

West of England LEP Board

Wednesday 18 January, 9:30am
Meeting held “virtually” via Zoom

Present:

Richard Bonner, Arcadis (Chair)
Prof Sue Rigby, Bath Spa University (Vice Chair)
Christopher Grier, Airbus
Joanne Rumley, Foot Anstey
Katharine Finn, PwC
Margot Day, Arup
David Brown, The Bristol Port Company
Neil Douglas, Viper Innovations

Nigel Costley, TUC South West
Cllr Kevin Guy, Bath & North East Somerset Council
Mayor Marvin Rees, Bristol City Council
Cllr Steve Bridger, North Somerset Council
Cllr Toby Savage, South Gloucestershire Council
Mayor Dan Norris, West of England Combined Authority

Officers in Attendance:

Richard Ennis, West of England Combined Authority
Jess Lee, West of England Combined Authority
Stephen Bashford, West of England Combined Authority
Kieran Highman, West of England Combined Authority

Dave Perry, South Gloucestershire Council
Melissa Houston, West of England Combined Authority
Andy Cornelius, South Gloucestershire Council
Stephen Gerrard West of England Combined Authority
Selonge Russell, West of England Combined Authority

Also Present:

Cllr Winston Duguid, Chair of Scrutiny Committee

Martyn Davies, West of England Combined Authority
[item 7 only]

Apologies:

Cllr Kevin Guy, Bath & North East Somerset
Will Godfrey, Bath & North East Somerset
Stephen Peacock, Bristol City Council

Patricia Greer, West of England Combined Authority
Jo Walker, North Somerset Council

Minutes

1.	<p>Welcome from Chair Richard Bonner welcomed members and gave an updated on recent changes to the business membership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Zoe Metcalfe and Natasha Swinscoe came to the end of their term and have stepped down - Gratitude for their time and contributions to the LEP Board were noted.▪ Joanne Rumley and Margot Day have accepted the offer to extend their term for another 3 years. The LEP Board now has some vacancies and this will be addressed once the LEP Integration is complete. <p>Apologies were noted</p>
2.	<p>Minutes of the meeting of 21 June 2022 The minutes of the meeting held on the 21 June 2022 were agreed as a correct record.</p>
3.	<p>Declaration of Interest The Chair reminded Board members that they had a responsibility to treat all proposals/projects equally and impartially and must therefore declare whether they or their organisation had either a direct or indirect interest in any of the projects to be considered by the Board.</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
Items for discussion	

<p>4.</p>	<p>Overview of the Region Richard Bonner introduced the item and invited Richard Ennis, acting CEO for the LEP to introduce himself and provide Board members with an overview of regional activities from the Combined Authority (CA) perspective.</p> <p>Richard Ennis took the opportunity to summarise some big investments happening in the region:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ £95m from Homes England for the Bristol Temple Quarter Regeneration Programme, which will deliver some 2,400 new homes alongside a significant upgrade to Bristol Temple Meads Station. ▪ Committee investment decisions in respect of The North Fringe, Quantum Technology and Hydrogen Sustainable Transport in driving forward matters of regional, local, and national importance. ▪ £540m through the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement - the highest amount of funding per head awarded in England. <p>We are looking to build our focus on delivery, which will continue to grow over the coming year, as well as strengthen partnerships across the region to ensure the right organisations are part of the planning and delivery of the next phase of work - we are working with SOLACE to shape this.</p> <p>Richard also highlighted that the programme growth of the organisation is 2.5 times larger than 2022/23 which gives an indication of both the success we've had and the challenges ahead.</p> <p>In discussion the following comments were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Having a high profile is great but providing housings/transport is key to keeping our economy moving. ▪ The West of England has some unique challenges, not least transport. Getting people around on buses is crucial and it is being impacted by the driver shortage which needs addressing. ▪ We have a tough 6 months ahead and if we delay inflation will eat away at our spending power. ▪ A prioritisation exercise was suggested to help support regional investment. By bringing together LEP partners there is an opportunity to look at our investment pot and understand the pipeline/narrative. <p>Richard also highlighted the difficult decisions ahead of Friday's Committee meeting on the supported bus services. ACTION: Combined Authority colleagues to provide a short summary for the business members on the outcomes to help engage support and share the changes through their networks.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>West of England Growth Hub The West of England Growth Hub is impartial, free and has played a vital role in supporting our region's businesses - drawing together a wide range of interventions into a single coherent offer.</p> <p>Despite its success, the Growth Hub faces ongoing challenges in maintaining and building on the high-quality service it has developed. The reduction in funding and the absence of longer-term funding settlements, will inhibit the ability to focus on the strategic issues that matter most to our residents and businesses.</p> <p>Richard invited Stephen Bashford, Director of Business & Skills to provide members with a brief overview on the Growth Hub's delivery arrangements, performance to date and future opportunities.</p> <p>Stephen began his presentation by highlighting the complex business support landscape which Growth Hubs have been set up to help simplify. The economy is in a fragile place and our region has seen an increase of support, particularly during the pandemic. Information on the impact, partnership working to address productivity was also shared, and Stephen thanked Neil Douglas for his support and work around advisory boards - an initiative where business leaders work with small businesses to share their knowledge, expertise and help them with their strategy.</p> <p>Unfortunately, some services and programmes are coming to an end, and we need to put in place the next stage. The Combined Authority are therefore working with the UAs on a joined up strategic approach to business support.</p>

