DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY BOARD MEETING

Minutes of the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership Digital Connectivity Board Meeting
held 25th January 2022 at 4.30pm by video conference call

Present:

Nicola Dunbar (chair)	Rupert Collis (vice-chair)	Calum Lewis	Helen Gopsill
Richard Bailey	Becky Stuttard (from 5pm)		

In attendance:

Connor Diskin	Ian Brooks	Sarah Williams	Charles Jarvis

Apologies

Roy Newton	Kathryn Eade	Eleanor Blackburn	Bill Carr

Members of the Public (for Part A)

N/A			

Agenda Item 1: Apologies and Introductions

1.1 Nicola Dunbar welcomed members. Apologies were noted as above.

Agenda Item 2: Conflicts of Interest

2.1 An ongoing conflict was noted for Rupert Collis in that Fisher German are acting for Cadent with respect to Hynet.

Agenda Item 3: Minutes of the last meeting and Matters Arising

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on November 25th,2021 were accepted as an accurate record.

3.2 Progress against actions would be covered during the activity update at Item 5.

Agenda Item 4: Public Presentation

4.1 There were no public presentations.

Agenda Item 5: Activity Update

5.1 SW presented an overview of the skills "bootcamp" programme being promoted by DfE. Crucial to the success of a programme will be the recruitment of sufficient trainees, which requires support from

employers. The training is across a range of subject matter areas, including digital, typically at a Level 3-5 standard (A-Level, 1st Year Degree), and requires 60 hours of training per individual over a period up to 16 weeks. Training is available at no cost to the unemployed, with a 90% discount to SME employees, and a 70% discount for employees of larger firms. Payment is dependent upon milestones being reached, including 5 days completed training, completion of the course and importantly demonstration that the new skills are being applied or that an employment interview has been conducted.   The LEP is expected to submit a bid by mid-February, but greater understanding will ultimately be needed of the requirements necessary to run the programme, attrition rates, and risks more generally. Assuming a programme can be commissioned, it is likely that the bulk of the training will occur in the Autumn.

SW was asked to share the slides (since done) and sub-board members were asked to raise awareness through their networks and promote the programme to specific employers who might be willing to commit to training opportunities.

ACTION: Sub-Board Members

HG suggested SW contact the Northern Automotive Alliance and would provide details.

5.2 ND said she had spoken to Joe Baker at Astra Zeneca and would pass on details.

5.3 IB presented a summary of ongoing work that had taken place since the last meeting. CJ, who chairs Connecting Cheshire, was able to provide considerable additional information regarding the relationship with BDUK and its programmes and some of the challenges faced in delivering the digital ambitions of the sub-region. BD UK is expected to commission a market assessment in Summer 2022 which, will establish a refreshed baseline of connectivity, which will then be kept current by quarterly updates. CJ also mentioned that the existing Airband Contract, to connect rural properties, had been increased with the opportunity to reach another 2000 properties.

5.4 CJ agreed that a joint meeting between the DCB and Connecting Cheshire would be advantageous and will propose some dates to IB. Matters to be discussed might include ideas for inclusion in a possible county deal, how the two boards maximise their support of each other and minimise duplication and ensure that communities and people don't get "left behind" for lack of infrastructure (incl. switching from copper cable to VOIP telephony), skills or lack or affordability of devices and connections.

ACTION: CJ/IB

Agenda Item 6: Board Discussion Forum

6.1 IB reported that the LEP board had agreed a possible programme of topics for its discussion meetings including pencilling in a focussed session for the Digital Connectivity Board on June 15th, 4.30-6.30pm. The session will allow for a deeper discussion of digital issues with the full board, and we could also invite sub-board members but would need preparation and facilitation. IB will discuss further with ND.

ACTION: IB

Agenda Item 7: Any Other Business
7.1 There was no other business.

Date and Time of Next Meetings

February 22nd, 2022 4.30-6.30pm via MS Teams