

West of England LEP Board

Friday 29 September, 10:30am
Meeting held in person and “virtually” via Teams

Present:

Richard Bonner, Atkins Global (Chair)
Prof Sue Rigby, Bath Spa University (Vice Chair)
Christopher Grier, Airbus
Joanne Rumley, Foot Anstey
Nigel Costley

Margot Day, Arup
Ruth Jefferson, Wessex Water
Cllr Claire Young, South Gloucestershire Council
Cllr Mike Bell, North Somerset Council
Mayor Marvin Rees, Bristol City Council

Officers in Attendance:

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

Rachel Pykett, West of England Combined Authority
Melissa Houston, West of England Combined Authority
Andy Cornelius, South Gloucestershire Council
Jo Walker, North Somerset Council

Also Present:

Karen Mercer, West of England Combined Authority
[item 5]

Apologies:

Neil Douglas, Viper Innovations
David Brown, The Bristol Port Company
Mayor Dan Norris, West of England Combined Authority

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

Minutes

1.	<p>Welcome from Chair Richard Bonner welcomed members to the LEP Board’s first hybrid meeting and welcomed Cllr Claire Young and Cllr Mike Bell to their first LEP meeting.</p> <p>Introductions were made and apologies were noted.</p>
2.	<p>Minutes of the meeting of 6 March 2023 The minutes of the meeting held on the 6 March 2023 were agreed as a correct record</p>
3.	<p>Declaration of Interest Board members were reminded 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 in relation to today’s agenda.</p> <p>ACTION: Where necessary business members are to contact Melissa Houston directly to update their Declaration of Interest forms.</p>
Items for discussion	
4.	<p>Refreshing our regional Strategy Since the Combined Authority published the Local Industrial Strategy [LIS] in 2019, new regional priorities have emerged and there has been considerable regional and national change.</p> <p>We are therefore refreshing our regional strategy to replace the LIS as our core regional plan - providing an up-to-date articulation of the ambition and priorities of the region over the medium to longer-term.</p>

The first steps in refreshing the strategy were to refresh the evidence base to understand the economics of the region. The evidence base has been shared with external bodies like Centre for Centres and the Institute of Government to review and challenge to ensure it is robust.

Based on engagement to date the following three broad outcomes have emerged:

- A greener West of England
- A more equal fair and inclusive region
- A more prosperous region

Richard Bonner opened the floor for feedback and the following comments and challenges were noted:

- The ambitions are good but are they ambitious enough? Do we have measurable outcomes?
- Is this a refresh or continuation of the LIS?
- The question around the geography for this strategy was discussed.
- Building longer term funding needs to be a key priority.
- There was a challenge and discussion around ensuring the strategy articulates the USP of the region
- House building is missing. There are significant issues around interest rate, building and affordability.
- How can we add granularity to the actions? What is the role of the LEP business members?
- The importance to be clear on ambitions, better definitions on outcomes on what we're trying to achieve.

Overall Board members were supportive of the work and agreed that what was presented was a useful framework to work towards.

ACTION: The team will share a discussion document in due course to enable further conversations.

ACTION: Richard Bonner requested the group reconvene to hold continue these conversations as the strategy is developed.

Bristol Temple Quarter regeneration programme [BTQ]

The Bristol Temple Quarter regeneration programme is one of the UK's largest city centre regeneration programmes, aiming to transform 130 hectares of land around Bristol Temple Meads station while delivering 10,000 new homes, thousands of new jobs and opportunities for people right across the region - The impact of the scheme is anticipated to deliver an annual boost of at least £1.6bn to the regional economy.

Richard Bonner introduced Karen Mercer, Temple Quarter Delivery Director who updated members on the scope of the BTQ and show how it aligns with the emerging West of England Regional Strategy.

Following a short presentation, the following comments were noted:

- This is a substantial asset - not just regionally but nationally and something for us to be proud of.
- A lot of progress has been made over many years, but the landing of recent funding has given real momentum to move forward.
- What comes across strongly is the collaborative relationship between partners locally and outside of the region - a model how we get better traction.
- Forthcoming briefings for Council Leaders and senior officers were welcomed, ensuring all CA partners have a clear understanding of the opportunity and obligations the BTQ scheme bring.
- The question was raised as to whether BTQ could be declared a Living Wage Zone. This would be a very tangible, visual declaration of intent.
- With regards to Social Value the team are aware of the importance to delivery in line with what the community needs and the businesses want.
- A challenge around the investment into skills and ensuring we can enhance something for younger people was highlighted - Is there anything we can do [during the development stage] to make sure partners commit to investing in the local community?
- There was a request to ensure there are synergies and we are reporting and better understanding what's happening in our enterprise zones as part of the strategy.

5.

6.	<p>Future of the LEP In August, Government confirmed that capacity funding will cease from April 2024 and that LEP functions will transfer to Mayoral Combined Authorities.</p> <p>A copy of the letter setting out the Government’s policy position was attached to the papers and work is underway to consider options for how we respond to ensure a strong business voice remains part of our approach to setting the strategic directions of the region.</p> <p>An open discussion developed on the current position and the importance to ensure there is a continued role for the voice of business in decision making. The following comments were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Members all agreed that having a strong business voice with wide representation was vital for the region. ▪ Without a business board the constructive challenge and support to ideas would be lost. ▪ The term “Business” Board is misleading as it should include other representatives not just employers. ▪ The view of members present at the meeting was that North Somerset should continue to be part of the regional Business Board. ▪ It should be led by business and be seen as a way to make a difference, add value. ▪ The LEP is at its best when using the sector expertise and on the ground knowledge - this came to the forefront during covid. ▪ There is a need for a wider outlook to be reflected. It is important that the board includes North Somerset and strengthen links to Western Gateway. ▪ The importance to set-out expectations, articulate what the role is and ensure it ties into our ambitions and the next stage of this. <p>ACTION: Richard Bonner requested the Board reconvene to further discuss where we take this.</p>
7.	<p>AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Future4WEST <p>David Gibson, Strategic Director for Infrastructure joined the meeting remotely to update members on Future4WEST. A paper will be going to the next Committee meeting on Friday 6 October where they will be asked to consider a number of options. For the scheme to move forward, funding will need to be authorised.</p> <p>An open discussion developed around decision making, milestones, the need to connect homes with employment, retail and destinations and the importance to clearly articulate programme to achieve funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ACTION: There was a request to extend LEP Board meetings to 2 hours.
Items for information only	
8.	<p>Papers for March Committees Richard Bonner will be attending the Combined Authority Committee and Joint Committee on the 6th October. Business members were asked to provide any feedback to Richard by Wednesday 4 October.</p>