

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

23rd September 2019 at 3.00 pm
Seminar Room, Business Solutions Centre,
Wolverhampton Science Park, Glaisher Drive, Wolverhampton

Present:

Stewart Towe	Hadleys;
Cllr. Adrian Andrew	Walsall MBC;
Cllr. Ian Brookfield	City of Wolverhampton;
Kevin Davis	The Vine Trust;
Cllr. Yvonne Davies	Sandwell MBC;
Prof Jackie Dunne	University of Wolverhampton;
Simon Eastwood	Eastwood Consulting;
Cllr. Ian Kettle	Dudley MBC;
Lindsey Flynn	Well Associates;
Prof Geoff Layer	University of Wolverhampton;
Tom Westley	Westley Group; and
Deborah Williams	Governance Consultant.

In Attendance:

Cllr. Harman Banger	City of Wolverhampton
Helen Paterson	Walsall MBC;
James Walsh	Walsall MBC;
Sarah Middleton	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Aaron Toussaint	BEIS;
Garth Wilson	BEIS;
Richard Lawrence	City of Wolverhampton;
Stuart Everton	City of Wolverhampton;
Lara Cragg	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Katherine Birch	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Delma Dwight	Black Country Consortium Ltd;
Kelly Valente	Walsall MBC; and
Hywel Ruddick	Black Country Consortium Ltd.

Apologies: Councillors Mike Bird and Patrick Harley and Paul Brown, Chris Handy, Ninder Johal and Deborah Williams.

Public – 0

145/19 **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of Interest were received.

There was nothing to add to the Gift Register.

146/19 **Minutes**

The public minutes of the meeting held on 20th August 2019 were submitted.

Agreed that the public minutes of the meeting held on 20th August 2019 were received and confirmed as correct.

Strategy

147/19 **Policy Update**

Sarah Middleton provided the Policy Update on the following items: -

- LEP Mid-Year Review
- Black Country Consortium Ltd Annual General Meeting
- Land and Property Investment Fund
- Towns Fund
- Midlands Engine Strategy
- Growth Hubs
- New CEO at the LEP Network and revised Network Terms of Reference
- Free Ports

She referenced the Growth Hubs update and highlighted that across the West Midlands the 6 LEP Chairs and Executives already meet as a group and worked together. Thus, the Growth Hub collaboration with Coventry and Warwickshire LEP's Growth Hub as lead should work well, as there were relationships already in place.

She referenced Free Ports and highlighted that work was being undertaken with the CA to identify a free port for the West Midlands.

Delma Dwight presented the following EIU statistics to the Board: -

- **Business Start-up Data and Banksearch**– Noted that the data from January 2019 to July 2019 had shown a positive indicator with a BC figure of 8.8% business starts, this compared with 1.0% for the West Midlands and 2.0% nationally.

Tom Westley asked if there could be further analysis undertaken as some start-ups will have arose because of larger firms failing, such as Carillion. He commented that manufacturing companies were not performing so well but that the service sector was.

Sarah Middleton stated that would be a need to monitor business failures as well as start-ups.

- **Diversity and Representation Update** – it was noted that there was a link between Board diversity and foreign ownership, with 4 out of 7 of these companies having male only boards.

In regard to the Women leaders event the meeting was advised that the organisers had not collected data on diversity but that they would do going forward.

- **Additional Innovation Update** –
- **Fuel Poverty, Excess Winter deaths and its causes** – it was noted that there were issues of affordability and poor-quality housing that gave rise to fuel poverty.

Councillor Yvonne Davies added that there were issues for people who paid too much for their fuel and if they did not switch supplier this would continue.

Tom Westley advised that the Energy Capital work was looking at a lowest tariff champion.

Agreed that the LEP Board note the updates.

148/19 **Black Country Brexit Monitoring DRAFT – September 2019**

Delma Dwight presented the report and advised that the information was restricted to the West Midlands regional economy and that the regional gross domestic product (GDP) was reported on a quarterly basis.

