

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

**21<sup>st</sup> September 2020 at 3.00 pm**  
**Microsoft Teams**

**Present:**

Tom Westley	Chair;
Paul Brown	EY;
Cllr. Maria Crompton	Sandwell MBC;
Kevin Davis	The Vine Trust;
Rachel Eade	Red Limited;
Simon Eastwood	Eastwood Consulting;
Cherry Elliott	Higgs & Sons;
Lindsey Flynn	Well Associates;
Chris Handy	Accord Group;
Prof Nazira Karodia	University of Wolverhampton;
Prof Geoff Layer	University of Wolverhampton;
Jatinder Sharma	Walsall College;
Amanda Tomlinson	Black Country Housing Group;
and	
Cllr. David Vickers	Dudley MBC.

**In Attendance:**

Cllr. Brian Edwards	South Staffordshire DC;
Sarah Middleton	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Katherine Birch	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Dan Carins	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Prof Delma Dwight	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Alison Guerra	Walsall MBC;
Mark Lavender	Walsall MBC;
Kelly Valente	Walsall MBC;
Michelle Nutt	BEIS; and
Hywel Ruddick	Black Country Consortium Ltd.

**Apologies:**

Councillors Adrian Andrew, Mike Bird, Ian Brookfield and Patrick Harley and Ninder Johal.

145/20 **Declarations of Interest and Gift Register**

**Agreed** that it be noted that no declarations were made in respect of items on the Agenda and no gifts or hospitality over the value of £50 were declared.

146/20 **Public Minutes of the LEP Board held on 20th August 2020**

**Agreed** that the Board confirm and approve the Minutes of the LEP Board held on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020.

14720 **Policy Update**

**a) BEIS – Mid-Year Review**

Sarah Middleton advised the meeting with BEIS was taking place tomorrow. Michelle Nutt added that it would be a light touch meeting to review LGF and other funding streams. It would also provide an opportunity to consider actions from the Annual Review and provide for a two-way conversation.

**b) LEP Network –**

- **Recovery Plan**
- **Chancellor Statement**
- **UK Collaboratorium Research on Infrastructure and Cities**

The updates were highlighted.

**EIU**

**a) Economic Intelligence Unit**

- **Economic Impact Dashboard**

Prof Delma Dwight highlighted the economic statistics to include the number of claimants and youth claimants.

Jatinder Sharma advised that there was good engagement with the younger students, apprenticeships were quite healthy and once through the doors the students appeared to be content. He advised that across the BC colleges were working on a NEETs project, being led by Dudley FE College.

The Chair welcomed the comments, which were encouraging and asked what the impact of Brexit was on the economic monitoring. He was

advised that there appeared to be uncertainty with the latest trade deals on exports reduced.

Chris Handy queried if there was a sectoral view of claimants.

**Agreed** that the LEP Board receive and note the Policy Updates and EIU updates.

148/20

### **Growth Hub Peer Networks Programme Approval**

Dan Carins advised that BEIS was making a grant of £75,000 available to the Black Country LEP Growth Hub for the purpose of delivering peer network groups for businesses across the following sectors

- Rail
- Aerospace
- Construction
- Metals and Materials
- Health and Social Care

In order to create a strong link between the peer networks and the interventions contained in the WM LIS and its sector action plans, it is intended to create one peer network for each of the sectors. Providers will need to demonstrate a sound understanding on the WM LIS sector action plans, plus knowledge of the sector both nationally and locally, and have strong links to SMEs in the Black Country in the sectors.

The grant offered was based on  $5 \times £15,000 = £75,000$  and the meeting was advised that quotes would be sought from five different providers to deliver individual peer networking sessions for up to 15 SMEs registered in the Black Country, ending in March 2021, up to a maximum value of £15,000 including VAT. The report was seeking approval for the Accountable Body to enter into a grant agreement to enter into a grant agreement with the BC Consortium Ltd to deliver the project.

Kevin Davis advised if any considerations had been given to the demographics of the selected companies. Dan Carins advised that demographics could be considered for future projects but advised that the pilot was for the 5 industrial sectors advised and asked if the focus was for social enterprise companies. Kevin Davis advised that initially he was seeking peer networks for BAME communities and suggest if the peer groups were not targeting this area in Round 1 then it certainly should be included in the considerations for Round 2.

**Agreed** that the LEP Board approves the Accountable Body (Walsall Council) to enter into a grant agreement with the Black Country Consortium Ltd to deliver the Growth Hub Peer Networks programme.

149/20

**Local Growth Deal - Accessing Growth Springfield Interchange Change Request**

Simon Eastwood presented the report and it was,

**Agreed**

That the LEP Board approves the Accountable Body for the Growth Deal (Walsall Council) to proceed to amending the Grant Agreement with Wolverhampton City Council, to deliver the Local Growth Deal Fund (LGF) funded elements of the Accessing Growth Springfield Interchange project with delivery to commence in the 2020/21 financial year.

