

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

**13<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at 3.00 pm**  
**Microsoft Teams**

**Present:**

Tom Westley	Chair;
Cllr. Adrian Andrew	Walsall MBC;
Cllr. Ian Brookfield	City of Wolverhampton;
Paul Brown	EY;
Kevin Davis	The Vine Trust;
Rachel Eade	Red Limited;
Simon Eastwood	Eastwood Consulting;
Cherry Elliott	Higgs & Sons;
Chris Handy	Accord Group;
Cllr. Patrick Harley	Dudley MBC;
Ninder Johal	Nachural Communications;
Prof Nazira Karodia	University of Wolverhampton;
Prof Geoff Layer	University of Wolverhampton;
Cllr. Danny Millard	Sandwell MBC
Jatinder Sharma	Walsall College; and
Amanda Tomlinson	Black Country Housing Group.

**In Attendance:**

Sarah Middleton	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Kevin O'Keefe	Dudley MBC;
Richard Lawrence	City of Wolverhampton;
Katherine Birch	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Lara Cragg	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Prof Delma Dwight	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Jaspal Sohal	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Stuart Everton	Black Country Transport Team;
Alison Guerra	Walsall MBC;
Kelly Valente	Walsall MBC; and
Hywel Ruddick	Black Country Consortium Ltd.

**Apologies:**

Councillors Mike Bird and Maria Crompton and Lindsey Flynn

## **Governance**

99/20

### **Declarations of Interest**

Tom Westley advised of his non-pecuniary interest as a Governor of Dudley College, should any item on the Agenda reference Dudley College.

### **Min. No. 105 /20 - School of Architecture and Built Environment**

Profs. Nazira Karodia and Geoff Layer and Ninder Johal as employees and Governor respectively of University of Wolverhampton.

### **Min. No. 102/20 - Black Country Skills Factory**

Kevin Davis advised that The Vine Trust had benefitted from the Ladders Apprenticeships initiative, referenced in the report. The report was for information and no decisions thereon, to include the Ladders projects, was required.

### **Min 114/20 - Black Country Economic Recovery Prospectus**

Chris Handy, Simon Eastwood and Ninder Johal declared their respective interests as Board members of Accord Housing and advised that the Prospectus referenced Bilston Urban Village, Accord were involved in the development. It was noted that there was no decision on this item but instead a reference in the document, to the project.

### **Gifts and Hospitality**

There were no declarations of any gifts or hospitality received in by members their role as a LEP Board Member.

100/20

### **Public Minutes of Funding Sub-Group held on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2020**

**Agreed** that the minutes of the meeting of the LEP Board, held on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2020 be confirmed and approved the public minutes.

101/20 **Black Country Growth Hub Funding 2020/21**

Jaspal Sohal advised that the Chancellor in 2020 Budget renewed commitment to funding Growth Hubs beyond 2021 and committed an additional £10million to increase Growth Hub capacity across all 38 Growth Hubs. Arising from this the Black Country LEP was been granted a further £134,000 allocation for the 2020/21 financial year. The additional budget breakdown was listed in the report and it was noted that Board approval was required for the Accountable Body to amend the existing grant agreement.

**Agreed** that the LEP Board approve the Accountable Body (Walsall Council) to amend the existing grant agreement with the Black Country Consortium Ltd for the additional award of £134,000 from Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to fund the Black Country Growth Hub from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

102/20 **Black Country Skills Factory Update**

Sarah Middleton advised that the update provided was of the Black Country Skills Factory work immediately before, during the Covid-19 lockdown, between February 2020 and July 2020, and future work. It included the following Key Projects, working with Adults, Apprenticeships the two Careers Hubs, the Enterprise Adviser Network, Primary and support for other Careers Projects.

Chris Handy asked how the various initiatives reached out to the BAME community and Sarah Middleton advised that she would take that away and a further report would be submitted to provide facts and figures.

**Agreed**

- 1) that the LEP Board note the work undertaken by the Black Country Skills Factory between February 2020 and July 2020; and
- 2) that a further report be submitted to provide details of how the BAME community were engaged with the activities provided through the Black Country Skills Factory, to include the Careers and Enterprise Hub.

103/20 **Local Growth Deal - Advanced Science Engineering and Technology**

Simon Eastwood presented the report.

