



CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON LEP BOARD MEETING

Subject: Chief Executive's Report (October 2017)

Agenda Item: 5

Author: Philip Cox

Meeting Date: 8 November 2017

A) Executive Summary:

This report provides an overview and a commentary on: LEP Board Awayday; Growth Prospectus; Institute of Technology; Institute of Technology; Automotive; Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund; Mary Ney Report; Scrutiny Committee and Media Coverage.

B) Recommendations / Action Requested:

The Board is asked to note the contents of this report.

C) Details:

Summary

1. The focus of recent activity within the LEP has been on implementing the Strategic Economic Plan. We have submitted an expression of interest in establishing an Institute of Technology, continued to work with the Automotive industry, one of our world leading sectors, and we have been developing our bid to the Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund which, we hope, will help to strengthen the quality of life offer in C&W.

LEP Board Awayday

2. Last weekend's Board Awayday gave us some excellent feedback on the Board's priorities for the next few years. As you asked us to do, we will be taking immediate steps to bolster the resources devoted to committing our ESIF allocation and taking immediate steps to recruit someone as our Finance Director and Company Secretary. As we also promised at the Awayday we will be preparing a detailed business plan for 18/19 and higher level plans for 19/20 and 20/21 that will reflect the priorities that came out of the discussion last Saturday. We will circulate those in draft, and then look to get them formally adopted at the Board meeting in January. Hopefully by then the Industrial Strategy White Paper will have been published and we will have had a clear steer from the Government on Growth Hubs.

Growth Prospectus

3. Government Officials have been sent a working draft of the sub-region's Growth Prospectus, and we are due to discuss it with Jake Berry, the Northern Powerhouse Minister, on 14



November. The key question is how far is the Government prepared to go to support us in achieving our objective of creating a £50 billion economy in C&W by 2040.

Institute of Technology

4. The publication version of the skills plan is on the agenda for later in the meeting. In parallel, The LEP, on behalf of employers and providers from across C&W, has submitted an expression of interest to the Department for Education in establishing an Institute of Technology to deliver a much closer alignment of skills and curriculum to the needs of our employers. The LEP team will be discussing the proposal with DfE Officials, although, if we are not successful in our bid, we still intend to find ways of delivering it.

Automotive

5. Board members will be aware of the 400 job losses announced at Vauxhall on 16 October. They served to underline the importance of the work we have been doing to strengthen the automotive sector within the North West and North Wales. In addition to work we are commissioning from the Northern Automotive Alliance to try to re-patriate the supply chain, I have separate meetings later in the month with the head of the Government' Automotive team, and with the head of Government relations at Vauxhall specifically focussed on the Ellesmere Port site.

Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund

6. The deadline for submitting bids to the Northern Cultural Regeneration Fund is 30 November. The LEP is allowed to submit only a single bid and a paper weighing up the alternative proposals is due to be discussed later in the agenda. What is striking is that all three proposals are excellent options, so, although we need to put one forward to DCMS' competition, we will be looking to find ways of ensuring that all of them can be taken forward.

Mary Ney Report

7. The Mary Ney report on LEP governance was published on 26 October, and DCLG's Permanent Secretary has already written to the Public Accounts Committee to say that they are immediately implementing all the recommendations. There is an opportunity to have a full discussion of the report under a later agenda item, but the most significant change for us is that in advance of the "Annual Conversation" that DCLG/BEIS have with us every year, the Chief Executive and the Chair will have to submit a written assessment of the LEP's delivery and governance, and that our Section 151 officer (Jan Willis in Cheshire East) will have to submit her own independent report. The Annual Conversation is due to take place early next month, so we will have to work quite quickly to produce this year's report.

Scrutiny Committee

8. We are currently canvassing dates for the first meeting of our new Scrutiny Committee, which will take place before the end of the year. It will comprise three local authority members, plus three representatives of the private sector – Carol Thompson, Anne Boyd and Guy Butler.



Media Coverage

9. The LEP has attracted a lot of broadcast media coverage over the last month. Pete Waterman was on both the breakfast and drivetime shows on Radio Stoke discussing our response to the HS2 Crewe Hub consultation, and then interviewed again by the BBC at the opening of the Mersey Gateway bridge. An interview I gave at MIPIM UK about investment opportunities across C&W was covered by Dee 103 and Silk 106, and I was also part of the studio discussion on the Politics Show on BBC1 in the week of the Vauxhall redundancies.