	<p>Stephen concluded with a request for Business members to highlight if there are any critical issues the team should be thinking about in terms of the next stage and a plea for everyone to continue championing the Growth Hub and direct colleagues to its website.</p> <p>An open discussion developed, and the following points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chris Grier and Joanne Rumley spoke on behalf of the Skills Advisory Panel [SAP] - Both feel the group is diverse and aligned to what's been heard today - Great to be able to see how things interlock. ▪ Members agreed that greens skills were in demand particularly the skills for car mechanics that understand software/technology applications. ▪ Although there are incentives to go greener with energy and heating, it's difficult to put into practice as finding companies to install air source heat pumps and solar panel is a real challenge. ▪ The scale of investment coming into the region is huge. Is there an opportunity to work with FSB to make sure local, small businesses are ready and able to bid for contracts? Get local supply chains ready.
6.	<p>Climate & Ecological Strategy and Action Plan [CESAP] The Climate & Ecological Strategy and Action Plan has been in place since April 2022, and it sets out an ambitious approach to tackling the climate and ecological emergencies that have been recognised by the region.</p> <p>Kieran Highman, Senior Project Manager introduced himself and updated members on the approach to revising the CESAP and work around updating the actions.</p> <p>Last year's CESAP had five themes focusing on business, buildings & places, nature recovery, energy and transport etc but having reflected on the fact we are already experiencing climate impacts in the region (heat waves, flooding) and listening to feedback from stakeholders - a new theme "Climate Resilience" has been introduced. Each theme has long term 2030 ambitions, medium term actions [2024-2028] and actions for next year under them.</p> <p>With a target of 23,000 green jobs to the region, a discussion focused on green skills developed and the following comments were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hydrogen is a growing industry - companies are already looking for liquid hydrogen for 2025 to ensure there's enough. Other innovation growth areas were also recognised: SMR nuclear, Hydrogen, and offshore wind. ▪ There is a national standard for carbon neutrality [PAS 2060]. Could the Growth Hub refocus on providing compliance information or training for companies to achieve this? ▪ In order to achieve our target, we need to take everyone with us, including the small businesses who already have pressure on working capital. Are there opportunities for businesses to collaborate and share pots of funding? ▪ A need to reflect what Government's Net Zero Review means for our region. ▪ With the potential automotive opportunities happening in the region could we become a centre for training and mechanics, to service the growing number of EVs. ▪ The long game is to work with schools to embed stem activities and promote work experience opportunities within the green sector to support the future workforce.
7.	<p>West of England LEP & IBB Forecast Selonge Russell, Head of Finance took members through the headlines for the LEP budget and noted that the full report will go to Joint committee for approval on the 27th January.</p> <p>Richard Bonner reflected on the information provided and felt members need to take stock for the future and what it means in relation to work around the LEP integration plans.</p>
8.	AOB

Items for information only

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| 9. | <p>Papers for June Committees
Richard Bonner will be attending the Combined Authority Committee and Joint Committee on the 27th January. Business members were asked to provide any feedback to Richard by Wednesday 25 January.</p> |
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