**Agreed** that the LEP Board:

- 1) Approves the Accountable Body for the Local Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to amending the Grant Agreement with Halesowen College to deliver the Local Growth Fund (LGF) funded elements of the Advanced Science, Engineering & Technology Centre project with delivery to continue in the 2020/21 financial year; and
- 2) Notes that this change request relates to the removal of the Follow-on Investment output.

104/20 **Local Growth Deal - Wolverhampton Interchange**

Simon Eastwood presented the report.

**Agreed** that the LEP Board Approves the Accountable Body for the Local Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to amending the Grant Agreement with Wolverhampton City Council to deliver the Local Growth Fund (LGF) funded elements of the Wolverhampton Interchange Project with delivery to commence in the 2020/21 financial year.

105/20 **Local Growth Deal - School of Architecture and Built Environment**

Simon Eastwood presented the report.

**Agreed** That the LEP Board:

- 1) Approves the Accountable Body for the Local Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to amending the Grant Agreement with the University of Wolverhampton to deliver the Local Growth Fund (LGF) funded elements of the School of Architecture and Built Environment project with delivery to continue in the 2020/21 financial year.
- 2) Notes that the Reprofile of the Change Request is detailed in paragraph 3.2, and moves £919,888 out of 2019/20 year into 2020/21, with no overall change to the total allocation of £3,520,000 over the project lifecycle.

(NB – Prof Geoff Layer, Prof Nazira Karodia and Ninder Johal declared their respective interests and left the meeting during the consideration of this item.)

106/20 **Draft Employment & Skills Theme Advisory Board – 19<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

Prof Nazira Karodia advised of the items discussed at the meeting to include the impact of Covid19, the Black Country Skills Factory and Apprenticeships.

**Agreed** that the Draft Employment & Skills Theme Advisory Board – 19<sup>th</sup> May 2020

107/20 **Black Country Executive Joint Committee Decisions – 20th May 2020 (Information)**

Sarah Middleton advised of the decisions made at the Black Country Executive Joint Committee, which in the main were confirmations of the decisions made by through the LEP Board and for information.

**Agreed** that the LEP Board receive and note the decisions of the Black Country Executive Joint Committee Decisions, held on 20th May 2020, to include confirmation of the following grant approvals: -

- a) Growing Places Fund – Daisy Bank Site Investigation – Amendment to Existing Grant Agreement;
- b) Growing Places Fund – Wolverhampton Environment Centre Site Investigation – Amendment to Existing Grant Agreement;
- c) Growing Places Fund – WM5G Project Black Country LEP Development Contribution – Grant Agreement;
- d) Black Country Land and Property Investment Fund – Iron Park Moxley – Grant Agreement Approval;
- e) Black Country Land and Property Investment Fund – Phoenix 10 – Amendment to Existing Grant Agreement;
- f) Black Country Land and Property Investment Fund – Sandwell Housing Gap Funding – Phase 1 – Grant Agreement Approval;
- g) Black Country Land and Property Investment Fund – Music Institute – Programme Change;
- h) Black Country Enterprise Zone – Boxpool – Grant Agreement Approval;
- i) Black Country Growth Hub – Growth Hub Funding Agreement Approval 2020/21;
- j) Black Country Local Growth Deal – Woods Lane Phase 2 – Amendment to Existing Grant Agreement;

- k) Black Country Local Growth Deal – City Learning Quarter Site Investigation – Amendment to Existing Grant Agreement;
- l) Black Country Local Growth Deal – Fab Kit Fab Lab – Amendment to Existing Grant Agreement;
- m) Black Country Local Growth Deal – M6 Junction 10 – Amendment to Existing Grant Agreement; and
- n) Black Country LEP Assurance Framework – Revised Appendix 25.

108/20 **PR and Communications Report (Information)**

Ninder Johal advised of the Black Country UNESCO Geopark announcement and thanked Members who had shared the news.

He also highlighted that the Prime Minister had visited Dudley and reiterated the Government's levelling up agenda.

**Agreed** that the LEP Board receive and note the update.

109/20 **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 under Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 for the reasons stated on the agenda'

Paragraph 3

Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

110/20 **Private Minutes of the LEP Board held on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2020**

**Agreed** that the private minutes of the meeting of the LEP Board, held on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2020 be confirmed and approved the public minutes.

