



West Midlands Combined Authority

Strategic Economic Development Board Meeting

Wednesday, 20 May 2020 at 10.00am

Notes

Members

Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP
Black Country LEP
Cabinet Portfolio - Economy &
Innovation
Deputy Mayor
Solihull MBC
Warwickshire County Council

Tim Pile (in the Chair)
Tom Westley

Councillor Ian Brookfield
Councillor Bob Sleigh
Councillor Ian Courts
Councillor Peter Butlin

Officers in Attendance

Black Country LEP
Black Country LEP
Coventry & Warwickshire LEP
Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP
City of Wolverhampton
West Midland Combined Authority
West Midland Combined Authority
West Midland Combined Authority
West Midland Growth Company

Sarah Middleton
Prof Delma Dwight
Paula Deas
Katie Trout
Tim Johnson
Julia Goldsworthy
Rebecca Riley
Jonathan Skinner
Roger Mendonca

Item No.

53. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Nick Abell, Matthew Hammond, Prof John Latham and from Councillors Adrian Andrew, George Duggins, Angus Lees, Izzi Seccombe.

54. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

55. Notes of the Strategic Economic Plan Board Meeting held 8th January 2020

Resolved:

That the notes of the meeting held on the 8th January 2020 be approved as an accurate record.

56. Notes of Teleconference held 18th March 2020

Resolved:

That the Teleconference notes of the meeting held on the 18th March 2020 be approved as an accurate record.

57. SED Board Tracker Log

The Chair noted that many of the actions had been completed or were now no longer required given the need to re-assess the focus of the SED Board and stated that he and officers would review the Tracker Log prior to the next meeting.

Resolved:

That the SED Board Tracker Log be reviewed in light of the comments from the Chair and the emerging role for the SED Board in light of the impact of Covid-19 on the West Midlands economy.

58. Forward Plan

The Chair asked that the dates of submission of reports be reviewed and it was noted that further work was required to populate the forward plan.

Resolved:

That the Forward Plan be updated and noted.

Economic & Innovation Portfolio

59. Covid-19 Recovery Planning

Julia Goldsworthy referenced the two sets of slides circulated in regard to the overall economic approach.

The Chair advised that Members could either respond today or that officers should pick up SED Board Members input outside of the meeting.

Councillor Ian Courts referenced the loss of 9,000 Rolls Royce jobs and expressed concern that key regional assets were clearly not referenced in the Prospectus, highlighting JLR in Solihull. Whilst the Recovery Strategy looked fine it was relevant to include the key companies.

Julia Goldsworthy stated that there had been engagement with the key regional assets, the document was seeking to identify key gear changing for all companies. The next steps were to ensure that the set of interventions were relevant to all business assets in the region.

Councillor Ian Courts advised that the document needed to be more easily navigated for the target audience and stated that the regions' assets of Birmingham Airport, JLR etc. needed to be referenced at the front of the document. Julia Goldsworthy advised she would take away for the Executive, summary.

Councillor Ian. Brookfield noted the comments and stated that he had issue with highlighting the key assets but stated that the region's SME's significantly outnumbered these large companies.

The Chair was of the view that the assets, both current and potential future needed referencing, to include the NEC. He wanted clarity around objectives and that it needed to a lot clearer for the target audience. The Chair expressed reservations at the need for 6 business cases by Friday but was reassured by Julia Goldsworthy that this was not the deadline.

Councillor Peter Butlin stated that the vision should be recovery. In respect of JLR he noted that the supply line was currently holding up but if they could not sell vehicles then those lines would disappear. In regard to JLR it could impact 250,000 jobs.

Katie Trout advised that the three LEPs and WM Growth Company were working on 10 growth sectors for recovery, plus retail and academia. They were reviewing the risk in sectors, by looking at furloughing data across sector and region. She stated that they had considered the assets and anchor institutes which had provided huge opportunities for the Local Industrial Strategy but now these posed risks i.e. Birmingham Airport and JLR. Now there would be a need to consider transition requests and what those sectors required in order to support recovery. The sector work needed to be overlaid with skills and unemployment to bring together the information to identify the required interventions.

