**Agenda Item 5 - Annex to the Chief Executive’s Report**

**Sub-group Updates:**

Employer Skills Board

1. The Employer Skills Board met on 29th April and welcomed a representative from Network Rail to the Board.  The Board has a final vacancy for a representative from the finance and professional sector to reach full capacity.

The meeting focused on ESF and contributed to ITT development for the 871 Collaboration ‘Skills for Growth’ project.  The project aims to support sector specific industry and provider collaborations to develop training programmes to meet the skills needs identified by industry and currently not eligible for mainstream funding.

* Digital Platforms
* Rail
* Life Science
* Engineering – particularly heavy plant/ nuclear
* Health
* Apprenticeship Academies
* Co-habiting space to deliver multi agency approach – incubator space. Pre start up, start up.

Provider Skills Board

1. The parallel Provider Advisory Board also met in April and agreed it revised Terms of Reference to reflect its role in supporting the Employer Board to carry out its responsibilities.  The Employer Board has charged the Provider Board with co-ordinating a joint meeting with the college consortium to understand the implications of the Area Based Review, how quality will be addressed and the future curriculum offer of the sector

Housing Strategy Board

1. The Board last met in November 2015. Dates and venues for the 2016 calendar year have been agreed with the first meeting scheduled for the 15th June 2016. Membership of the Board has been reviewed and an invitation is to be issued to a Land Agent to join the Board to provide a further private sector perspective on some of the challenges faced in bringing schemes to market. A representative from Shelter has also been invited to join the Board but as yet this has not been accepted.

Growth Hub Group

1. The Growth Strategy Group last met as a sub Group to discuss how the development of the Growth Hub should be taken forward on the 26th of April. It will report back to the Growth Strategy group on 24 March 2016. The Group discussed the draft Growth Hub Business Plan setting out the strategic direction of the Growth Hub. It was agreed that the Business Plan would be simplified and would focus on the added value of the Hub and the relationship between the Growth Hub commissioned by the LEP and the products delivered by providers.   The Growth Hub agreed to provide an overview of the sectors currently provided with support and the expertise currently available to enable the group to consider how any gaps should be addressed.

Rural Strategy Board

1. LEP Rural Strategy Board last met on Thursday 23rd February 2016 at Thornton University of Chester. Key items included providing strategic fit for proposed rural growth business support projects and agreeing Agritech consultancy work brief. Full draft Minutes attached.

The Innovation Group

1. The Innovation Group has reviewed and updated its Terms of Reference and has been actively working to identify additional sector-specific representation on the group. Initial thinking is being progressed around the development of an Innovation Strategy for the LEP and identification of possible sources of funding to support innovation activity. The main areas of focus at this time are energy, advanced manufacturing and science.

The group is also providing input to the Greater Manchester and East Cheshire Science and Innovation Audit process. In advance of this work has been undertaken to pull together information on existing science and innovation assets within the sub-region.

ESIF Low Carbon Economy Update

1. Since the last Low Carbon Group there have been several developments:

* Two projects came in as a result of the August 15 ERDF Low Carbon Call one has gone through to stage 2 appraisal and the other has withdrawn.
* The ESIF Low Carbon Action Plan (LCAP) is available on the LEP website and it seems £10,000 well spent as people are using it in bid development.
* There is still an issue around lack of match and incomplete guidance being provided. The NW team at DCLG have gone back to the centre with a list of questions and we await answers to we can continue planning. One question being a request to confirm that no nuclear related business will be eligible for support

under ERDF, which, if confirmed, will be a disappointment to Cheshire & Warrington.

* There is a call out at the moment for £7m. This is to encourage projects to come forward, even it not ready, so we can start to development for any future calls. We have had approximately six enquiries. The closing date is 27th May 2016.