111/20 **Private Minutes of the FSG held on 17<sup>th</sup> June and 1<sup>st</sup> July respectively**

**Agreed** that the private minutes of the meetings held on 17<sup>th</sup> June and 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020 be confirmed and approved.

**Policy Update - Covid19 – BC LEP Activity and National and Regional Activity**

Sarah Middleton provided an update through the BC LEPs involvement in national and region activity to include the Secretary of State, a European Regional Development Fund update, the LEP Network WM Chairs meetings, WMCA Prospectus, LEP Ministerial Round Table, the LEP Board Recruitment and the Secretary for State for MHCLG submission and further letter

In regard to the ERDF Update and Response to COVID19, greater flexibility to fund more of a project's costs (the 'intervention rate') had been provided as an emergency measure that enabled the ERDF to fund up to 100% of a project's costs for a limited period. In most cases, match funding remained in place and would continue to be vital for ERDF projects. This flexibility they can now fund a limited range of projects at a higher intervention rate, specifically COVID-19 response activities that addressed priorities across the country (e.g. the Reopening High Streets Safely Fund). She added that businesses experiencing short-term financial difficulties that could be classified as Undertakings in Difficulty (UiD), were previously ineligible for ERDF support. EU regulations had now been permanently changed to allow ERDF to support UiDs where this was allowed under State Aid rules.

In regard to LEP Recruitment, Sarah Middleton advised that 4 members were scheduled to stand down at the end of September and that expressions of interest had been received and others were being actively sought. Given the National Assurance Framework and Strengthening LEP requirements it was noted that the recruitment would also need to consider the gender and ethnicity balance of the Board so that the LEP Board continued to reflect the BC community.

**Agreed** that the LEP Board receive and steer next steps whilst also noting the following updates provided: -

- a) ERDF Update and Response to COVID19
- b) LEP Network – WM Chair meetings  
Update on meetings
- c) WMCA Prospectus  
Links to WMCA prospectus on green growth and their 2020 Prospectus for Growth.
- d) LEP Board Recruitment

- e) Secretary for State for MHCLG submission and further letter
- f) Secretary of State MHCLG – Housing and Planning Update
- g) Further Education Colleges Capital Fund 2020-21 – Secretary of State for Education
- h) Enterprise Zones.

113/20

### **Sector Actions Plans - Focus Advanced Manufacturing**

Prof Delma Dwight provided an overview of the Economic Intelligence Unit data, to include the ten transformational sectors. She advised that:

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- Furlough data was being monitored and that there was a transfer being seen from furlough to redundancy;
- Sector Insights – Creative Jobs had reduced by 1/5;
- Retail had seen a drop of 68% in footfall.
- The Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) was at 50.4% across the West and East Midlands which was a positive market indicator.

Ninder Johal asked as a region what economic shape was the BC in. He was advised that whilst the furlough data was negative, a PMI greater than 50 was positive and it was felt that there were signs the economy was picking up. However overall, the BC performance was approximately in the middle. The Chair advised that this presented an opportunity for some messages.

Ninder Johal noted that the service sector had taken the biggest hit.

Jatinder Sharma advised that the unemployment data in Walsall was quite stark with the east of the town that is owner/proprietor businesses and the self-employed being hardest hit. He stated that this needed to be considered alongside initiatives to tackle youth unemployment.

Amanda Tomlinson referenced the data in the context of confidence levels, linked with the recovery plans and investment requirements and asked which were the hardest hit sectors. Whilst she was advised that it was a mixed picture primarily manufacturing and construction had been hardest hit. The Chair added that it had affected companies cashflows.

Sarah Middleton advised that the need to review the sectors data was required and consider medium- and longer-term support for the communities and families impacted. It was noted that although all sectors were different, aerospace had taken the biggest impact with the view that it would take between 3-5 years to get back to former levels.



Sarah Middleton referenced the Jenrick letter and £66.1m of funding for the West Midlands. Whilst the BC was clear on priorities the requirements was for short-term “shovel ready” projects and the BC submission was a strong list of 6 projects which would have realised a reasonable share of the funding for the BC.

Simon Eastwood advised of the current position and stated that the process had been CA led projects, with the BC securing 2 projects in the submission – National Brownfield Institute - £17.5m and VLR - £13m. There was also an element of 5G at approximately £1m. Whilst it had not been an ideal process there had been a need to get the best deal for the BC. He advised that subsequently each project had been asked to reduce their ask by 14% and sought the view of the meeting.

