. The project aimed to deliver prior land acquisition and utility diversion works to the value of £300,000, followed by three proposed junction improvements in 2016/17 to the value of £1.25m which would complement the major improvements already planned and funded for M6 Junction 10.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the approval of the three Pipeline bids – Wolverhampton City Centre, Wolverhampton College Feasibility and Dudley Town Centre - by the Black Country Executive Joint Committee be noted;
- 2) that the following project bids be approved:
 - a) Walsall College – improving engineering capacity;
 - b) M6 Junction 10 resilience package of junction improvements.

98/15

Local Growth Fund - Programme Dashboards

The Board received the regular dashboards on the progress of City Deal and LGF projects. Members were also informed of Government proposals to review the operation of Assurance Frameworks.

Agreed that the Programme Office continue to examine the scope for increasing current year spend.

99/15 **EU Structural and Investment Fund Strategy – Update**

Further to Minute No. 79/15, the Board received an update on progress to utilise the EU funding programme across the Black Country. The report highlighted the following:-

- The call for ERDF projects had stimulated £38.3m of bids, which represented 56% of the total programme. Priorities 1 (Innovation) and 3 (Competitiveness) were particularly strongly over-subscribed.
- the SME Competitiveness call stimulated applications totalling £19.6m, almost twice the funding available. Successes included the Black Country Growth Hub, BC GOLD(2), Access to Business and a number of projects from Wolverhampton University,
- Proposals submitted by Birmingham City Council for cross-LEP work linked to HS2, Green Bridge Supply Chain, Business Innovation and Development, were unsuccessful at stage one.

The Board also noted the continuing discussion concerning Intermediate Body status.

Agreed that the progress of calls, agreement of ESF Programme and progress of Intermediate Body discussions be noted.

100/15 **Application for Additional/Extension of Enterprise Zones**

The Chief Executive reported that the Government had announced an intention to invite LEPs to submit applications for further Enterprise Zones. Partnerships were asked to submit notice of intention to submit proposals by 14th August 2015 and the Secretariat therefore confirmed its intention to apply highlighting possible proposals for the extension of both the north and south zones. Work was also undertaken to submit a proposal for a zone in Brierley Hill, one of the areas included when the establishment of the zones was originally announced by the Coalition. The deadline for full applications was 18th September and, following consultation with Members, full proposals for the two Zones had been submitted.

Agreed that the decision to submit applications for the extension of the North and South Zones and establishment of a Brierley Hill Zone be confirmed.

102/15 **Review of Post 16 Education and Training**

The Board received details of the area review process and suggested an approach taking into account the Combined Authority proposals and the facts tracking of the Birmingham and Solihull review.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the timing of a Black Country review to inform future Combined Authority work and be ready to understand any Black Country implications from the Birmingham and Solihull review be explored;
- 2) that the scope for the co-design of a review to be discussed with the FE sector (and HE if appropriate).

(The Board noted the indirect interest of Lowell Williams in the Review.)

103/15 **Careers and Enterprise Company – Black Country Launch of National Programme**

The Board considered the next steps following the success of a submission for the roll-out of Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC) national programme of enterprise advisors backed up with a small number of paid Enterprise Coordinators. The CEC had offered funding of £150,000 which would need to be supported by match funding. This would support two Enterprise Coordinators to engage and coordinate Enterprise Advisors (EA) at 45 schools over two academic years. Under the proposals:-

- i) A first Enterprise Coordinator (with employer background) would be employed by Black Country Consortium Ltd;
- ii) A second Coordinator (or FTE's) (with schools experience) would be seconded' from Education Business Partnerships (EBP);
- iii) The Consortium Skills Factory Director would responsible through the LEP People Theme Board for the operation of this contract.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the award of the CEC funding be noted and that the Black Country Consortium Ltd. act as the accountable body for the programme;
- 2) that the approach of joint working between the Skills Factory and EBP's be supported;

- 3) that monitoring of the project take place through the People Theme Group (Employment & Skills Board).

104/15 **Black Country Growth Hub and AIM for the Black Country**

The Board received an update on the development of plans to ensure the sustainability of the Black Country Growth Hub including working principles to form part of a collaboration agreement amongst partners. The governance of the Growth Hub was being strengthened through the creation of a new “Board” comprising senior level representation drawn from the Core partners. The Hub would also be aligned to the Competitiveness Theme Advisory Board and regular reports would be brought to the Board.

Further to Minute No. 99/15 above, the report also set out details of the outline application for EU funding for resources to deliver an integrated approach to business support, investment and market development for SMEs under the acronym AIM – Advice, Invest and Market Development. The proposal would be proceeding to a full application that had to be submitted by 5th November 2015.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the working principles for the Black Country Growth Hub be supported;
- 2) that the work to progress the submission of a full ESIF Bid for the AIM project be supported

105/15 **Growing Priority Sectors Regional Growth Fund**

The Board received the recommendations of the Funding Panel in relation to three applications for Growing Priority Sectors funding.

Agreed that the recommendations of the Sub-Board to award funding as it becomes available to the Companies below as ranked by the score they received during appraisal (highest score first):-

- Alutrade Ltd
- Kilo Ltd
- NDC Polipak Ltd.

106/15 **Establishment of Theme Advisory Groups**

Further to Minute No. 47/15, the Board received an update on the progress of establishing theme groups. Paul Brown reported on the first meeting of the Competitiveness Theme Group on 9th September 2015. The notes of the meeting were submitted.

Agreed:-

- 1) that the progress of establishing the Theme Groups be noted;
- 2) that the notes of the first meeting of the Competitiveness Group and informal meeting of private sector members of the People Group be noted.

107/15 **PR and Communications Update**

The Board received the regular update on PR activity since the last meeting. The Board noted the introduction of a dashboard monitoring approach and changes in structure of PR Team.

108/15 **Decisions of the Black Country Executive Joint Committee held on 5th August 2015**

The decisions of the Black Country Joint Committee made at its meeting on 5th August 2015 were noted.

109/15 **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).

110/15 **Midlands Engine and Midlands Connect**

Further to Minute No. 95/15 above, the Board received a paper setting out proposals to provide focus for Midlands Engine. The Board also received a draft agenda for the meeting of Midlands Chairmen on 22nd September 2015. The Board noted the intention of the Secretary of State for BIS to lead on the Engine and the scope for him to visit the area to support and promote its development.

Agreed that the proposals for initiatives to be taken forward under the Midlands Engine banner and the draft agenda for the meeting of LEP Chairmen be noted.

111/15 **Local Growth Fund - Site Investigations – Process for Evaluating Commercial Bids**

Further to Minute No. 97/15 above, the Board received a report outlining an evaluation process for site investigation bids against LGF grant support and seeking approval for the first bid to progress through the evaluation process.

The Board also noted a possible approach for funding from a Company seeking further finance to continue in operation. The Company had been in discussion with Finance Birmingham.

Agreed:-

- 1) that authority be delegated to the Chairman and Simon Eastwood to approve bids up to £150,000 against the Site Investigations fund;
- 2) that the documented process for the evaluation of individual bids up to £150,000 be approved;
- 3) that the bid for £90,000 from Commercial Developers Trebor, for site investigations to be carried out at Popes Lane, Oldbury be approved.

112/15 **Date of Next Meeting**

19th October 2015.

113/15 **AoB – Lord Lieutenancy**

The Chairman referred to recent press reports concerning the position of the current Lord Lieutenant.

Agreed that a letter to be sent confirming the Board's view of the positive contribution he has made to the West Midlands' social and economic life.

(The meeting closed at 5.20 p.m.)