**LEP Strategy Programme Board**

**MINUTES (DRAFT)**

Meeting Held: Friday 14th May 2021

Via Microsoft Teams

**Present:**

Robert Mee (Chair) Nicola Dunbar Robert Davis

Philip Cox Rupert Collis Peter Skates

Eunice Simmons Steve Park Melissa Crellin

John Downes Gemma Davies Connor Diskin

Stephen Kinsey Steven Gleave Nicola Dunbar

**Apologies:**

Frank Jordan Charlie Seward

**Attending:**

Roy Newton (AI 6 only)

**Agenda Item 1: Welcome, Introductions & Apologies**

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Frank Jordan and Charlie Seward.

**Agenda Item 2: Declarations of Interest**

Rupert Collis, Robert Davis, Eunice Simmons, Steve Park, Gemma Davies and Peter Skates declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 6.

**Agenda Item 3: Minutes of Strategy Committee held 12th February and Matters Arising**

The Strategy Programme Board approved the Minutes of the meeting held on 12th February 2021.

***Matters Arising***

12th December – carried forward:

Cross border investment – the MDA Board will be looking to make progress on the Fiscal Stimulus bid in the Autumn.

Digital Board –

**Action: Nicola Dunbar, Philip Cox and Roy Newton to meet to progress.**

Science and Innovation – slightly wider discussion still to be resolved.

**Action: Joe Manning to pull together the Life Sciences industry-led group.**

12th February

Item 3 - Natural capital audit and investment plan – this was taken to the last LEP Board. We are expecting a draft report around the end of the month.

Item 6 - Business Case Development Fund – Philip Cox reported that there is currently sufficient money left for this year’s business cases without needing to allocate additional money.

Item 7 - Recovery Plan – on the agenda.

Item 8 - Energy Priorities – forward work plan paper on the agenda. It was reported that the Metro Mayors / Cllr Gittins press conference on 15th February had gone well and it was positive that Cheshire had been featured prominently.

Item 8 – Freeports – the Liverpool City Region bid was approved.

**Agenda Item 4: Public Speaking Time**

No members of the public were present at the meeting.

**Agenda Item 5: LEP Review**

Philip Cox gave an overview of the national LEP Review which is now in progress, and drew members’ attention to the appendices giving the ToR, the Ambition Cheshire statement, and an outline of the C&W LEP functions. The ToR envisage a stronger role for LEPs in direct business support, and that capital funds that have previously been directed through LEPs will, in future, go through local authorities. Now is a good time to feed thoughts into a local response.

There was a discussion about the C&W LEP functions paper, and whether objectives could be added, whether there could be more about export, decarbonisation, the Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission, and promotion and marketing. It was agreed that the key issue is how to ensure that LEPs continue to have influence that makes a difference.

Philip Cox asked what role would board members like LEPs to play in the subregion in future. The discussion included the following points:

* the Recovery Plan consultation was very positive and this engagement is a useful function for the LEP.
* business support, bringing the best of local authority work and sharing best practice (e.g. Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission)
* LEPs to be more business led whilst having strong engagement with local authorities. How to get more businesses involved.
* importance of business support and skills. The Growth Hub has done well in the last few years however a lot of business still do not know about the LEP.
* targeting business support to the hardest hit sectors post pandemic. Some businesses are really struggling and there are winners and losers. Not to forget the important synergies with the DMO Review.
* need to be clearer about what the objectives are, how we are influencing, what activities we are doing and what outcomes we have achieved and how this will be measured.
* The LEP can advise on where government policy is going and to place the subregion in a position to respond.
* Important to remember that the LEP has strategic influence and this is an important and ongoing role.

**Action Philip Cox will review suggestions to feed into the process.**

**Agenda Item 6: Business Case Development Fund**

The contents of the report were noted.

Roy Newton, Director of Transport and Infrastructure at the LEP, provided an overview of the process that has been followed in launching the call for projects for the Business Case Development Fund. 2021-22 is the third year of the Fund and again up to £400,000 is available to support relevant projects (housing, transport and wider place) get to a good state of readiness in anticipation of national funding opportunities. The deadline for allocating funding this financial year is before September.

The current request for funding is for a £25k allocation towards preparing the business case for stage 2 of the Institute of Technology against a £50k business case cost, being matched by the project. The project was successful with Government funding at Phase 1 and is on a shortlist of 13 that will go forward for 8 to be selected, with the aim to create a Cheshire and Warrington Institute of Technology. The proposal has been endorsed by the Employers’ Skills Board and aligns with the skills strategy on the delivery of level 4/5 skills and progression to degree level and beyond. Higher Education is involved via University of Chester as a partner.

The following bid was supported and approved: -

* **£25,000 contribution to the Institute of Technology Business Case** Development (total estimated cost £50,000, to be matched by the project).

**Agenda Item 7: Draft Plan for Recovery**

The draft plan and the summary of feedback was noted. Melissa Crellin gave an outline of the consultation process, outlined the feedback received and changes that had been made to the document to accommodate this. Within the feedback, and given the high levels of engagement, there was strong support for the overall vision and that the priorities set out are the right ones. Further examples were given to bring the vision to life, which we plan to incorporate in case studies, balanced across the geography and by partners and theme. The LEP was asked to include more on the inclusivity theme and further include the contribution of the third sector.

Given the uncertainty caused by the rapidly changing circumstances of the recovery, and to accommodate further discussions about the delivery of the subregional vision, we have undertaken to produce a longer-term strategy document at the end of the year, and this is outlined in the Plan. Given that the document is a recovery plan and the focus is on short term actions, it is important to get the document out quickly. The document will go to the LEP Board on 19th May.

Board members reflected:

* Consultation was very positive and people / stakeholders generally want to get involved so we should build on this
* Consider the roles of the various organisations such as local authorities in healthy and inclusive.
* Sustainability and inclusivity can work together effectively as the experience of the Sustainable and Inclusive Growth Commission is showing
* Local Authorities have a lead role to play in inclusivity. CW&C is leading an anchor institution forum on this, which will enable contributions to become more tangible and clear
* The difference between the 2008 crash and the Covid pandemic. Philip Cox outlined that the government response to the first crash was austerity but the response to the current crisis is ‘Levelling Up’ which will have different policy outcomes
* Being wary about committing to a further strategy when conditions might change and we may not be able to deliver it
* Need to take the opportunity to really promote the messages in the Plan to the subregion

Board members confirmed their support for the draft plan.

**Agenda Item 8 – 2021-22 Strategy Programme Board Work Programme**

The contents of the report were noted alongside the fact that the work programme will evolve to keep up to date with policy and other changes. A further version will be brought back to the next substantive Board meeting.

**Agenda Item 9 – Non-public items.**

There were no items for discussion under this agenda item.

**Agenda Item 10 – Any Other Business**

It was noted that the LEP Chair has requested that she or the Deputy Chair along with the Chief Executive and/or Deputy Chief Executive attend one of the next meetings to provide a welcome and overview of the Strategy Programme Board to all members as part of an ‘induction’ process, across all the LEP sub-boards.

The Government’s intention to issue a Levelling Up White Paper was noted, alongside the Government’s response to the Industrial Clusters CCUS consultation on phasing.

**Agenda Item 11 – Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Next meeting: (subject to business cases being ready for allocation) Friday 11th June 2021, 9:00am, via MS Teams.

Meeting schedule:

* Friday 13th August 2021 (if required)
* Friday 8th October 2021
* Friday 10th December 2021