There were a number of comments on the appropriateness of the funding allocation being made at a WM regional level and the projects supported in the process, as opposed to BC “shovel ready” projects that would bring a benefit to the whole WM region. There was general consensus that the process should have been at a local level.

Sarah Middleton noted the comments and stated that there was a need, with BC local authority Chief Executives and Heads of Regeneration, to reposition the Black Country narrative to ensure the BC Asks were heard in regard to Garden City, VLR and other flagship initiatives, so that it was understood they not only benefitted the BC but the wider region.

### **Advanced Manufacturing**

Rachel Eade provided an overview of the work done to reposition the BC area in relation to Advanced Manufacturing, to include Industry 4.0 and the digitisation of services; the Skills Factory; exports; the Growth Hub. She advised that early stage plans were process and that there was engagement with universities across the region.

**Agreed** that the LEP Board: -

- 1) note the comments of Board Members in relation to the outcome of the Jenrick letter be noted and that officers of the LEP and Local Authorities work together to reposition the Black Country narrative in respect of the project pipeline, for the WM region to understand the wider benefits;
- 2) receive the Sector Action plans, noting the detailed update on the Advanced Manufacturing Centre; and

- 3) note that there would be a focus on the other Sector Actions Plans over the forthcoming meetings.

114/20 **Black Country Economic Recovery Prospectus**

The Recovery Plan was presented and it was noted that the Sector work would be an important feature of the plan, thus other sectors would be brought before the Board.

**Agreed** that the LEP Board receive the Black Country Recovery Prospectus and note that feedback should be submitted direct to the Secretariat.

115/20 **Energy Decarbonisation Presentation**

Matthew Rhodes advised that there had been some progress with infrastructure fund and energy transition ask at CA level; significant progress on a regional fuel poverty programme; successful completion of phase 1 of Repowering the Black Country; a significant follow-up opportunity for Black Country, with a Ministerial meeting scheduled on 20 July; bidding for £1.5M follow up funding; a “live” ask for £30M via the Recovery Programme; and a plan to attract £1bn private finance.

He advised that the Repowering the Black Country sets out a 10 year vision to decarbonise Black Country industry and that the core concept was a progressive development of a new kind of industrial park built around circular economy and zero carbon principles with 16 potential sites identified within existing spatial plans and hope to start developing four demonstrators in phase 2 of the project.

He detailed the circular economy proposal for Phoenix 10 and advised that if there ten such sites, then zero carbon could be delivered by 2030.

The immediate next steps were to secure enabling funding for phase 2 of the project to include - Emergency funding and budget asks into government for £30M; Innovate UK Phase 2 bid - £1.5M; and direct approaches to Minister and Mayor.

Sarah Middleton advised that the Energy Decarbonisation should link in with the BC Plan regarding site identification for future developments.

The Chair advised that once the region had examples of how energy decarbonisation through the circular economy worked, it would make the BC a more attractive location for businesses.

**Agreed** that the Energy Decarbonisation update be received and noted.

## **Delivery**

### 116/20 **Risk Register – Covid19 Programme Risk update**

Lara Smith advised that and advised that a revised version would be reported to the Board.

**Agreed** that the LEP Board received and noted the Risk Register to include the Covid19 Programme Risk update.

### 117/20 **Black Country Local Programme Dashboards**

The new indexed suite of Dashboards was presented: -

- Growth Deal In Flight Current Financial Year
- Growth Deal Future Years
- Black Country Pipeline
- Land and Property Investment Fund
- Growing Places
- Enterprise Zones

**Agreed** that the update be noted.

### 118/20 **Local Growth Fund - Very Light Rail Test Track 1**

Simon Eastwood presented the report and, it was

**Agreed** that the LEP Board:

- 1) Approves the Accountable Body for the Local Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to amending the Grant Agreement with Dudley Council to deliver the Local Growth Fund (LGF) funded elements of the Hub to Home Transport Innovation Centre and Test Track Project: Very Light Rail and Autonomous Technologies – Test Track project with delivery to continue in the 2020/21 financial year.
- 2) Notes that this additional funding request relates to the funding request detailed in the report.

119/20 **Date of Next meeting**

**Agreed** that the LEP Board note that the next meeting would be held on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

(The meeting closed at 4.50pm)

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