



BOARD MEETING

**Minutes of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership Board Meeting
held on 15th July 2020, at 4.30pm by video conference call**

Present:

Clare Hayward(Chair)	Trevor Brocklebank	Robert Mee	Chris Hindley
Stephen Kinsey	Graeme Bristow	Cllr Craig Browne	Nicola Dunbar
Peter Broxton	John Downes	Cllr Louise Gittins	Eunice Simmons

In attendance:

Philip Cox	Ian Brooks	Steve Park	Adrian Bull
Charlie Seward	Alex Thompson	Joe Toward	Maggie Chen
Yulanda Duff	Connor Diskin	Frank Jordan	

Apologies

Cllr Russ Bowden	Angie Robinson	Nichola Newton	Joe Manning
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Agenda Item 1: Apologies and Introductions

1.1 Clare Hayward welcomed Board Members and extended a warm welcome to those joining from the “Youth Board” (the name remains under consideration) the first time (JT, MC, YD, CT). Apologies were received as above.

Agenda Item 2: Conflicts of Interest

2.1 Conflicts were noted in respect of Item 13.

Agenda Item 3: Public Presentation

3.1 There was no public presentations.

Agenda Item 4: Minutes of the Meeting held on 13th May 2020

4.1 The minutes of 13th May 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record.

4.2 There were no matters arising.

Agenda Item 5: Annual Report of the Finance and audit Committee

5.1 Chris Hindley, acting chair of the F&A Committee, presented a report summarising the activities over the year 2019-2020, for the purpose of providing assurance to the board and directors, prior to their

considering Item 6 on the agenda. In approving the annual accounts, directors' declare they have fulfilled their responsibilities toward the company, its' solvency and for the preparation of the accounts, and the work of the F&A committee helps ensure that these responsibilities are collectively discharged.

5.2 The Board approved the report.

Agenda Item 6: Approval of the Annual Report and Accounts

6.1 Ian Brooks presented the annual report and accounts for the year ended 31st March 2020, highlighting that the external auditors have given an unqualified opinion, and that the accounts represented a true and fair reflection of the company financial position.

6.2 Attention was drawn to a requirement on all companies to consider the impact of Covid-19 and that the company would remain solvent for the foreseeable future. The LEP is a public funded organisation and its funding in the short to medium term has not been materially impacted.

6.3 In summary, the turnover of the LEP had grown to £3.3M from £2.2M, and the company reported a small surplus of £26k. Growth had largely come from delivery programmes such as NP11, the "Pledge", and the Growth and Skills Hub which are now included for the full year. The inclusion of those programmes had doubled the staff numbers from 13 to 26, posts who are often part time. Hence the increase in the number of staff posts, does not result in a proportionate increase in the wages bill.

6.4 In response to a question from GB, IB explained there is no requirement for the LEP to consolidate Marketing Cheshire which prepares its own set of annual accounts. The LEP liability as the sole member of Marketing Cheshire is limited to £1, which is shown as an investment within the LEP accounts. AB confirmed that the Finance and Audit Committee of Marketing Cheshire had received and approved its annual report and accounts, the day before this board meeting. The accounts were also unqualified.

6.5 TB asked why the section for risks was not fuller, when other (larger) organisations provide deeper analysis. IB explained that the size of the LEP placed no requirement on small companies for full disclosure within the report but that risks were routinely reviewed by the executive, and by both P&I and the Finance and Audit committees. It was agreed to bring the risk register to a future board meeting.

ACTION: IB

6.6 PC reminded board members that the LEP role and responsibilities extend to investing, on average, around £30M per annum, and that the item under discussion referred to the accounts of the operational company for the LEP. The bulk of investment funds are held by Cheshire East Borough Council, the Accountable Body, on behalf of the LEP, and the accounts constitute a relatively small proportion of the financial resources at the disposal of the LEP.

6.7 RM identified that some of the figures in the directors' report needed updating, and subject to those changes being made, Clare Hayward asked board member to show their agreement to the approval of Annual Report and Accounts. Approval was duly given and IB will arrange signatures accordingly.