The Chair welcomed the update and noted that whilst the region was improving above the national average, however he observed that the Black Country improvement had been from a lower starting base thus there was a need to go beyond the national average growth year on year.

Lindsey Flynn welcomed the slides but asked if productivity could be incorporated into future presentations.

Simon Eastwood advised that it was important that some form of transitional funding was identified as Growth Deal came to an end to enable the local economy to continue in the right direction.

Agreed that the LEP Board: -

- 1) that the Board note the Brexit Monitoring information; and
- 2) that the report be submitted on a quarterly basis.

149/19

Board Recruitment

Sarah Middleton advised that there had been progress to fill the vacancies created by increasing the Board membership to twenty, which would enable the Board to achieve the gender balance in line with the requirements of the National Assurance Framework.

Reference was made to the timetable for the recruitment of the new LEP Chair, with the aim to have a new Chair in December. This would be a three-pronged approach – with an open advert; utilise experts in board recruitment; and the use of local and regional networks.

With national changes coming to a head it was necessary to ensure that board members had the right skills sets and capacity to meet forthcoming challenges.

Councillor Yvonne Davies advised that she would not be able to attend the published Nominations Committee interviews and it was noted that her involvement, as Diversity Champion, would need to be accommodated.

The Chair advised that he had been the Chair of the informal LEP Board before it came into official recognition in 2012. He stated that it made sense for the new Chair to commence from December onwards, as he could assist with the handover and going forwards would he

would be willing to engage with Away Days etc. Tom Westley observed that Paul Brown and other private sector Board members had expressed their willingness, despite leaving the main LEP Board, to continue their involvement with areas of specialty. The Chair advised that they could act as ambassadors for these areas and assist with the transition period.

Agreed that the LEP Board notes the process being adopted and the identified steps being taken in relation to Board recruitment.

Delivery

150/19 **Local Growth Fund – Dudley Town Centre Improvement Programme Change**

Simon Eastwood advised that there had been changes to the contracted outputs with less jobs delivered or secured but that the housing output had increased from 5 to 67, thus he highlighted that overall it had been a successful project.

Agreed that the LEP Board: -

- 1) Approves the Accountable Body for the 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 Dudley Town Centre Improvement Programme project to enable finalisation of outputs and project closure.
- 2) Notes that this change request relates to a variance in outputs.

151/19 **Local Growth Fund – Chances Glassworks**

Simon Eastwood presented the report for Chances Glassworks and highlighted that whilst it was felt to be a worthwhile and important project there was a need to terminate the existing grant agreement. He advised that this would not prevent the project coming forward with a funding application in future.

The Chair commented that he would welcome a solution to be found in the future and Councillor Yvonne Davies acknowledged that it was a complicated project that required a solution.

Agreed that the LEP Board: -

- 1) Approves the Accountable Body (Walsall Council) to proceed to terminate the existing Grant Agreement with Sandwell Council to deliver the Local Growth Fund (LGF) funded elements of the Chances Glassworks Site Assembly project.
- 2) Instructs the Accountable Body (Walsall Council) to inform Sandwell Council of the decision.
- 3) Notes the withdrawal for the Chances Glassworks Site Assembly project from within the Growth Deal Programme.

152/19 **Local Programmes – Dashboard**

Lara Cragg presented the dashboards.

Growth Deal – the meeting was advised that that the programme for the year had been £33m, which had been £8m over programmed and it was noted that the target was met. The focus now would be monitoring outputs.

Land and Property Investment Fund (LPIF) – it was noted that the £53m was fully committed and work was being undertaken to seek a release of the second tranche of funding, or part thereof.

Helen Paterson referenced the price of assurance work being undertaken with the Combined Authority and asked if was duplicating what had already been done locally.

The Chair commented that whilst it could be accepted that it was constructive to have scrutiny of the systems in place regarding LPIF spend and monitoring, the Board would not expect a detailed interrogation of the projects supported through the fund.