150/20

**PR and Communications Report**

Katherine Birch presented the PR and Communications Report and highlighted that the teams had:

- Continued to inform business of on-going COVID announcements cross referencing with Growth Hub accounts and continued to remain the most followed LEP on Twitter in the West Midlands.
- They were currently working with the West Midlands Cabinet Office in producing Black Country case study examples of successful Test and Trace implementation in businesses.
- There had been a number of press announcements in relation to our pipeline projects and Enterprise Zone which had gathered coverage.
- On Skills Factory a 'My Choices' brochure aimed at GCSE plus age demographic had been produced and would be released and promoted shortly.
- Active Black Country had seen an increase in publicity with the partnership recently appearing on Central TV. The next Rainbow Hour book which was part of the on-going campaign had been released. The campaign had been successful in increasing ABC exposure on social media.

Kevin Davis advised that he was meeting with media companies tomorrow and for future reference it would be good for Members to have a pipeline of forthcoming BC stories.

**Agreed** that the LEP Board note the PR and Communications Report.

151/20 **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.

**Exempt Information**

**Paragraph 3**  
**Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).**

152/20 **Minutes**

**Agreed** that the private minutes of the meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020 be received and confirmed as a correct record.

153/20 **Private Minutes of Funding Sub-Group held on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020**

**Agreed** that the LEP Board confirm and approve the minutes of the Funding Sub-Group held on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020, to include all recommendations and conditions contained therein.

154/20 **Policy Update – Midlands Connect Charter (Collaboration Agreement) Autumn 2020**

In the absence of the Director of Transport, Sarah Middleton advised that Midlands Connect maintained the transport strategy for the Midlands and stated that the collaboration agreement with Government had would attract funding into the Midlands region, which would be of benefit to the BC. The Chair welcomed the document and the provision of future funding.

Councillor Brian Edwards asked did the document tie into the Rail Interchange and the Chair advised that it should do as the Interchange project would improve connectivity across the West Midlands.

Sarah Middleton advised that there was an integrated rail plan for both freight and the interchange and agreed to investigate further and report back to Councillor Edwards.

**Agreed**

- 1) that the LEP Board strongly supporting the approach being undertaken by Midlands Connect in the development of the Midlands Connect Charter (Collaboration Agreement); and
- 2) that the action detailed in relation to the integrated rail plan be undertaken.

155/20 **Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) - update**

Members were advised of the CA CSR and the BC CSR asks, which encompassed residential, commercial and employment land and were underpinned by a £100m pipeline of projects. It was noted that the BC had natural capital with the UNESCO Geopark; there was important asks for skills; and that financial sustainability of funding were all reflected in the submission.

The Chair commented that there had never been such big challenges thus everything was in the pot.

Sarah Middleton highlighted the Life Sciences Sector ask in the bid for BC, where primarily it had a Birmingham focus in the CA ask. Prof Geoff Layer welcomed the ask and suggested it was something that could be taken up with Birmingham Colleges. Chris Handy also welcomed the Health and Social Science Hub ask and stated that he hoped there would be co-operation with other colleges. Jatinder Sharma advised that this would be the case.

**Agreed** that the LEP Board note the region's approach to the Comprehensive Spending Review and support the inclusion of the BC LEP priorities.

156/20 **BC Sector Plans update – Sector Insights**

**Agreed** that the LEP Board note the sector insight and approve the emerging actions to support sector development.

157/20 **Risk Register – Covid19 Programme Risk update**

Sarah Middleton advised that the document was for noting and reflected the latest information on identified risks.

**Agreed** that the Risk Register be noted.

158/20 **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 (PowerBi)
- Land and Property Investment Fund (LPIF)
- Growing Places
- Enterprise Zones

Sarah Middleton advised that work was well advanced with Verto “real-time” data which was reflected in the development of projects. She stated that confirmation of the final LGF payment and been received and a number of projects were on site.

**Agreed** that the update be noted.

159/20 **Project Management Office (PMO) and Single Accountable Body (SAB) - Management funding proposal**

Simon Eastwood presented the report, highlighting that the request was to provide continued funding to support the PMO and SAB management costs and, it was

**Agreed** that the LEP Board confirms:

- 1) The approval of capital allocations from the identified Growth deal over programming (formerly the Growing Places Fund) detailed in the private report.
- 2) Endorses that the administrative costs of supporting effective programme delivery and ongoing monitoring of schemes continue and are funded through the Growth Deal over programming as set out in Table 3 of the report detailed in the private report.

160/20 **Date of Next meeting**

**Agreed** that the LEP Board note the next meeting would take place on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

(The meeting closed at 4.00pm)