Agenda Item 7: Chief Executive's Report

7.1 Philip Cox presented his report highlighting the Chancellor's recent announcement to fund a significant number of job placements particularly for young people. The challenge will now be to create opportunities with businesses in sufficient numbers to meet the Government commitment.

7.2 PC reported that the structure set up in response to Covid-19 was shifting emphasis. The Strategic Command Cell, which had focussed on the immediate health crisis and associated issues, was reducing levels of activity, but would re-invigorate should a second wave of Covid cases appear. Work on the economic impact was continuing at pace.

7.3 Cheshire and Warrington's recent bid for funding from the Get Building Fund had been signed off by the Secretary of State, the projects and funding would be discussed in more detail under item 13.

7.4 ES added that further to the involvement of the Dean of the Business School, greater impetus was being provided to drive up volumes for the Accelerate programme.

7.5 The board recognised the broad scope of initiatives in which LEP and Marketing Cheshire staff have been engaged over the past few months and, with Catherine Walker, soon to move on from her post as Director of Communications, extended thanks to her and the marketing team.

Agenda Item 8: LEP Purpose, Vision and Strategy

8.1 With consensus built previously around the sub-region's ambition to be the healthiest, most sustainable, most inclusive and fastest growing economy, Clare Hayward led a discussion focussed on measures and Key Performance indicators which might be used to track progress. To support the discussion, a draft slide exploring possible KPIs was presented.

8.2 The board was keen to ensure that in setting KPIs, the following points were taken into consideration:

- a strong link was made between health of the population and economic prosperity,
- that mental health was identified separately
- that sustainability encompasses more than decarbonisation,
- while inward investment to boost jobs would be important in coming months and years, the LEP should be prepared to trade off, for the better good, jobs creation if those jobs were in carbon dependent sectors.
- Inclusivity includes access to good, fair jobs which narrow the economic divide between different socio-economic groups.
- Develop guidance to support decision making.

8.3 An underpinning "strapline" was discussed with broad consensus achieved to "Building a Better Future Together for Cheshire & Warrington".

8.4 The Board sub-groups will be reconvened to continue the discussion on suitable KPIs.

Agenda Item 9: Board Committees / Vacancies

9.1 The paper setting out a review of board committees will require further discussion and development. Questions were raised about the proposal to include Digital Connectivity within the remit of the Local Transport Board on grounds including that the economic timescale of digital infrastructure is considerably shorter than that used for physical transport infrastructure.

9.2 Questions were also raised about the proposed remit of the Science Corridor and Innovation Board.

9.3 It was agreed to give the item further consideration outside the board.

ACTION: CH/PC

Agenda Item 10: Business Restructuring Grants

10.1 The paper served to update the board on progress towards introducing a grants scheme, funded from Growing Places Fund, initially as a pilot to the value of £500k. The general purposes and principles of the scheme had already been discussed by the board.

10.2 Intelligence from the Growth Hub and other sources had refined the proposal such that grant applications would be between £1,000 to £5,000, with a minimum of 150 firms receiving support. Work had progressed on procuring an organisation to administer the programme, on the LEP's behalf, with Blue Orchid being the successful tender applicant.

10.3 Board members expressed a desire to extend the scheme and to consider an increase the value of the maximum grant, subject to success of the pilot.

10.4 In the meantime, the pilot was approved.

Agenda Item 11: Board Sub-Committee Reports

11.1 Minutes from the various Sub-committees were noted by the Board. By way of further updates the following comments were made:

- Strategy Committee will be reviewing the Digital Plan
- Employers and Skills Board is progressing work on co-ordinating responses for increased levels of redundancies
- P&I reported that the LGF fund remains fully committed but, with a final delivery deadline of 31st March, some concerns exist.
- Transport – Andrew Stephenson MP has engaged with NP11
- Scrutiny committee membership is being bolstered with new members now nominated from CEC and small business.

Agenda Item 12: Any Other Business

12.1 There was no other business.

Agenda Item 13: Part B Item – Get Building Fund, Project Proposals

13.1 This item is reported in a separate annexe.

Agenda Item 14: Date and Time of Next Meetings:

There is no Board Discussion Forum in August.

Board Meeting (public) Wednesday 16th September 2020 4:30 - 6:30pm. Location tbc.