Enterprise Zones (EZ) – it was noted that there would be a new tool to monitor the EZ schemes across the Black Country which was to be adopted by the three local authorities with a scheme. Kelly Valente added that the initial findings would be reported through the EZ Implementation Group and advised that she was reliant on continuous feedback from all partners.

Growing Places – it was noted that these funds would now be used to address some of the over programming in the Growth Deal.

Agreed

1) that the updates on the following dashboards be noted: -

- In flight Current Financial Year
- Future Years
- Pipeline
- LPIF (Public)
- Growing Priority Sectors
- Growing Places
- Enterprise Zones
- Transport

2) that the CA be advised of the concerns of the LEP Board regarding the issue of duplication in respect of the CA review of the LPIF spending and outputs, as outlined above.

153/19 **Minutes of the Funding Sub-Group held on 4th September 2019**

Simon Eastwood presented the Minutes of the Funding Sub-Group held on 4th September 2019.

Agreed that the LEP Board to confirm and approve the minutes of the meeting held on 4th September 2019.

154/19 **Draft Minutes of the Competitiveness Theme Advisory Board held on 30th May 2019**

Sarah Middleton presented the Minutes of the Competitiveness Theme Advisory Board held on 30th May 2019 for information.

Agreed that the LEP Board note the contents of the draft minutes of the meeting of the Competitiveness Theme Advisory Board held on 30th May 2019.

155/19 **Minutes of the Place Making & Land Theme Advisory Board held on 12th June 2019**

Sarah Middleton presented the Minutes of the Place Making & Land Theme Advisory Board held on 12th June 2019 for information.

Agreed that the LEP Board note the contents of the draft minutes of the meeting of the Place Making & Land Theme Advisory Board held on 12th June 2019.

156/19 **PR and Communications**

Katherine Birch provide the update and highlighted the communications on the skills factory, the careers hub, the LEP Board recruitment campaign and local media coverage.

Agreed that the PR and Communications dashboards for July and August be received and noted.

157/19 **Date of Next meeting**

Agreed that the LEP Board note that the next meeting would be held on Monday, 21st October 2019 at Wolverhampton Science Park.

158/19 **Exclusion of 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.

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

Governance

159/19 **Private Minutes of the LEP Board held on 20th August 2019**

The Chair presented the private minutes of the LEP Board held on 20th August 2019.

Simon Eastwood advised that for clarity, whilst the preamble to the minute referenced the figure from the Growing Places Fund, the decision should also include this sum.

Thus Minute 142/19 Local Growth Fund - Very Light Rail Main Scheme should be amended to read: -

- 1) Approves the Accountable Body for the Local Growth Deal programme (Walsall Council) to proceed to enter into a Grant Agreement and/or other appropriate documentation, with Dudley Council to deliver the Local Growth Deal funded elements of the

Very Light Rail Test Track Project, **to a value of (*detailed in the private minutes*)** the Growing Places Fund to support for any Local Growth Deal over-programming required; and

Agreed that the Private Minutes of the LEP Board meeting held on 20th August 2019 and subject to the amendment to Minute No 142 Local Growth Fund - Very Light Rail Main Scheme detailed above, be received and confirmed as a correct record.

160/19 **Risk Register**

Lara Cragg provided an update to the Board referencing risks around different funding streams to include Land and Property Investment Fund, Local Growth Deal, Growing places Fund and Enterprise Zones.

James Walsh queried if the risk impact was measured and it was highlighted that risks were measured against the chance of occurring.

Agreed that the Risk Registers be received and noted.

Delivery – Local Growth Fund

161/19 **Local Growth Fund – City Learning Quarter**

Simon Eastwood advised that consideration of the City Learning Quarter be deferred for further consideration by the Funding Sub-Group.

Agreed that consideration of the City Learning Quarter be deferred.

(The meeting closed at 3.55pm)