Councillor Bob Sleight stated that the focus needed to be recovery. The politicians needed guidance and that the evidence came from the sectors. He stated that the Prospectus needed to be clear on "Asks" from Government where interventions/resources were required.

Councillor Ian Courts added that there was need to be clear who the document was directed and was required to make a difference now. The longer-term strategy could come later.

The Chair commented that there was a need to pivot activity to Recovery and therefore should be ALL about actions required. Thus, there was a need to articulate into a set of Asks – what were the critical interventions and identify the gaps i.e. where economy was, where risks were and what was needed. This would represent first wave of critical interventions. He added there was a need to make an economic difference now, highlighting that the WM had been the fastest growing economy before Covid-19 and could be again but that resilience and recovery should be the imperative drive in the short term.

Julia Goldsworthy advised that the next steps were for PWC to produce a piece of work with small number of the most critical propositions for an immediate recovery piece and to work with the local authorities and LEPs to build a package of propositions over the next 4-6 weeks. She expected the role of the SED Board was how to organise and galvanise as a region and that that the short piece of work on the propositions would provide grater detail on what was required now. She stated that the Executive Summary would inform the package and the pitch but that the Asks would be very specific.

The Chair advised that a meeting of the SED Board was required in next 3 weeks and noted need to link across all CA budgets i.e. Housing and Regeneration and skills.

Councillor Bob Sleight queried how the Asks would link into the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) being developed for the Autumn, that is would these Asks being developed be reflected in the CSR.

Julia Goldsworthy stated that the starting priority for the Asks would be to link in with colleagues across local authorities and LEPs, linking them into the Investment Programme and pull together into critical programmes. The Asks would be for delivery now and that this was a baseline for all work being undertaken now. She highlighted that working with higher education, one of the biggest changes would be to secure a Gigafactory, to focus an impact on the regional economy.

Katie Trout stated that it was important to draw on all the work undertaken, she noted the announcement of Rolls Royce and thus highlighted that it was important to be in a position to accelerate all sectors across the piece in real time.

The Chair concluded that the propositions should provide framework for everything, not just new propositions, which were required, but to include the CSR Asks. There needed to be 6-10 initial inputs ready in 6-8 weeks that would provide a boost for jobs

Resolved:

- 1) That Officers and PWC review the Recovery Prospectus in line with the comments made by Members, outlined above; and
- 2) That the emerging submission to Government be reported through to the Board in the next month.

60. Refreshing the SED Board's Purpose in light of COVID-19

The Chair advised that he had reflected on the Terms of Reference for the SED Board and that there was a need to pivot the Board to a short-term focus on recovery, as economic development could be considered later, which would include a reflection on membership and the frequency of meetings.

Councillor Ian Brookfield agreed that there was a need to consider the frequency of meetings, noted that this Board provided the opportunity for an open discussion and welcomed the review of the Terms of Reference.

Julia Goldsworthy that this presented an opportunity to review how all parties worked together and stated that the Terms of Reference review should consider how the SED Board related to other groups, to include the Economic Impact Group.

The Chair stated that the LEPs needed to feed in to the economic recovery and that the Board should help drive this.

Resolved: That the Board request the Board's Secretariat, working with Chair and the WMCA Governance Team, to review the Terms of Reference and present these to the next meeting, noting the ambition to for the Board to meet more frequently.

61. Future Mobility Update

Julia Goldsworthy advised that this represented an update for the Board on the work being undertaken on Future Mobility.

Resolved: that the SED Board receive and note the update.

62. Notes for WMCA Energy Capital Board held on 5th March 2020

The Chair noted that Matthew Rhodes had not joined the meeting and thus advised that these could be reported through to a future meeting.

Resolved: that the minutes of the WMCA be deferred to a future meeting.

63. Date of Next Meeting

Resolved: that it be noted that the next meeting would be held in the next month on a date to be agreed.

The meeting closed at 11.00am

Chair